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Thrive: The impact of a mind, body and soul program on anxiety symptoms and quality of life

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Abstract:

Research supports a link between exercise and physical, mental, and spiritual health. Supporting holistic wellness is an important emphasis for individuals and within healthcare systems. Various studies with individuals with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) have suggested improvements in anxiety symptoms and quality of life from involvement in mindfulness and physical exercise. The six-session Thrive program was designed to help students and employees at Messiah University improve quality of life and decrease symptoms of anxiety through physical exercise, mindfulness practices, and spiritual disciplines. In this mixed methods study, program effectiveness was evaluated with adherence rates, pre and post-program completion of the Burns Anxiety Inventory, written session feedback, and a focus group at conclusion of the class. Data was triangulated from the various evaluation sources. The study included 21 participants with an overall adherence rate of 81%. The Burns Anxiety Inventory pre-program ($M = 28.0$, $SD = 16.1$) and post-program assessment ($M = 18.6$, $SD = 12.7$) indicated decreased anxiety symptoms among participants ($p < 0.001$). Thematic analysis from the focus group and session feedback forms showed that participants benefitted and learned from Thrive, identified ways that Thrive could be improved for the future, and experienced positive effects on personal anxiety and quality of life. As a mind, body, and soul program, Thrive was a feasible option for students and employees, who reported decreased symptoms of anxiety after completion.