Evaluation of Stress Resources in School-Age Children by Fifth and Sixth Grade Teachers

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Overview

Stress in moderate amounts is a perfectly normal part of life. However, an excessive amount of stress may lead to detrimental effects on both a person’s body and mind. Children are especially susceptible to these effects due to their inexperience and unfamiliarity on how to cope with stress. Something that would seem completely tolerable to an adult may be the biggest stressor in a child’s life. These stressors inevitably lead to the “stress hormone” called cortisol to rise. Because stress has been linked to negative changes in the body such as elevated body mass and elevated cortisol levels, it is important to explore ways to reduce stress in children. In this study, several questions must be investigated, including what types of stressors children ages 10-12 years-old experience, what methods of stress relief work in this age group, and what teachers and health care providers can do to assess and alleviate stress in children. A collection of existing data will also be examined to determine whether stress in children leads to higher cortisol levels and thus a higher BMI. By determining if this idea is true, further research can be conducted to find ways to reduce stress in children and thus help facilitate healthy weight loss. Since obesity is on a rise in the United States, it would be best to start healthy stress-relieving practices early in childhood to help reduce obesity and its associated complications, and thus create an overall healthier nation.

Methodology

The sample size will include approximately ten participants employed from Tanner High School, East Limestone High School, and Creekside Elementary School. Prospective participants will be recruited through email, provide consent to participate in the study, and provide demographic information. Participants will be asked to meet for approximately twenty minutes to discuss stress in children with the principal investigator (PI) in a private conference room at the school. They will be asked to describe stressors commonly found in children and ways they know of how to deal with it through open-ended interview questions. A resource manual will be developed to include more ways to deal with stress that the participants may not know of in hopes that it can help improve how they handle their students’ stress. Participants will use these new methods for one month. Following one month, the PI will meet with the participants in a private conference room at the school for a second interview to provide feedback. Participants will then be given school supplies as incentives and thanked for their time.

Acknowledgements

This project is dedicated to Dr. Thuy Lynch for giving so much of her own personal time in helping me in every step. She has been such an inspiration to me and has selflessly given me both her guidance and support. I would also like to dedicate this project to Dr. Ann Bianchi for guiding me through the Honors College at The University of Alabama in Huntsville and helping me with all assignments as well as any additional questions I had. She has been so patient and valuable to the betterment of this project and more. You both have been so crucial in the making of this project, and for that I am incredibly thankful.