Causes and Effects of Stress in Adolescents

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The purpose of the experiment was to investigate and describe average stress levels, most common causes and effects of stress, trends in stress over time, and methods of stress management done in a seventeen-week double-blind study on adolescents aged 14-19. Participants were given an identification number and completed an online weekly journal, as well as a monthly Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14) survey for seventeen weeks. If participants went three weeks without submitting any data, they were dropped in order to maintain reliability of results. There were 72 participants that completed all surveys and journals for the full 17 weeks. The data show that average stress levels were just above a seven on a scale of ten on the PSS-14. Most common causes of stress were school-related, and most common effects were anxiety and a drop in grades. There was a positive correlation between weeks in the school year and stress levels, and about half of participants were managing stress in healthy, effective ways (crying, venting, exercise, etc.). 46 participants reported thoughts and feelings that could be considered suicidal. Eight percent of participants turned to self-harm to manage stress. These data indicate that stress and stress-management may be a source of concern in the health of adolescents. The data can be used to reform stress-management education in schools and help adolescents form healthy patterns. The data can also be used to help break the stigma about mental health and change opinions about stress-related disorders.

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