**Unit 9 Assignment: Final Project**

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HW410 Stress-Critical Issues in Management and Prevention

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# Throughout this paper, I will discuss stress management and prevention strategies, stressors, and a prevention program geared towards women. Women suffer from several different stressors daily, and these stressors are detrimental to women’s health. The program that is described will help to support women and teach them how to handle daily stressors. In addition, best practices and tools to support women will be discussed. I chose to design a program for women because of the strong women in my life and the desire to research and learn so I can share knowledge with them on how to mitigate stressful situation.

# Explained Stressors

Women experience stressors daily. Women experience stress from job security, kids, pregnancy, financial issues, relationships, driving, family, caregiving, overstimulation, and the overwhelming task of trying to do everything. According to the Cleveland Clinic (n.d.), women have an impossible task of taking on too many roles (Cleveland Clinic, n.d.). In today’s society, women are caregivers for children and many times for elderly parents while juggling full time jobs (Cleveland Clinic, n.d.). The mass amounts of responsibility women carry is overwhelming. Women are overwhelmed and can feel failure from not being able to meet these unrealistic expectations (Cleveland Clinic, n.d.). In addition, women are too busy nurturing to others and their needs that they forget about their own. Women are stressed out due to these high demands which is why the proposed program is necessary.

## Stressor Importance

The above stressors have a large impact on women’s health. Physical symptoms such as migraines, skin issues, fatigue, upset stomach, depression, anxiety, lack of focus, loneliness, and despair are all symptoms that women could experience as a result of their stressors (Cleveland Clinic, n.d.). In addition, women have higher rates of depression and anxiety than men and also face menstrual issues and pregnancy issues from high stress levels (Cleveland Clinic, n.d.). Women face specific gender-based stress which can contribute to low self-esteem and anxiety (Seaward, 2018). Stress also contributes to disease in women. Stress can contribute to several illnesses including cancer, ulcers, colitis, allergies, heart disease, and irritable bowel syndrome, to name a few (Seaward, 2018). Stress can alter molecular structure of neuropeptides and suppress proper functioning of leukocytes which can decrease their effectiveness (Seaward, 2018). This process results in the body becoming more susceptible to exogenous and endogenous antigens which ultimately result in immune dysfunction leading to disease (Seaward, 2018). Women are physically and mentally sick from stress.

Program Descriptions

There are several stress management techniques that can be used to support women in managing their stress. *Meditation* increases a practitioner’s concentration and awareness (Seaward, 2018). It promotes living in the present moment and is a proven relaxation technique (Seaward, 2018). Women are faced with so many stimuli and are overloaded with tasks causing a cluttered and stressful mind (Seaward, 2018). Meditation can help combat sensory overload and is a great practice for women to incorporate into their daily lives.

*Yoga* is also a great tool to combat stress. Yoga promotes the union of mind, body, and spirit and hatha yoga has been proven to decrease stress levels (Seaward, 2018). Yoga can increase muscle strength and longevity through asanas and is a complementary healing modality for stress and several chronic health related issues (Seaward, 2018). Yoga can improve sleep quality, chronic pain, flexibility, balance, and homeostasis in the body (Seaward, 2018). It is a great practice for women to incorporate into their daily lives.

*Mental imagery* is also a relaxation technique that women can use to combat stress. The purpose of mental imagery is to promote relaxation through relaxing thoughts (Seaward, 2018). During mental imagery, negative thoughts are replaced with peaceful thoughts and peaceful scenes that can trigger a relaxation response to stressors (Seaward, 2018). Stressful stimuli such as the overwhelming stimuli women encounter daily can be neutralized by mental imagery. Tranquil natural scenes can be used to promote relaxation through an individual’s imagery of tropical beaches, mountains, forests, or anywhere that the practitioner views as a relaxation destination (Seaward, 2018).

Program Implementation

The program that I would like to propose for women’s health and wellness is a virtual platform that offers yoga, mental imagery, and meditation. All these techniques have been proven to support stress reduction and relaxation, which is exactly what women need to reduce their stress and overstimulation. I propose to launch a virtual wellness website for women with virtual yoga, meditation, and mental imagery classes that are offered at various times throughout the day, so women have options on when to take part in classes.

During the mental imagery sessions, there will be trained instructors guiding the women through the imagery exercises. There will also be trained yoga and meditation instructors who offer virtual classes several times during the day for women. Women have so much going on in their lives so I’d like to make my priority **accessibility**. I’d like to offer classes every hour to fit women’s schedules. I’d also like there to be versatility with the classes; hatha yoga, vinyasa flow yoga, guided meditation, mindfulness meditation, mental imagery using different scenes and visualizations. These classes would be offered in several different increments as well (e.g. 15-minute, 30-minute, 60-minute).

Program Obstacles

I foresee several obstacles when marketing and launching the online platform. Marketing the program will be difficult and needed to reach a wide audience of women. Since the platform is virtual, women will need access to internet and a smart phone or computer to access the sessions. For low-income families and women, this could be a financial burden. I will also face challenges when women need more of a one-on-one setting. However, if I received an excess of feedback stating the women would like one-on-one sessions that is something I could slowly start to integrate into the program. I will also face challenges when seeking to hire the right mediation, yoga, and mental imagery instructors. I must make sure that they have proper credentials and are the best fit for the program. I may also come into issues when there is inclement weather in certain locations and the site is either down or there is no power. Online platforms also require some technical knowledge which could leave women without computer skills unable to access the sessions.

Health Professionals

There are several types of professionals that could support this program. I would need certified yoga instructors with extensive knowledge and background at teaching different yoga styles. They also must have experience using online platforms and have a professional background when virtually teaching. Additionally, meditation and mental imagery instructors and/or coaches would be needed to support this program. I would also love to have medical professionals available to review the program and offer their advice and advocate for the program. It would give the program and platform validity to have health care professionals review the site and give positive review and feedback. This would encourage women to seek out the resources they need and understand that the modalities are effective in treating their chronic stress.

Program Measurements

There are several ways to measure the efficacy of the program. I will need to collect reviews and feedback from the women participants. The feedback would entail answers to questions such as: How are you enjoying this program? Has this program seemed to lower your stress levels? Do you feel happier? Do you use these tools outside of the program sessions when you feel stressed? Have any of your vitals from your annual doctors’ visits improved? I would also be able to measure the success of the program through the commitment levels of members. For example, if someone signs up for the program and then leaves only after a few sessions then that will demonstrate that the program was not working for that person. If we do not have members that continue with their membership and cancel, that will show a lack of success and participants not having positive results. I also want to have medical professionals evaluate the program on a regular basis to get their insight on anything that could be improved. If the current program was a success, the website could be incorporated into workplaces, and additional types of modalities to combat stress could be added. The great thing about an online platform is the ability to reach a wide range of women.

Summary

In conclusion, the outlined program would be a wonderful resource for women to have. The program allows participants to find sessions that fit into their current lifestyle and offers a variety of time frames and offerings. Depending on the day, women may need different coping mechanisms. One day, a women may need to move her body through yoga and the next day need quiet and still meditation. Everyone is different and has different needs. Incorporating yoga, mental imagery, and meditation into an online platform will give the members a well-rounded program of stress reduction techniques. Women face so many challenges and take on so many roles throughout their lives. Women need a platform that is designed for them specifically, a program that tailors to the many roles and responsibilities taken on each day. Women may also feel more comfortable in a women’s program. The program designed for women will also support and encourage the idea of women supporting women.

**References**

Cleveland Clinic. (n.d.). *Women and Stress.* https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/5545-women-and-stress

Seaward, B. (2018). *Managing stress: Principles and strategies for health and well-being* (9th ed.). Jones & Bartlett Learning.