

**THE USE OF PLAY THERAPY MEDIUMS IN A STRESS
MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME WITH CORPORATE
EMPLOYEES**

by

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Dedicated to: Wilkie, Vickus and Chanté

SUMMARY

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There is a growing need for corporate employees to be able to manage their stress levels and use stress to their own, and to the organisation's, advantage. Various literature references show that the damage to the workplace and to the worker costs millions of rands annually. Organisations are loosing money because of employees who are not able to manage their stress levels. Employees often experience stress because of an excessive workload, a high expected work pace, difficult work schedules, role conflict, uncertainty regarding career security, poor interpersonal relationships and unpleasant working conditions and many more. This stress manifests in conflict, depression, absenteeism, headaches, hypertension, alcoholism, drug abuse and more which as a result, impacts the organisation's profitability due to decrease in productivity.

In this thesis, research was done regarding the use of play therapy mediums in a stress

management programme with corporate employees. The following research question was formulated: Will the use of play therapy mediums in a stress management programme for corporate employees, have a positive effect on their stress levels? The purpose of this stress management programme was to create greater awareness amongst corporate employees regarding the effects of stress on their lives and to indicate to them how they can go about managing stress to their advantage. The aim of the research was to use play therapy mediums in a stress management programme to enable corporate employees to become aware of, and to manage their stress levels. Play therapy mediums were therefore used to aid the de-stressing of the corporate employees and to facilitate greater awareness regarding the effects of stress on their lives.

The researcher applied the Gestalt Theory as theoretical framework for this study. This theory supports the notion of awareness as a tool that can be used by a person to be in control of his/her life. The Gestalt Theory as a theoretical framework emphasises the fact that healthy behaviour occurs once people reach a point where they can regulate the emotional state that they are in. The literature research has shown that when this comes about, people experience a feeling of unity and integration in their lives. It is also concerned with the total existence of a human being. The people are addressed as whole and integrated beings, who strive to gain balance in an ever-changing environment. The Gestalt Theory is holistic and can form the theoretical framework for work with any type of individual and has been used effectively with individuals, groups and in teaching.

Research was done within the corporate environment. The researcher developed a stress management programme which was presented to corporate employees. The aim was to establish whether the programme would have an effect on their stress levels and whether play therapy mediums can be used successfully with corporate employees during a training programme to reduce their stress levels and to improve their awareness of the causes of

stress in their lives and their reactions to stressors in their environment. This stress management programme served as an intervention because it could enhance the functioning of the corporate employees with regard to their stress levels and also their general functioning within the organisation and in their personal lives. Pre- and post-test results were compared to evaluate the effect of the programme.

Play therapy is traditionally used with children but relevant literature and the researcher's own experience from the research has shown remarkable results in the use of play therapy mediums with adults. The literature as well as the empirical study showed that play itself has a number of therapeutic elements that produce behaviour change. Furthermore play also offers opportunities to re-live past stressful events and the emotions associated with them in a safe and therapeutic environment.

The research findings indicated that stress levels improved after the stress management programme was presented to the corporate employees. From the research findings the researcher developed a model as a guideline for a stress management programme using play therapy mediums in the corporate environment.

Key Words:

Play therapy mediums

Awareness

Corporate employees

Gestalt Theory

Organisation

Stress

Stress management programme

Employee assistance programme

OPSOMMING

THE USE OF PLAY THERAPY MEDIUMS IN A STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME WITH CORPORATE EMPLOYEES

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Toenemend bestaan daar behoefte onder korporatiewe werknemers om in staat te wees om hulle stresvlakke te bestuur asook om stres tot hulle eie voordeel en tot voordeel van die maatskappy aan te wend. Verskeie literatuur bevestig dat die nadeel van stres vir die werkgewer asook vir die werker miljoene rande jaarliks beloop as gevolg van die feit dat werknemers nie in staat is om hulle stresvlakke te bestuur nie. Werknemers ervaar dikwels stres weens hoë werkslading, 'n hoë verwagte werkspas, moeilike werkskedules, rolkonflik, onsekerheid oor loopbaansekuriteit, swak interpersoonlike verhoudinge, onaangename werksomstandighede, en vele meer. Hierdie stres manifesteer in konflik, depressie, afwesigheid van werk, hoofpyne, hipertensie, alkoholisme, dwelmmisbruik, en nog meer, wat tot gevolg het dat die produktiwiteit binne die maatskappy afneem.

In hierdie verhandeling is navorsing gedoen oor die rol van speltherapie-mediums in 'n stresbestuurprogram met korporatiewe werknemers. Die volgende navorsingsvraag was

geformuleer: Sal die gebruik van speltherapie mediums in 'n stresbestuurprogram vir korporatiewe werknemers 'n positiewe effek op die stresvlakke van die werknemers hê? Die doel van die stresbestuurprogram was om groter bewustheid onder korporatiewe werknemers aangaande die effek van stres op hulle lewens te kweek, en om aan te dui hoe hulle te werk kan gaan om die stres in hulle lewens tot hulle eie voordeel te bestuur. Die doel van die navorsing was om speltherapie mediums in 'n stresbestuurprogram te gebruik om die korporatiewe werknemer in staat te stel om bewus te word van sy/haar stresvlakke sodat hy/sy dit doeltreffend kan bestuur. Speltherapie-mediums was derhalwe gebruik om ontspanning te bewerkstellig en om groter bewustheid oor die effek van stres by die korporatiewe werknemer te kweek.

Die navorser het die Gestaltteorie as teoretiese raamwerk vir die studie gebruik. Hierdie teorie ondersteun die konsep van bewustheid as hulpmiddel wat 'n persoon kan gebruik om in beheer van sy/haar lewe te kom. Die Gestaltteorie as teoretiese raamwerk beklemtoon die feit dat gesonde gedrag voorkom wanneer mense 'n stadium bereik waar hulle hul emosionele toestand kan reguleer. Die literatuurstudie het getoon dat wanneer dit gebeur, persone 'n gevoel van eenheid en integrasie in hulle lewens ervaar. Dit is ook gemoeid met die totale bestaan van die individu. Mense word in geheel as geïntegreerde wesens aangespreek, wat daarna streef om balans in 'n voortdurende veranderende omgewing te bekom. Die Gestaltteorie is holisties en kan die teoretiese raamwerk vir enige tipe individu vorm. Dit is reeds met vrug toegepas onder individue, groepe, asook in onderrig.

Navorsing is binne die korporatiewe omgewing gedoen en 'n stresbestuurprogram is ontwikkel wat aan korporatiewe werknemers aangebied is. Die doel hiervan was om vas te stel of die program 'n impak op hulle stresvlakke sou hê, asook of speltherapie mediums doeltreffend met korporatiewe werknemers gedurende 'n opleidingsprogram gebruik kan

word. Hierdie stresbestuurprogram het gedien as intervensie aangesien dit die funksionering van die korporatiewe werknemers ten opsigte van hulle stresvlakke en algemene funksionering binne die organisasie en hulle persoonlike lewens kan verhoog. Voor- en na-toets resultate was vergelyk om die effek van die program te evalueer.

Speltherapie word tradisioneel met kinders gebruik maar relevante literatuur asook die navorsers se persoonlike ondervinding het merkwaardige resultate met die gebruik van speltherapie mediums onder volwassenes getoon. Die literatuur, asook die empiriese studie het getoon dat spel opsigself 'n aantal terapeutiese elemente bevat wat gedragsverandering meebring. Verder bied spel ook 'n geleentheid aan die volwassene om stresvolle gebeure van die verlede te kan herleef en om die emosies wat daarmee gepaard gaan in 'n veilige en terapeutiese omgewing te kan ervaar.

Die navorsingsresultate het aangedui dat stresvlakke verbeter het nadat die stresbestuurprogram vir die korporatiewe werknemers aangebied is. Vanuit die navorsingsresultate het die navorsers 'n model ontwikkel as riglyn vir 'n stresbestuurprogram waar gebruik gemaak word van speltherapie mediums in die korporatiewe omgewing.

Sleutel Woorde:

Speltherapie-mediums

Bewustheid

Korporatiewe werknemers

Gestaltteorie

Organisasie

Stres

Stresbestuurprogram

Werknemerhulpprogram

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