

Comparing Three Complementary Interventions (Mindfulness-Meditation, Gratitude, and Affirmations) in the Context of Stress

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Abstract : Rationale & Aims: Complementary interventions such as mindfulness-meditation, gratitude, and self-affirmation are often used by therapists to treat stress. Many studies have been conducted using these interventions either individually or adjunctively with regard to stress. However, there has been little work comparing these interventions to investigate which of them is the most effective in treating stress. This study aims to compare these interventions and to determine which of them has the strongest perceived and physiological impact on stress. Participants: 120 law students preparing to take the bar exam: 3 experimental groups of 30 individuals, 1 control group of 30 individuals. Methods: One day prior to administering the interventions, baseline salivary cortisol samples will be taken, and the participants will complete the perceived stress scale (Cohen et al., 1983). Thirty days prior to the bar exam, each experimental group will be given an intervention to practice. Interventions will be practiced once in the morning after waking and once at night at bedtime. In group one, each participant will do a recorded three-minute mindfulness meditation. In group two, each participant will practice gratitude by writing down three things he/she/they are grateful for. In group three, each participant will practice affirmation by writing three sentences affirming his/her/their core values. The control group will not have an intervention to practice. Starting experimental day 1, upon waking and prior to practicing the intervention, the participants will take a salivary cortisol sample. Then they will practice their given intervention. Every night, before going to bed, the participants will practice their given intervention for a second time. The participants will practice their interventions and take salivary cortisol samples for 28 days. After each seven-day period (days 7, 14, 21, 28), the participants will fill out a brief questionnaire about the effects their intervention has on their stress, daily life, and relationships with themselves and others. On day 29, the participants will take a final salivary cortisol sample and will fill out the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983). Applications of findings: Findings from this study would inform therapists of best practices when working with clients with stress. Moreover, therapists will gain knowledge of how individuals perceive these interventions and their impact on stress, daily life, somatic symptoms, and relationships with self and others. Thus, therapists will be able to administer these interventions with more precision to the stress-related contexts and issues their clients bring.

Keywords : stress, mindfulness-meditation, gratitude, affirmations, complementary interventions

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