

# Coping Mechanisms for Stress and Anxiety in Undergraduate Nursing Students

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## Introduction

The intensity and rigor of nursing school has been reported to cause 30.2% of students high levels of anxiety, and 82.4% of students moderate stress. Based on these statistics, we aimed to look at educating first year nursing students on coping mechanisms to help manage this stress.

## PICO Question

Among undergraduate nursing students in a BSN program, how does education on coping skills for stress and anxiety in nursing school versus no education affect their knowledge on coping skills?



## Literature Search

Databases: CINAHL, Google Scholar, & Pubmed

Keywords: Nursing Students, Stress, Anxiety, Coping Mechanisms, Relief

Search Limits: Full-Linked Text, Article Within Past 7 Years, English Language, Peer-reviewed Articles

Total of 20 articles found and used from this literature search.

## Current Evidence

### Music Therapies:

“Students reported statistically significant lowered levels of anxiety and lowered blood pressure when music was played during their first examination, compared to music not being played” (Eyuboglu et al., 2020).

Music therapy was found by multiple articles to be an easy, cost effective, and successful way to reduce reported levels of stress, as well as physiological indicators of stress in nursing students.

### Mentorship Programs:

“Undergraduate medical students reported that peer mentoring program helped them reduce their stress, cope with new situations, and confront difficulties. Mentoring program not only affects students' coping styles with stress but also decreases students' stress levels” (Yüksel & Bahadır-Yılmaz, 2019)

Mentorship programs were found to increase self efficacy and sense of belonging, shared experience, reinforcing knowledge, increased critical thinking skills and confidence. They also provided a resource students could react out too when they felt reluctant to seek out other traditional campus resources. All of which decrease stress and anxiety on students.

### Physical Activity:

It was found that “even low/moderate daily activity was associated with significantly lower stress levels” in college aged students (Schultchen et al., 2019).

Physical activity was proven to reduce daily stress levels of students in college. This can be something as simple as taking a walk around campus as a study break in order to reduce the overall stress levels that come with being a student in college.

### Mindfulness, Meditation, Aromatherapy:

Results of this study showed that a “group mindfulness-based cognitive therapy program conducted with nursing students had an effect on students’ mindful attention awareness and stress levels” (Yuksel & Yilmaz, 2019, p. 7).

It was found that mindfulness, meditation, and aromatherapy all had a positive effect on undergrad nursing students’ stress and anxiety prior to performing tasks and taking exams.

## Education Plan & Implementation

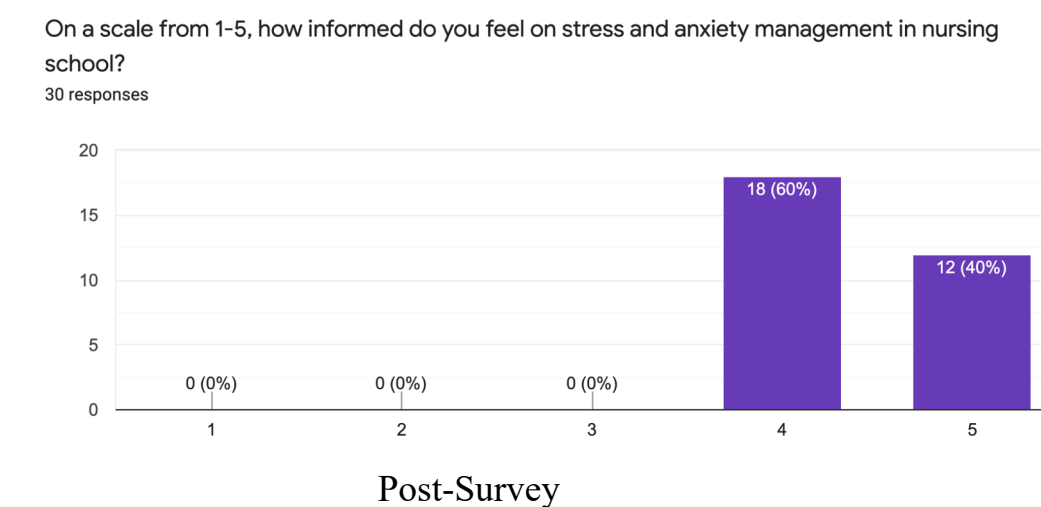
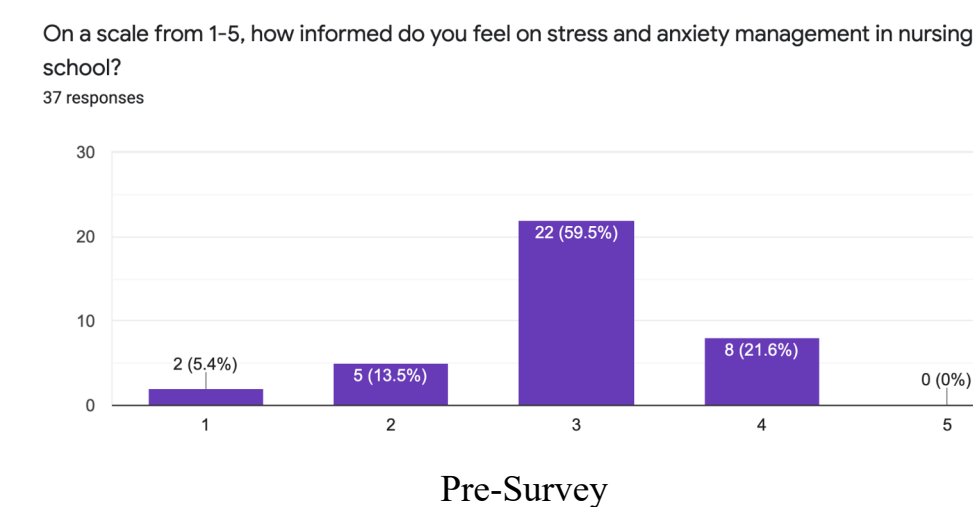
Population educated: A freshman nursing class of 40 students

Overall purpose: To educate first- year Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing students about stress and anxiety and coping skills to use throughout skills as well as provide an educational tool the students can use for long-term stress and anxiety management

### Implementation of education:

- What is stress and anxiety in nursing school
- Positive/Negative coping skills
- What are the benefits of proper stress and anxiety management
- Resources for students

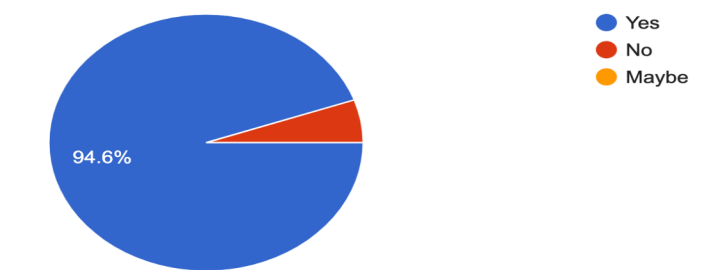
### Pre/Post test to evaluate education



## Findings & Feedback

- 94.6% of students stated their stress and anxiety levels have increased since starting nursing school
- Before the educational presentation, 26.1% of students felt “informed” and 0% of students felt “very informed” on stress and anxiety management in nursing school
- The post-survey after the education was implemented showed 60% of students felt “informed” and 40% of students felt “very informed” on stress and anxiety management
- Post education, 73% of students were able to identify at least one of the main coping skills presented

Do you feel your stress and anxiety levels increased since starting nursing school?  
37 responses



## Lessons Learned

- Education to on stress and anxiety
- Education on coping skills
- Mindfulness, physical activity/nutrition, music therapy, and mentorship
- Examples:
  - Music before exams
  - Mindfulness before exams
  - Campus green space and walking paths
  - College mentorship programs
- Present to a larger population
  - Multiple first year classes
  - Multiple grade levels (1st-4th year)
- Present to 1st year students and reevaluate in their 4th year
- Equal amount of pre and post surveys
- Decrease researcher subjective interpretation
  - Decrease number of extended responses; more select all with extended response

## References

Eyuboglu, G., Baykara, Z.G., Nurcan, C., Eyikara, N.D., Aydogan, S., Cifdaloz, B.U., Ozyildiz, A., Gunduz, C.S., Erdogan, B.C., Cakmak, N.C.S., Istek, N. 2021. Effect of music therapy on nursing student’s first objective structured clinical exams, anxiety levels and vital signs: A randomized controlled study. *Nurse Education Today*, 97, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2020.104687>

Schultchen, D., Reichenberger, J., Mitt, T., Weh, T., Smyth, J., Bleichert, J., & Pollatos, O. (2019). Bidirectional relationship of stress and affect with physical activity and healthy eating. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 24, 315-333. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjhp.12355>