

# The Usage of Stress Management Interventions

## Types of stress:

### Acute

Stress can be both positive and negative. Acute stress helps to react quickly to dangerous situations, but also helps to stay focused [1]. On the other hand, chronic stress will have a reverse effect and can even be bad for our health. Risks include cardiovascular disease [2], chronic illness [3], accelerated biological aging [4] and worse mental health [5]. Luckily there are also effective ways to manage stress levels. Methods, underpinned by research, include mindfulness [6], relaxation exercises [7], biofeedback

### Episodic

devices [8], progressive muscle relaxation [9] and breathing exercises [10]. These methods are integrated into many interventions accessible to the public. However, harmful stress is still a problem within our society, which suggests that these interventions are not effectively used. This begs the question: **Why don't people make use of stress management interventions and can the use of these interventions be stimulated?**

### Chronic

## Research setup:

To research this question a study was set up with a total of 35 participants. They were asked to install a stress management application if they did not make use of a stress management technique already. The two week study consisted of two groups, during which the first week was used as a baseline. During the second week the separate conditions were introduced and afterwards the results were gathered using a questionnaire.

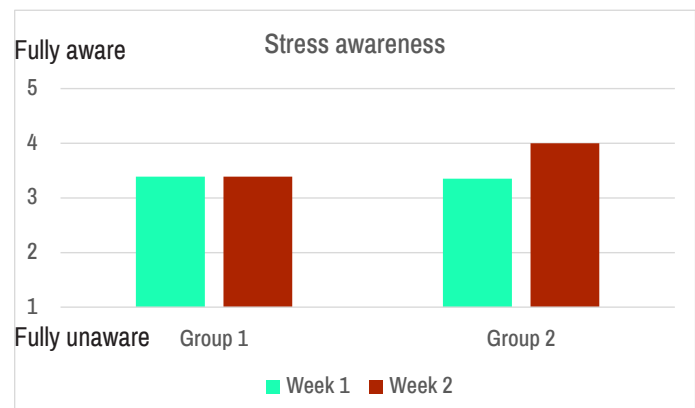
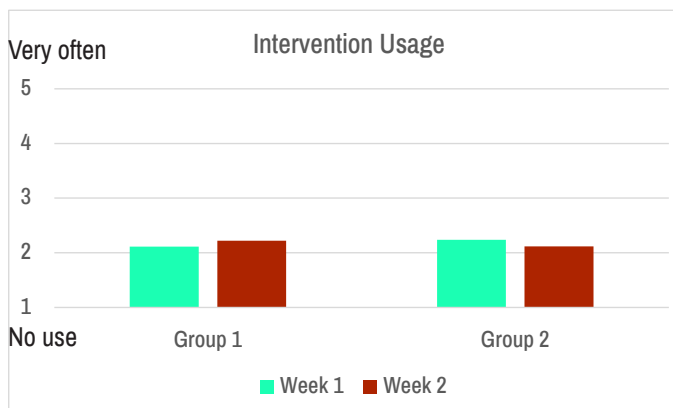
### Group 1: Persuasive group

This group was asked to read a short text each day during the second week, which aimed to stimulate intervention usage. This was done by targeting specific determinants of behavior [11].

### Group 2: Measurement group

This group was asked to complete a short questionnaire each day during the second week, which measured their subjective stress levels [12]. They were then presented with a graph showing the results.

## Results:



As can be seen in the first figure, there was **no** significant increase in intervention usage between the first and the second week for both groups. In the second figure it can be seen however, that for the second group, the measurement group, their stress awareness **increased** during the second week. Furthermore the participants were asked if they desired lower stress levels and these results were compared to their intervention usage. There was **no**

correlation found between these two factors. Participants were also asked for their reasons why **not to engage** in stress management. Over half of the participants stated that they felt "too busy" for stress management. Stress management is not always needed for everyone, however these responses highlight an important problem: when people are **stressed** they often take even **less time** to **deal** with their stress, with all the consequences this entails.

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