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Acute Changes in Positive Well-being, Psychological Distress, and Fatigue after Group Exercise in Older Adults

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Previous research has shown that long-term participation in aerobic group exercise (Williams & Lord, 2008), tai chi (Bohannon et al., 1999), and yoga (Dehen et al., 2006) have positive impacts on mood in older adults. Few studies have examined whether group exercise has an impact on acute mood changes in older adults. **PURPOSE:** This study examined acute changes in positive well-being, psychological distress, and fatigue in older adults after one group exercise class. **METHODS:** Data were collected from a total of 27 participants (average age 70.35 ± 6 years; 18 females, 4 males; 5 did not identify sex) who participate in group exercise on a regular basis at a local senior center. Data were collected at the following classes: Tai Chi, Fit for Life and Cardio Fitness. Mood variables (positive well-being, psychological distress, and fatigue) were assessed pre- and post-class using the Subjective Exercise Experience Scale (SEES). Significant changes in mood scores were determined using dependent (paired) *t*-tests. **RESULTS:** There was a significant (9%) increase in positive well-being from pre- to post-testing for all classes, $t(26) = 2.561$, $p < 0.05$, but no significant changes were observed for psychological distress or fatigue. When the classes were examined separately, participation in the Tai Chi class yielded a significant decrease (-36%) in fatigue after the class $t(10) = 2.055$, $p < 0.05$. Positive well-being increased significantly by 20% from pre- to post-test $t(9) = 2.16$, $p < 0.05$ for the Fit for Life class, and a 9% change in positive well-being for the Cardio Fitness class, $t(5) = 2.06$, $p < 0.05$. **CONCLUSION:** Positive well-being increases with participation in group fitness classes for older adults after only one session. Improvements in positive well-being are greater in classes with a cardiovascular component. Decreases in fatigue were observed for the Tai Chi class only, which may be attributed to the mind-body experience and flow movements the class incorporates. Thus, group fitness classes are beneficial for improving acute mood states in older adults.