

Exploring Mindfulness as a Tool to Reduce Perceived Stress Among First-Year OT Students

Amy E. Hudkins, DHSc, COTA/L

Saint Francis University, Loretto, Pennsylvania, United States

DOI: [10.5014/ajot.2024.78S2-PO296](https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2024.78S2-PO296)

Date presented: March 23, 24

Primary Author and Speaker: Amy E. Hudkins, ahudkins@francis.edu

In 2022, over 51.7% of college students experienced moderate psychological stress (ACHA, 2022). The purpose of this study was to implement a 3-week mindfulness program to explore its usefulness as a tool to cope with daily stressors and seek additional positive outcomes. Seventeen students (all female, all OT majors) enrolled in a 1-credit, first year, introduction to occupational therapy course participated in a pre-experimental study. Students completed Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale 10 Item Inventory (PSS) as a pre-test, completed a 3 week mindfulness journey, and then completed the PSS as a post-test. At the end of each of the 3 weeks, students were asked to provide the number of sessions they completed along with feedback regarding any changes they noticed in themselves. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The average PSS pre-test score was 22.05, indicating moderate stress. The average PSS post-test score was 18.4, indicating moderate stress. The difference in the pre-test scores and post-test scores was minimal but did show a decrease. Qualitative data collected resulted in several themes emerging per week. After week one, the primary themes that emerged from the data included feelings of decreased stress, anxiety, an increase in feelings of relaxation and calm. After week two, primary themes included increased emotional regulation, feelings of contentment, and relaxation. After week three, primary themes included improved emotional regulation, reduced feelings of anxiety and stress, and increased feelings of relaxation. The impact of these results show support for implementing mindfulness as a tool to assist 1st-year OT students in managing feelings of stress and improve overall daily functioning.

References

- Bamber, M., & Morpeth, E. (2019). Effects of Mindfulness Meditation on College Student Anxiety: a Meta-Analysis. *Mindfulness* 10, 203–214. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-0965-5>.
- Pascoe, M. C., Hetrick, S. E., & Parker, A. G. (2020). The impact of stress on students in secondary school and higher education. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 104–112. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02673843.2019.1596823?src=recsys>.