

Self-Care Techniques Lesson

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Intention:

To provide practical, no-cost tools and techniques for the students to use in their approach to managing stress.

Population:

College Success class of College Transitions Program. (Can be adapted easily to other populations.)

Preparation:

- Review the physiology of how stress manifests itself in the body. (See [Stress and the Body](#) activity.)
- Invite licensed massage therapist to visit the class and give presentation. Review teaching goals with therapist beforehand. (I worked with Charlene Crane, licensed massage therapist in our area.)

Materials:

- Yoga mats are helpful
- Clean socks—such as cotton athletic socks. They do not have to be new.
- Tennis balls

Implementation:

1. Have massage therapist demonstrate a range of exercises and techniques designed to help students to meet their self-care needs, including shoulder rolls, breathing techniques, and trigger point massage.
2. Allow students to volunteer to experience the techniques.
3. Create self-massage tools with tennis balls and socks. The following YouTube videos offer instructions.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coP-7rwkbuo>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CvKx3fhcLI>

Classroom Snapshot:

All techniques Charlene demonstrated included student volunteers, and all students present had a chance to volunteer. Within the first few techniques, the full classroom was engaged and eager to practice their approach to the particular stretch, shoulder roll, breathing technique or trigger point massage. By far the most popular technique demonstrated was Ms. Crane's tennis balls in a pair of socks, self (and partnered) body massager. See the YouTube videos for demonstrations for the tennis ball massager.

Student Responses:

The students enjoyed this lesson, especially the hands-on component. The more reserved students seemed to benefit the most, indicated by their willingness to volunteer for a demonstration and their after-class questions of Ms. Crane. Several students and Ms. Crane continued to talk through the lunch break. Below are student's written responses about their experience.

Fawn: "The first guest speaker Sally had lined up was a massage therapist; her goal was to explain how stress affects our bodies, how to recognize stressors and the techniques that will help relieve stress that our bodies go through on a daily basis. One of the main points that the therapist made was how just sitting for long periods of time can put a lot of stress on your body. When you are sitting at your computer or at a desk looking at a textbook you really don't think about the stress you're putting on your body. The muscles you can affect are the neck and the pectoral; both of these muscles connect to other muscles that can cause many problems. The massage therapist showed the class some neck exercises we can do in our chairs to keep the muscles moving and healthy; also a way to stretch our pectoral muscles which are located in the upper chest .The class learned some great techniques for relaxing our muscles using tennis balls. The speaker was great, I learned a lot about different types of muscles that I wouldn't usually think about."

Jose: "Tuesday's class was very dynamic. I think that giving massages to the body and stretching the muscles is very therapeutic for people. I have used these techniques before and for me it is a good source of relaxation and stress remover. I used to work for long hours standing up and my feet and legs got really tired, sometimes my feet hurt, but when I stretched my legs muscles I felt fine. Sometimes I had trouble sleeping, then I started to do muscles stretching, then after that I was able to sleep. Body massages and muscles stretching are techniques that really work, it has for me and I will recommend it to anybody to manage stress, for relaxation and to recover energy."

Cale: "...Charlene Crane stopped by to go over some massage therapy. She talked about trigger points, an area of high neurological activity that when pressed on sends sensation to another area of the body. She went over five stages of muscle rehab, compression, biomechanics, (how you move through space, walking posture), stretching, strengthening, more activity, movement, aerobics, swimming, biking. The best part of the class was when she handed out the socks and we put two tennis balls into the sock tied the end up. She demonstrated using them by lying on your back and rolling them up and down on the back of the neck and going up and down the spine. I could not do that lying down, because of back problems, but I found doing these steps up against the wall was great. They really helped, and I wanted to go out and make my own. Doing this not only helps the back, but relaxed and released stress, which is very good when we are all dealing with multiple stuff in our lives."