

**Mini Review***Copyright © All rights are reserved by Nickardo Salmon*

Massage and Stress Management for College Students

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College students are exposed to multiple stress factors that are unavoidable due to the nature of their environment. Stress is known to have severe negative effects on the mental health of college students. Everyone experiences different stressors and it is evident that they handle stress differently. Stress management is now a concern as not many students are aware of the resources available to them or they simply do not have easy access. Due to the popularity of massage therapy, officials at institutions like Harvard University have used massage therapy in as a means of stress management. This has sparked an interest as students have indicated that they would like to know more about massage therapy as a means of stress management.

Keywords: Stress management; Anxiety; Depression; Massage therapy**Introduction**

The unavoidable stress experienced by college students is at alarming levels as not much is being done to provide easy access to stress management and education opportunities. High stress levels is known to lead to anxiety, depression and suicide. Massage therapy is one of the oldest form if treatment and therapy for stress and seem to be favored by most college students according to a recent survey.

Stress

Stress comes can be positive (eustress) and negative (distress), both of which are experienced by college students at a high rate [1]. Seaward BL, et al. [2] identifies stress as the inability in coping with a real or imaginary perceived threat that can affect one's psychological responses through mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being.

This can be triggered from life changes such as their living environment, academic pressure, finances, and social factors. Some view stress as a form of relationship that exist between a person and their environment that could potentially be dangerous to the psychological makeup of that individual [3,4].

What must be acknowledged is that the stressor is not what causes stress but the individual's ability to react to it in a way that is not harmful as college students are constantly exposed to

stressful situations throughout their studies [5]. Stress has been linked to depression among college students, with 1 in 10 college students diagnosed with depression according to a national health survey [6]. In another national survey, 10.7% of college students considered attempting suicide and 2% attempted suicide within the last 12 months due to stress [7].

This alarming result calls for interventions and services for college students as only 29% of college students sought out professional help while another 20% who were interested in help did not seek help due to waiting lists, scheduling problems, and some were not aware that the services were available.

Massage Therapy and Stress Management

Ultimately, stress affects the academics of college students if not managed properly, as 22.9% reported a decrease in exam grades and 6.6% received lower course grades [7]. Since it might be nearly impossible for college students to not experience some form of stress, it is important that they are aware of ways that they can manage stressful situations. One common physical stress management procedure is massage. The use of massage therapy is known to have positive effects on stress management [8]. Massage therapy is said to be one of the older forms' treatment for stress and depression [9]. In their study, Oswalt SB, et al. [1] indicated that when college students were asked about learning more about

stress-coping strategies, 58% indicated that they would like to know more about massage. Massage was also the top response (65%) when asked which stress-management service they would use if provided by their university.

Officials at Harvard University have developed a program aimed at promoting the mental health of students through therapeutic breaks where the students receive shoulder and back massage [10]. This is extremely beneficial as massage therapy has been proven to decrease stress-related hormones that are linked to anxiety and depression [8].

Summary

Considering that students cannot avoid some of the situations that contribute to their stress level, it is important that university officials provide stress-management opportunities and resources for students to take advantage of. Massage therapy seems to be a popular choice among college students so this is highly recommended. Stress can easily lead to suicide, anxiety, and even depression. Providing the proper resources for stress management and treatment can decrease the effects of stress on college students.

Acknowledgment

None.

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest.

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