

Using Music as a Form of Self-Care for Music and Non-Music Undergraduate Students

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## **Abstract**

The prevalence and frequency of stress within the lives of undergraduate students throughout America has been on the rise for several years. There has also been an increase in psychological, cognitive, physiological, and emotional disorders and illness among this population. This study sought to gain a deeper understanding of the use of music within the self-care routines of undergraduate music and non-music students. In partnership with Dr. Lisa Summer's MT-BC, LMHC self-care workshop held on October 10, 2019, pre-workshop and post-workshop surveys were sent out electronically to participants to collect statistical data on the use of self-care among these students and whether or not students already used music as a part of their self-care routines. The study found that there needs to be a higher focus on self-care education within college and university curriculums. It also found that many undergraduate students already use music as a form of self-care.

**Key Words:** *Burnout, Music Majors, Non-Music Majors, Perceived Stress Levels, Self-Care, Undergraduate Students*

## Using Music as a Form of Self-Care for Music and Non-Music Undergraduate Students

### **Introduction**

Undergraduate students, often, face many levels of stressors. These stressors can stem from academic coursework, field work, extracurricular activities, personal or familial relationships, parental expectations, and time management (Fiore, 2018). For many students, all these external expectations and pressures can easily pile up, causing immense stress. This can eventually lead to career burnout, as well as mental health challenges and poor self-image. Oftentimes, colleges and universities do not have the necessary counseling and educational resources that undergraduate students need in order to seek help for their stress. On top of not having the necessary resources to seek help, students are unlikely to reach out for help when they are struggling with their psychological, physiological, cognitive, and/or emotional wellbeing, due to stigmas in society against mental illnesses.

The high cost of mental health treatments, such as inpatient facilities and outpatient therapies, are also contributing factors as to why undergraduate students may not seek help. Music has a natural ability to help people relax and reflect on their emotions. Music listening can help people connect words to their emotions. Music's tempo, timbre, melody, and harmony all have effects on music's influence on the human brain. Group drumming can aid individuals in releasing tension related to work or school. In *Use of Music Therapy for Enhancing Self-Esteem among Academically Stressed Adolescents*, it is shown that music therapy can improve ones' self-esteem and self-efficacy (Sharma, 2012). Students also may not be educated on self-care techniques and the importance of setting aside time for oneself.

Although there has been a shift in focus in today's society on the importance of self-care, this shift has not reached the classrooms of higher education institutions. Studies that have been conducted on self-care and stress management focus more so on those working professionally. While these studies are insightful and provide evidence to back up the importance of self-care in one's everyday life, their focus on professional populations does not fully relate back to the ways that undergraduate students feel and process stress. The stress induced from working in a business office differs greatly from the stress that an academic classroom can cause a student. Furthermore, the few studies that focus on college and university students are mostly focused on graduate-level students.

There are, however, some studies that focus both on undergraduate and graduate students. *A Survey of Music Therapy Students' Perceived Stress and Self-Care Practices*, by Carolyn Moore, et. al, included undergraduate and graduate students in their study, but recognized that there were bound to be differences in the academic experiences of the two collegiate levels (Moore, 2019). Again, there are some similarities to undergraduate and graduate student's stress, but there are also critical differences. Graduate students have already gone through higher education and have a basic understanding of what factors contribute to their perceived stress levels. Undergraduate students, on the other hand, are experiencing higher education for the first time and are being exposed to stressors that they may have never encountered in high school, such as being away from home for the first time and having more personal responsibilities. One study has found that undergraduate music therapy students tend to have, on average, higher stress levels compared undergraduate students in other fields, but there is a lack of research to compare perceived stress levels of music therapy students to the perceived stress levels of undergraduate students in other music fields (Moore, 2019).

Additionally, the studies that do discuss the use of music as a self-care tactic are not written in regards of young adults, let alone undergraduate students. *Erin Fox, MA, MT-BC* and *Cathy H. Mckinney, Ph.D, MT-BC, LCAT*, conducted a study using the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) as a self-care technique, but it specifically focuses on music therapy interns (Fox 2016). Similar to studies that primarily focus on stress and those working in professional fields, studies on self-care center their research on how professionals can use music in their self-care. These studies, too, tend to focus on using music in therapeutic settings. This makes it appear as though one can only receive the therapeutic benefits of music by attending individual and group music therapy sessions. While attending music therapy can be a way to incorporate music into one's self-care routine, it is not the only way that people can benefit from music's therapeutic power.

Having a steady self-care routine can help students maintain acceptable levels of stress. By maintaining their stress, students will be able to prevent themselves from reaching high levels of stress, which could lead to burnout. Getting used to following a self-care routine as an undergraduate student will help students when they graduate and enter the professional world. When music is listened to with the idea of relaxation in mind, there is a decrease in overall stress levels in the listener (Linnemann, et. Al., 2015). Setting aside time to listen to music for relaxation purposes could potentially prevent heightened stress levels in students. In addition to the lack of research on self-care, there are few articles written on the ways that music, specifically, can be used as a form of self-care.

A variety of ways that undergraduate students can use music to lower their perceived and actual stress levels, prevent burnout, and connect more deeply with their inner selves, including music listening, music and imagery, and group drumming, will be discussed. The researcher will

investigate the prevalence of self-care among undergraduate students and how, or if, undergraduate students use music in their self-care routines. This study will also look into the ways in which music can be used as a form of self-care in music and non-music undergraduate students. For undergraduate music students, the focus will primarily be on how students can separate their academic music making from making or listening purely for enjoyment and/or relaxation purposes. For non-music undergraduate students, this study will address the power of music and its benefits as a form of self-care, even for those with no musical training.

By not addressing stress, mental health issues, and/or physical health issues, undergraduate students are putting themselves at risk for future career burnout, mental illnesses, and irreversible physical injuries. Stress can impact students' abilities to keep up with both course work and maintaining relationships. This can lead to isolation, as many college and university students try to hide their struggles from their peers and professors. By isolating oneself instead of seeking out help from others, students set themselves up to have low self-esteem and self-image and high levels of self-blame for their struggles.

The first step in addressing one's self-care needs is to be self-aware. Having an awareness of oneself is beneficial since it enables people to accept their flaws, as well as take pride in their accomplishments. By being self-aware, undergraduate students will have a more positive self-image, thus reducing the amount of self-blame and self-doubt they may face due to stress. Self-awareness is also crucial in preventing career burnout, as it gives the individual insight into their weaknesses, allowing them to strengthen areas or skill that they are not yet proficient at. Music and imagery can be used to help one grasp a better understanding of their inner emotions that may be behind the realm of consciousness. The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music has been found to help professional music therapists grow personally and

clinically, helping them to have a better sense of mind-body connection and overall acceptance of their emotions (Fox, 2016).

It will specify the significance of having and maintaining a self-care routine for undergraduate students and how music can be incorporated into one's self-care routine. This study will also discuss the various ways that music can be used as a self-care technique, and how having a proper self-care routine that incorporates music can help undergraduate students prevent future career burnout, as well as reach academic success.

Research was conducted with the purpose of identifying the various ways that undergraduate students can use music as a form of self-care. The researcher sought to find what self-care resources undergraduate students are already using within their personal self-care routines. The researcher also sought to gain a better understanding of undergraduate students' perceived stress levels, as well as factors that contribute to student stress, and students' views on self-care. In order to answer the research questions, the researcher conducted an electronic survey with undergraduate music, music education, and music therapy students. Two surveys were distributed, the first being dispersed before Dr. Lisa Summer's Self-Care Workshop on October 10, 2019 and the second survey was dispersed immediately after the workshop ended.

The data collected from this study was analyzed to find commonalities between students' perceived stress, the factors causing their stress, and whether or not they felt that the music used in the workshop helped to lower their stress levels. The findings of the surveys, in conjunction with the evidence found through literature review will provide evidence that stress negatively impacts undergraduate students' psychological, physiological, cognitive, and emotional well-being. From analyzing literature within the fields of music therapy, psychology, and medicine, the researcher found that there is a gap in research pertaining to undergraduates, self-care, and/or

stress. Previous studies that have conducted research on this population have found that students benefit from self-care education. It also proves that there is a need to study the effects of stress on undergraduates and how self-care education could potentially prevent future career burnout in soon-to-be professionals. This study sought to gain a better understanding on the role of self-care in undergraduate students' lives. It found that undergraduates are, to an extent, aware of the importance and need of self-care, but that the students would benefit from self-care education within their course curriculums. Many students already participate in self-care activities and are eager towards learning how to use music as a self-care technique.

This research study is important to the field of music therapy because it is vital to have a proper self-care routine and to take care of oneself, in order to provide clients with the best possible care. At the undergraduate level, music therapy students are required to take an intense, multidisciplinary course load, including courses focusing in music, psychology, health and behavioral sciences, and music therapy methods and treatment practices. Students must also complete clinical hours out in the field. With all of these responsibilities, it is easy for students to become stressed and/or burnout, making them unable to properly care for their clients and themselves. There is little literature that specifically focuses on stress and self-care for music therapy students. This research project will bring light to the stress undergraduate students are under and will, in turn, encourage music therapy programs, students, and professors to implement stronger discussion of the importance of self-care in students' everyday lives.

This study will also help those who have no musical training gain a better understanding of the significance of music and how they, too, can incorporate music into their lives. It will provide undergraduate non-music students with information regarding the therapeutic influence of music, as well as music's effects on one's psychological, physiological, cognitive, and



emotional wellbeing. It will also provide undergraduate students of all majors with resources for self-care techniques.

## **Definitions**

The following terms will be used throughout the study and thesis.

- **Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM):** A music therapy technique created by Helen Bonny, that involves drawing while listening to music. The created drawing is meant to reflect one's unconscious feelings, helping the person to self-reflect.
- **Burnout:** Loss or decrease in energy, due to overexerting oneself physically, psychologically, cognitively, or emotionally
- **Perceived Stress Level:** The stress level that an individual feels he/she/they are currently experiencing
- **Self-Awareness:** One's ability to connect with, understand, and act upon their conscious and unconscious emotions and well-being
- **Self-Care:** Techniques/activities used to take care of one's physical, psychological, cognitive, and/or emotional well-being
- **Undergraduate Music Student:** A student attending a college or university on track to graduate with a Bachelor's degree in a music-related field
- **Undergraduate Non-Music Student:** A student attending a college or university who is intending to graduate with a degree in a field outside of music.

Time restraints limited the data collection process of the study. As the researcher only had one semester to formulate the thesis topic, complete a literature review, conduct a study, analyze the study's findings, and finalize the thesis, there was a limited time available to study could collect data. Due to time restraints, the researcher was unable to conduct a pilot study to

ensure that the survey platform would work without any technological errors. The scope of participants is also limited, as the study was conducted on-campus and through a single course. The study size was small and limited to undergraduate music, music education, and music therapy majors.

The surveys were conducted on a voluntary basis and all surveys were submitted anonymous via the Google Forms platform. Before conducting the survey, a research proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Anna Maria College for approval. No personal or identifying information was collected from participants. The only people who had access to the survey responses were the researcher, the project's subject advisor, Dr. Lisa Summer, and Anna Maria College's IRB. Before answering the survey questions, participants were given an information sheet. The information sheet explained the purpose of the study and included the study procedure and the researcher's contact information. Participants were able to ask the principle researcher any questions they had about the study and their role as a participant. The information sheet also informed participants that they could skip any questions that they felt uncomfortable answering.

## **Literature Review**

There are many different factors that can cause undergraduate students to have high stress levels. Chronic stress, which is commonly associated with being a college or university student, can lead to physical and psychological issues. This, in turn, puts students at risk for future career burnout, mental illnesses, and irreversible physical injuries. Furthermore, there is a stigma against seeking help from others that prevents many undergraduate students from reaching out to peers, professors, and mental health practitioners when they are struggling. Introducing students to the topic of self-care and educating them on its benefits will provide students with the resources that are critical for creating and maintaining a healthy, well-rounded professional in whatever field they are pursuing.

### **Undergraduate Stress**

Stress of all levels is prevalent among undergraduate students across all majors and backgrounds. In an article published in the Journal of American College Health, Dr. Casey Straud and Dr. Mary McNaughton-Cassill discuss the relationship between proactive coping on undergraduates' self-blame and stress levels. According to the article, about 75% of college students report having moderate stress (Straud, 2019). Moderate to severe levels of prolonged stress can lead to emotional, physical, and psychological issues. High levels of stress in college students can be linked to a decrease in academic performance, hardships with adjustments, a decline in retention rates, and struggles in regard to academic success (Straud, 2019). There was a correlation found between higher levels of stress and increased levels of self-blame. Lower levels of stress were recorded when higher levels of proactive coping were reported.

The study found that those who participate in higher levels of proactive coping possibly counteract the effects of self-blame, which could in turn lower their stress levels, even if they do have some form of self-blame. Dr. Straud and Dr. McNaughton-Cassill found that proactive coping promotes the overall wellness of individuals and leads to lower levels of negative affect due to self-blame and stress (Straud, 2019). Straud and McNaughton's study supports the idea that high stress can negatively impact college students' academic performance and overall wellbeing, as well as lead to future career burnout and that, through self-care education, stress levels can be decreased and/or maintained.

Additional support for the need for proper coping strategies to reduce and prevent stress is found in a study conducted on college students in the Dominican Republic (Thomas, 2017). Thomas et al were influenced by Mencia-Ripley and Vargas' 2011 study that focused on risky behaviors among college students. Participants for Thomas et al's study all attended a private university in the Dominican Republic and took place over the 2011 academic year. Participants completed self-administered surveys which asked questions regarding their coping mechanisms and their academic overall academic success. The study found that students use adaptive coping strategies, including exercise and listening to music, as well as maladaptive coping strategies, such as substance abuse and cigarette smoking. It also found that students who were in good academic standing were five times as likely to use adaptive coping strategies over maladaptive strategies. Music listening was one of the most reported adaptive strategies. Consequently, Thomas et al state that the stress-coping strategies that one uses is significantly attributed to social and life stage factors of the individual (2019). Students would benefit from having an on-campus recreation center that focuses on educating them on coping with stress in healthy ways,

like exercising or listening to music listening. It supports the researcher's theory that music can be an effective tool coping strategy for stress.

Mamta Sharma and Tanmeet of Punjabi University in Pakistan further extend the topic of stress in adolescents by providing pertinent information on the long-term effects on one's body, particularly when stress begins during adolescence (2012). By not properly dealing with stress, students are at risk of developing psychological, social, and/or emotional issues later in their lives (Sharma, 2012). Sharma and Tanmeet specifically focused their research on adolescents with academic stress. The study's main focus was to collect data on the effectiveness of music therapy to boost self-esteem and lower stress. There was a direct correlation found between music therapy participation and reduction in stress and increasing self-esteem. While this study was conducted on adolescents, many of the academic stressors, including parental and self-expectations, coincide with the stressors that college students face. The study, however, focuses specifically on using music as self-care and self-regulation within a therapeutic setting with a music therapist, rather than on the ways that individuals can use music at home, on their own. Although this study specifically focuses on music used in the context of music therapy, it assists the idea of music being used for the purposes of stress management.

Stress also has a profound effect on mental health. Around 57.7 million persons in the United States 18 years of age or older have some form of mental illness and over half of that 57.7 million have two or more mental disorders (Lee, 2013). Having a mental illness can contribute to the stress that an individual may feel, as they may not be seeking the necessary treatment to help them cope with their disorder. These individuals may also have difficulty with choosing appropriate, adaptive coping skills and are susceptible to falling into maladaptive coping habits, such as substance abuse, self-injurious behaviors, and/or drug addiction. Lee et al's literature

review discussed nine articles that primarily analyze the effects of music therapy as a stand-alone treatment and music therapy combined with standard care for mentally ill adults (2013). Again, the idea of music therapy being a beneficial therapeutic modality for relieving and managing stress of individuals supports the researcher's claim that music can be reputable technique for one's self-care routine.

Self-care is a pertinent tool in helping students prevent and cope with stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout. *Teaching self-care: The utilization of self-care in social work practicum to prevent compassion fatigue, burnout, and vicarious trauma* encouraged social work programs to implement a deeper discussion on the importance of self-care in the coursework of social work students in their field practicum (Lewis, 2019). Because students need to have resiliency to prevent burnout and secondary traumatic stress from their clients, they must practice positive coping skills (Lewis, 2019). The study reflects on how the incorporation of self-care education and the implementation of self-care strategies into students' lives during internship affected their overall outlook on life and their ability to balance all of their personal and professional needs. This provides reassurance that including self-care education within undergraduate curriculums can lead students towards becoming healthier, more sustainable professionals once students graduate.

### **Role of Self-Care in Undergraduate Music Majors**

Undergraduate students majoring in music are subject to stressors that students of other majors are not necessarily faced with. As musicians, undergraduate music majors are at risk of developing playing-related injuries from overuse, including nerve damage, muscle injuries, and central nervous system disorders (Gooding, 2018). Hearing loss is also common among musicians, as well as an increased risk of developing psychological disorders, such as depression

and anxiety disorders (Gooding, 2018). Music therapy students and professionals are also at risk of developing vocal problems due to extensive use of their vocal chords and musculoskeletal disorders rooted from piano, guitar, and percussion playing. Interestingly, eye strain and headaches in guitarist has a strong correlation to the stressful work environment that music therapists often practice within (Gooding, 2018). Because music therapists work so closely with their client(s), both students and professionals are at increased risk of developing career burnout and compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue stems from the secondhand stress healthcare professionals can get from listening to their client's discuss traumatic experiences they have endured (Gooding, 2018)

Incorporating an effective self-care routine can help musicians and music therapists prevent the development of these physical, social, psychological, and emotional injuries and disorders (Gooding, 2018). "Self-care involves taking responsibility for your own health and well-being", so including more time for self-reflection can positively affect an individual's health (Lori, 2018). It is also important for music students, regardless of whether they are receiving a degree in general music, music education, or music therapy, to leave time to make music just for fun. The effects that creating music just for fun has on an individual's health provides evidence that music, when used by individuals within an everyday setting, is capable of relieving symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression.

There is a significant lack of research on the need for self-care among undergraduate music therapy students, as most research has primarily focused on the need for self-care among professional music therapists. *A Survey of Music Therapy Students' Perceived Stress and Self-Care Practices* highlights that undergraduate music therapy students report having stress levels that are higher than those of the average adult living in America, as well as higher stress levels

compared to undergraduate students of other majors (Moore, 2019). Moreover, there is a steady link between lower engagement in self-care and self-awareness and high perceived stress levels (Moore, 2019). As previously stated, the excessive amounts of stress music therapy students are under can lead to career burnout, both during their undergraduate studies and in their professional career (Moore, 2019).

To prevent burnout, self-care techniques can be utilized. 350 students completed self-care and perceived stress questionnaires that enabled data to be collected, which was then analyzed to determine the relationship between health self-care practices and perceived stress levels. Marion Kaiser's Master's thesis *An Exploration of Creative Arts-Based Self-Care Practices among Music Therapy Students* also sheds light on the need for literature focused on the need for self-care. Kaiser's study included undergraduate students who were not board-certified by the Certification Board of Music Therapy and who gained their knowledge of self-care from their music therapy programs, internships, and clinical practicums (2017). Prior research has proven that professionals in the healthcare and helping professions benefit from the use of music as self-care, as well as that music therapy students must have an understanding of their own relationship and leave space for their own creative processes to be practiced (Kaiser, 2017). Leaving space for the creative process can be particularly beneficial for students to incorporate into their routines before entering the professional world. Kaiser found that undergraduate students who participated in music therapy sessions reported higher self-awareness and more opportunities for self-exploration (2017). This study concluded that there is a need for music therapy students to use and create music for themselves and their self-care routines, as it gives them a creative outlet to express the stress and anxiety of clinical work with clients (2017). Having a steady self-care routine is also recommended because it can provide a preventative measure against stress and



burnout (Kaiser, 2017). Rather than waiting to use self-care techniques until they have reached high stress levels or have begun feeling the effects of burnout, self-care should be incorporated when the student is in sound mind and body to receive the best results possible. Therefore, the researcher of this thesis is able to defend the need of self-care among undergraduate music students, especially for students completing internships or student teaching.

The importance of self-care for music therapy students, in particular, has begun to be noted throughout music therapy programs and professional music therapists in the United States. There is, however, an insufficient amount of curriculum to suitably educate students on why self-care is important, why they should develop a steady self-care routine during their undergraduate careers, and tools and techniques that they can use within their self-care routines. Noted in Fox and McKinney's *The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music for Music Therapy Interns: A survey of Effects on Professional and Personal Growth*, few music therapy programs require students to have their own personal therapist and fewer programs mandate that students take part in self-care and self-growth activities (2016). There is a lack of communication between music therapy programs and the students, which significantly influenced the topic of this thesis. Research has found that, "It is imperative that these students 'live with awareness of [their] own creative process as well as that of [the] clients... It is only through intimate knowledge of this process that we are prepared to facilitate this process for others'" (Fox, 2016). There is a strong belief in the necessity for students to self-reflect, yet most music therapy programs do not provide substantial opportunities for students to help and physical, psychological, or emotional support, whether that be from self-care education, experiential, or personal therapy. The lack of self-care curriculum within music degree programs, although colleges and universities seem to

understand the importance of self-reflection among students, shows that this is an important area which would greatly benefit from further research.

### **Using Music as a Non-Music Undergraduate Student**

Music can also have beneficial effects on students who are studying topics unrelated to music. All undergraduate students, regardless of major or concentration, are susceptible to a variety of factors that can heighten their stress levels and lead to burnout. Jennifer Fiore, PhD, MT-BC of Western Michigan University conducted a pilot study which investigated the effects of online receptive music on college and university student's anxiety and stress. Fiore noted that "Managing family and personal relationships; parental expectations related to school; time management between school, work, and leisure activities; and pressure for high academic achievement" are some of the many factors that cause stress among college and university students, with decreased academic performance was influenced by "stress (32.5%), anxiety (23.4%), sleep difficulties (22.2%), and work (14.7%) (2018). Female students showcase more academically related stress than males and respond more physiological responses, such as sweating and trembling, to stress (Fiore, 2018). Results indicated that online pre-composed receptive music significantly lowers students' stress and anxiety (Fiore, 2018). Melody was the biggest factor in stress and anxiety reduction, with tempo also being an important factor. Further research, including Joseph Lingham and Tores Theorell's study *Self-selected "favorite" stimulative and sedative music listening - how does familiar and preferred music listening affect the body?"* have examined the effects of different musical stimuli on the body. Lingham and Theorell's study aimed to collect data on the effects of preferred stimulative and sedative music on psycho-physiological and emotional responses. Results indicate that stimulative music heightened physiological responses, like heart and respiratory rates, that is concurrent with

previous experiments by other researchers. Lingham and Theorell's results, however, showcased some significant differences from previous research, they found that self-selected sedative music also increase heartbeat (2009). This indicates that the style and beat of music can be used to either energize or relax students. Understanding the effects that style and beat have on the body helped the researcher to provide readers with a basis on how to select music for self-care, for relaxation, and/or stimulation.

The techniques and strategies discussed in Fox and McKinney's study on the use of the Bonny Method of Guided Music and Imagery (GIM) on professional and personal growth among music therapy interns are also relevant to students interning in other fields. Undergraduate students of all majors can be positively affected by attending personal therapy. Non-music undergraduate students can also gain a stronger self-awareness, confidence, and motivation, as well as decreased stress levels, through the use of GIM. *Coping with Work-Related Stress through Guided Imagery and Music (GIM): Randomized Controlled Trial* also supports the use of GIM for self-care purposes, highlighting that the best results occur when GIM is used as an early intervention for stress prevention (Beck, 2015). This article enabled the researcher of this thesis to provide an analysis of GIM and its benefits within self-care.

Songwriting has also been found to be an effective tool for self-expression and self-reflection among undergraduate students (Zhang, 2019). In her Master's thesis, Jue Zhang ran a songwriting experiential with four individuals who had little to no musical experience. Results of the study indicated that songwriting gave participants a way to express their stress and challenges. Writing the song and overcoming the challenges of the songwriting process helped participants feel a sense of accomplishment. Zhang's study provided evidence to support the use of songwriting as an effective self-care and self-awareness activity for non-music students.

A considerable amount of research has been conducted on the effectiveness of music as a form of self-care among students entering the medical field. Those studying to be social workers, teachers, as well as those working a nine-to-five job in an office setting can also benefit from using music as a form of self-care. Barry Bittman et al (2003), James R. Cheek et al (2003), and Jonas Vaag et al (2013) have all conducted research related to the effectiveness of music in a variety of professional settings.

*Recreational Music-Making: A Cost- Effective Group Interdisciplinary Strategy for Reducing Burnout and Improving Mood States in Long-Term Care Workers* examined the clinical and economic effects of Recreational Music-making (RMM) on burnout and mood dimension rates among those working in long-term care (Bittman, 2003). Bittman states, “Negative mood has a major impact on the delivery of quality care” and hypothesized that a set of six cost-effective RMM sessions would diminish burnout symptoms and mood disturbance in long-term care workers (2003). Results proved Bittman’s hypothesis that RMM substantially reduces personal barriers faced by long-term care workers that can lead to burnout and/or leaving the field (2003). There is a clear correlation between dissatisfaction and the need for efficacious self-care and coping strategies, with data reporting that high levels of self-respect lowers burnout symptoms (2003). Bittman’s study also indicates that RMM can be a cost-effective intervention to decrease the amount employee turnaround within skilled care facilities (2003). It is possible, based on Bittman’s study, that using RMM as an undergraduate student can prevent future job dissatisfaction and burnout.

*Using Music Therapy Techniques to Treat Teacher Burnout* discusses the need of self-care within the teaching profession and how music therapy can be a useful self-care tool. Approximately 60% of teachers report having high levels of stress and at least 30% of teachers

have symptoms of burnout (Cheek, 2003). Chronic stress leads to physical symptoms that can push individuals towards burnout. The participants were split into four groups (two groups for each school) and with each school having a combination of music therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and the other group only receiving CBT without music therapy (Cheek, 2003). The teachers in the music therapy group had lower levels of burnout symptoms than teachers that only received CBT. This article also goes into the rates of burnout in traditional versus reformed schools. Cheek found that 54% of teachers at traditional schools said that they would not return to teaching, if given the choice, whereas only 24% of teachers at reform schools would leave the teaching profession (2003). By increasing the amount of self-care within one's daily routine, students studying education can prevent burning out once they are working professionally, further supporting the use of music as self-care among students seeking to work in non-music related fields.

In Norway, workplace environments are making changes to incorporate more psychosocial interventions for their employees. *Sound of well-being - choir singing as an intervention to improve well-being among employees in two Norwegian county hospitals* compared data on work environment, psychological factors, and perceived health among one group of workers who participated in a "Sound of Well-Being" choir and workers who did not participate in the choir (Vaag, 2013). There were high levels of organizational commitment and work engagement found in those who participated in the choir (Vaag, 2013). Singing in a choir could be a way for students to develop a stronger sense of organization and commitment to their work, which would benefit them when they enter the professional world. Vaag's research provided evidence of choir singing being beneficial for self-care purposes. It also showcases an easy way that colleges and universities throughout the country can provide supportive

Bryanna C. Tobin defends the use of music as self-care for non-music undergraduate students in her senior thesis *The Use of Music as Self-Care for Non-Music Major Undergraduate College Students: Observations of Stress Management and Music Use*. Tobin found that there is a strong correlation between the use of music as self-care and stress management and overall positive life experiences (2018). Research was conducted through an online survey and found that music listening is used by many non-music students in various ways. This includes the use of music to feel good, improve one's mood, and emotional release.

### **Musical Self-Care Resources and Techniques**

Music can be used in a variety of ways to promote wellness and prevent or reduce stress and burnout symptoms in individuals. It also has the ability to help individuals self-reflect and gain a better sense of self-awareness. It is important to note that the characteristics of music, including tempo, melody, and whether the music is random or selected by the listener have a substantial effect on the ways a particular song will affect one's physiological, psychological, and emotional states. When selecting music for self-care purposes, individuals should determine whether they are looking to be energized or relaxed, so that they can make appropriate music choices to promote their overall goal. Music's accessibility, as well as cost-effectiveness make it easy to incorporate music into one's self-care routine (Linnemann, 2015). Music therapy, Guided Imagery and Music, recreational music making, singing, and group drumming can all be used as a form of self-care.

Linnemann et al's study, *Music listening as a means of stress reduction in daily life*, examined the effects of music listening on stress. Within this study, it was concluded that music listening reduces stress (Linnemann, 2015). It was noted that when music was listened to for the reason of relaxation, there was a significant decrease in stress. As previously mentioned, whether

music was self-selected or unfamiliar effects the efficacy in reducing stress. Listening to preferred music elicits different responses than listening to less preferred or unfamiliar music (Lingham, 2015). This is also true in regards to stimulative versus sedative music. If students are looking for a means of relaxation and stress reduction, they should listen to sedative music, which includes music that is slow in tempo, uses repetitive rhythms, and incorporates simple, stepwise melody lines (Lingham, 2009). In contrast, if students are looking for an energy or mood boost, they should listen to stimulative music (2009). Stimulative music includes music consists of music that has fast tempos and upbeat, energetic rhythms. Alexandra Linnemann, Jana Strahler, and Urs M. Nater also found that music listening to be an effective means of reducing stress (Linnemann, 2016). This study also found that listening to music with others leads to a greater reduction in stress, as opposed to solitary music listening (Linnemann, 2016). Concurrent to Lingham's study, Linnemann found that solitary music listening was most effective when individuals were listening to music for relaxation purposes (Linnemann, 2016).

Music therapy can be used as self-care, although it does require one to attend a legitimate session with a professional music therapist. Even though music therapy must be conducted within a therapeutic environment, its benefits make it a recommended treatment modality for those with high perceived stress levels, mental illness, and/or those suffering with burnout symptoms. Music therapy has the ability to reduce stress by boosting self-esteem and through producing endorphins that stimulate the body (Sharma, 2012). Also, music therapy is effective as a standalone treatment or in conjunction with other treatments, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, in regards to reducing the symptoms of mental illness among adult populations, which undergraduate students are a member of (Lee, 2013). Music therapy may not be the most

financially accessible option for undergraduate students, but if a student is able to afford group or individual music therapy, it could greatly benefit their overall wellbeing.

The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) allows individuals to gain a look at their personal insight and emotions. The incorporation of imagery and drawing within the music therapy intervention allows participants to reflect on their inner feelings through discussion of their drawings at the end of the intervention (Beck, 2015). This technique is useful for students who are seeking to strengthen their self-reflection skills and to develop a deeper understanding of themselves, which supports the areas of this thesis that focus on the need for self-awareness and self-reflection among this population. GIM is also effective for those who are seeking to increase their confidence and motivation, as GIM promotes positive personal experience and growth (Fox, 2016). GIM also has lasting effects on mood, which can benefit students well into their future (Fox, 2016).

Recreational music making (RMM) is a cost-effective way for undergraduate students to enjoy the benefits of music as a form of self-care, as well as to socialize with others. RMM promotes creativity and self-expression, while also enabling individuals to expressively communicate their stressors and emotions with other group members (Bittman, 2003). In turn, RMM groups can be beneficial for undergraduate students who are seeking a safe place to express themselves within a confidential setting. Furthermore, RMM can be beneficial for students who are not members of other extracurriculars or social groups, as it provides them with a group of people that they can make musical and verbal connections with.

Singing is another self-care technique that encourages self-expression and creativity. It can be used anywhere, at any time, making it an extraordinarily accessible self-care tool. Singing, especially within performance contexts, promotes self-esteem and confidence. Vaag et



al's study *Sound of well-being, choir singing as an intervention to improve wellbeing among employees in two Norwegian county hospitals* provides evidence that singing in group settings can increase individuals work commitment and organizational dedication, which can be beneficial skills for undergraduate students of all majors.

Lastly, group drumming can be used within the context of self-care. Students looking to support their wellbeing can look towards group drumming for support and guidance (Maschi, 2013). Recreational and group drumming also decreases stress and increases energy, empowerment, and one's sense of community. Undergraduate students who are feeling isolated may benefit from group drumming sessions, as the musical connections created through drum circles helps build a community between group members. Group drumming is also beneficial for students who may not want to verbally express their feelings, as it is a nonverbal modality of expression. Students will be able to release their emotional, psychological, and physiological stresses through the action of drumming.

To reduce and properly cope with stress, prevent future career burnout, and to encourage self-reflection and self-awareness in undergraduate music and non-music college and university students, it is imperative to have an understanding of the factors that cause these students to have such high perceived stress levels and the long term effects of stress on an individual's physiological, psychological, and emotional wellbeing. Undergraduate students are at risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders, mental disorders, and physical symptoms, such as heart palpitations from the stress that they endure throughout their college careers. To prevent serious harm to students' minds and bodies, self-care education should be implemented into course curriculums. Music students should also be encouraged to create music for fun and for creative and emotional expression. Non-music students can benefit from using music in their self-care

routines, as it aids in stress reduction, community building, self-expression, and boosts self-esteem and self-confidence. Music therapy, Guided Imagery and Music, music listening, singing, and group drumming are all ways that music can be used within an individual's self-care routine.

## **Methods**

Self-care must be addressed within college curriculums in order to prevent career burnout, chronic stress levels, and the development of mental health issues among undergraduate students. There are a variety of factors that influence students' perceived stress levels and it is imperative for students, professors, university administrators, and professionals to understand how these factors effect students throughout their undergraduate careers. The implementation of self-care education is vital in teaching students the proper self-care techniques to use for desired outcomes, whether they are looking to relax or to become more energized. GIM, music listening, group drumming, group singing, and songwriting are all musical techniques that one can use within the realm of self-care.

This study collected data on the perceived stress levels of undergraduate music students. It also investigated the prevalence of self-care in undergraduate music majors' lives and what resources were already readily available to them. It sought to gather data on Students' views on self-care were considered, as well as their opinions on self-care after attending Dr. Lisa Summer's, MT-BC, LMHC, self-care workshop. Data was collected through two surveys (see appendix). The first survey was completed before the self-care workshop. The second survey was filled out at the end of the workshop. The study focused on four questions; how can undergraduate students, music and non-music, use music as a form of self-care to prevent stress, career burnout, and to connect with their inner selves, what are the various ways that music can be used as a self-care technique, how can undergraduate music students use music subjectively as a means of self-care, and how can undergraduate non-music students with no previous musical training successfully use music as a part of their self-care routine.

## **Setting**

The study took place in a small, private college in Paxton, Massachusetts. The college is made up of 1,100 undergraduate students and 325 graduate students. The college is accredited by the American Music Therapy Association and has a strong music therapy program as part of its undergraduate degree programs. Degree programs in music education and general music are also offered through the music department. Other undergraduate majors at the college include fire science, nursing, business administration, social work, and education.

All music students at the college are required to take Performance Lab, a course in which students perform repertoire they have been working on in private lessons, to prepare for music juries at the end of each semester. A Self-Care with Music Workshop led by Dr. Lisa Summer, Director of Music Therapy took place during the regularly scheduled Performance Lab class. The recital hall in which the workshop was held contained a small stage, where Dr. Summer and her colleague who co-taught the workshop stood and spoke with the students. Behind Dr. Summer was a grand piano. Students sat in the audience seating. Chairs were set into circles of six. In total, there were 8 circles. The researcher observed the workshop from the back of the room, as not to interfere with the workshop and the data being collected.

## **Participants**

Participants of this study were selected in partnership with Dr. Lisa Summer, as all survey participants were required to attend the self-care workshop. Attendance of the self-care workshop was mandatory for all students enrolled in the college's Performance Lab course, therefore all survey participants were found through the roster for Performance Lab. Participants consisted of undergraduate students ranging from first semester freshmen to seventh semester seniors. All participants were on track towards bachelor's degrees in general music, music

education, and music therapy. Participation in this study was voluntary and all attendees of the self-care workshop were provided with an information sheet to inform them about the study and their rights as participants. Forty responses were collected from the first survey and 36 responses were completed for the second survey.

## **Design**

This workshop aimed to educate undergraduate students on the importance of self-care and how they can incorporate music into their self-care routines. The workshop, held in October 2019, also helped gauge students' perspectives on the topic of self-care and whether or not students would be interested in attending future workshops and seminars on self-care practices and techniques. Students sat in groups of six and discussed the experiential and their response to the experiential with their fellow group members. The intervention took 50 minutes.

The pre and post surveys were conducted before and after Dr. Lisa Summer's self-care workshop. The workshop was held in October 2019. Students recorded their pre-workshop perceived stress levels in the first survey. The second survey asked students to share their perceived stress levels after having attended the workshop in order to see if there were any shifts in stress levels from pre-workshop to post-workshop.

## **Materials**

Information sheets were given to the participants prior to the start of the workshop. This information sheet explained the purpose of the study, how the study would be conducted, the benefits and risks of participating in the study, confidentiality, and their rights as a research participant. The researcher's contact information was provided if participants had any additional questions. Students also had the opportunity to speak with the researcher in person. Dr. Lisa Summer's self-care workshop was used to educate students on the importance of self-care and

self-reflection. Two surveys were also used in this study. Both surveys were sent to participants via the Google Forms platform. The pre-workshop survey served to collect data on students' perceived stress levels and how often they practiced self-care techniques. It also sought to collect data on whether or not undergraduate music majors made time to connect with their personal relationship with music outside of the educational requirements of studying practicing and/or if they already used music in their personal self-care routines. The post-workshop survey collected data on students' perceived stress levels after attending Dr. Summer's self-care workshop. It also aimed to find out whether or not workshop had changed participants' views on self-care and if they were encouraged to increase the amount of self-care they used in their personal lives.

### **Measurement Instruments**

Two electronic surveys were created by the researcher and distributed through the Google Forms platform. Data was also collected and analyzed through the Google Forms platform. The first survey consisted of seven questions; five multiple choice questions, one scale (a 0-5 rating) question, and one checkbox question. Questions covered participants' perceived stress levels, factors related to their stress, how often they practice self-care routines, and whether or not they included music as part of their self-care routine. The second survey contained 14 questions. These questions included multiple choice, scale (a 0-5 rating), and open-response answer options and covered topics on students' perceived stress levels after attending the self-care seminar, whether or not the workshop influenced their perceived stress levels, and if they were inspired to increase the amount of self-care they use in their daily lives. Access to the internet via a laptop, cellphone, tablet, etc was necessary to complete the survey. Both surveys were able to accurately measure the topics indicated, proving their validity as measurement instruments.

### Pre-Test

Students entered the recital hall and sat in groups of six. In total, there were eight groups. Information sheets were provided for participants to read through the study's purpose, the procedure of the study, benefits, risks, and inconveniences of study participation, their rights as research participants, and the principle researcher's contact information. The researcher spoke to class, making sure that participants read the information sheet and that they were all 18 years of age or older.

### Intervention

The researcher sent out a link to the first Google Forms survey via email. Access to an electronic device (cellphone, laptop, tablet, etc) were required to access and complete the survey. The survey took approximately five to ten minutes for participants to complete and consisted of one checkbox, one scale (on a 0-5 rating), and five multiple choice questions. After completing the first survey, Dr. Lisa Summer's self-care workshop began.

Dr. Summer and a music therapy alum/assistant introduced students to several topics; how to tell when self-care is needed, how to use music as a self-care strategy, and how to select music for the purpose of self-care. Then, students were led through an experiential that involved selecting music for self-care. Subsequently, each student discussed their thoughts and feelings about their use of music for self-care among their small groups. Dr. Summer and her colleague then wrapped up the self-care seminar.

### Post-Test

The researcher then sent out the post-workshop survey to participants. The post-workshop survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. It consisted of nine multiple choice, one scale (on a 0-5 rating), one check box, and three open response questions. Access to

an electronic device was required to complete the survey. All questions were optional, allowing participants to skip any question they were not comfortable answering. “Other” was an option for each question, giving participants the opportunity to create their own answer if the provided answers did not accurately relate to their perceived feelings.

### **Data Analysis**

Results were collected and organized through the Google Forms platform. All statistical analysis and computation were also completed through the platform. The hypothesis, that using music as a part of one’s self-care routine will help reduce stress, prevent burnout, and lower risk of psychological disorder was tested through these surveys. Quantitative data was compiled and analyzed through the Google Forms response spreadsheet. Participants’ perceived stress levels indicated in the first survey were compared with their perceived stress levels recorded in the second survey. Individual responses could be viewed for each survey, as well as the overall group response. There were 40 respondents for the pre-workshop survey and 36 respondents for the post-workshop survey. As the surveys were submitted anonymously, it was unclear which of the four pre-workshop surveys did not have a coinciding post-workshop survey. This was taken into account when the researcher compared the statistical analysis of the two surveys. Statistical analysis was provided in pie and bar charts. Each chart provided the total number of respondents for the question, as well as the percentage of respondents who chose each answer option.



## Results

Questions in the surveys were to be answered based on the participant's past month experiences. Fifty-Five (55%) of participants in the pre-workshop survey identified feeling stressed on a daily basis, thirty percent (30%) felt stressed two or more times per week, five percent (5%) of participants reported feeling stressed once a week, as well as five percent (5%) reporting a couple times a month, two-and-a-half percent (2.5%) felt stressed once, and two-and-a-half percent (2.5%) were unsure of their stress levels (Figure 1). Participants were asked to distinguish the factors which caused them to experience high levels of stress. Participants were able to choose multiple factors. Results were indicated as; Academics (92.5%), Extracurricular Activities (80%), On-Site Clinical Hours (22.5%), Social Expectations (42.5%), Personal Factors, such as homesickness, medical issues, and/or family matters, (65%), and Other (5%) (Figure 2). One respondent who selected "Other" stated that meeting their personal goals and expectations caused them stress. Another respondent who selected "Other" identified "money/bills/job" as a factor of their stress. Respondents could choose more than one contributing factor.

Participants were then asked to identify their in-the-moment perceived stress levels on a zero to five scale. Zero represented "no stress" and five symbolized "maximum stress". Results were as follows: Zero (7.9%), One (10.5%), Two (18.4%), Three (26.3%), Four (26.3%), and Five (10.5%) (Figure 3). The remaining questions focused on gaining insight on participants' self-care practices. For the purposes of this study, self-care was defined as, "Techniques and/or activities used to take care of one's physical, psychological, cognitive, and/or emotional wellbeing". Data reported that participants practiced self-care; Daily (10%), Two or More Times a Week (22.5%), Once per Week (25%), a Couple Times a Month (15%), Once (12.5%), and

Never (15%) (Figure 4). For respondents who did practice self-care, fifty percent (50%) indicated that their stress levels decreased, while the remaining respondents stated there was no change in their perceived stress levels (26.5%), that their stress levels increased (5.3%), or that they were unsure of the effects of self-care on their stress (18.4%) (Figure 5).

The last two questions of the pre-workshop survey focused on participants use of music. When asked, “How often, within the past month, have you used music purely for enjoyment?” participants responded; Daily (37.5%), Twice or More per Week (22.5%), Once a Week (15%), A Few Times a Month (15%), Once a Month (5%), and Never (5%) (Figure 6). Participants were asked to answer whether or not they used music within their self-care routines. Options include “Yes/All the Time (47.5%), “No/Never” (2.5%), “Sometimes” (42.5%), “Unsure” (5%), and “Other” (2.5%), which was indicated as “On Occasion” (Figure 7). After completing the pre-workshop survey, participants attended Dr. Lisa Summer’s, MT-BC, LMHC self-care workshop. Dr. Summer and a music therapy alum/assistant led the participants in an experiment that involved selecting music for self-care purposes.

Participants used a zero-to-five scale to respond to the following question in the post-workshop survey; “After having attended this self-care seminar and experiential, what is your perceived stress level”. Responses were as follows; Zero (11.4%), One (20%), Two (11.4%), Three (28.6%), Four (20%), and Five (8.6%) (Figure 8). Figure 9 compared the perceived stress levels from the pre-workshop and post-workshop surveys. The percentile difference between the pre and post workshop was compared in Table 1. When asked if the seminar had any effect on their perceived stress levels, respondents stated; “Yes, it decreased my stress” (36.1%), “Yes, it increased my stress” (11.1%), “No, the seminar did not change my stress level” (44.4%), “It helped, but did not increase or decrease my stress levels” (2.8%), and “Other” (5.6%) (Figure

10). Those who selected “Other” stated that the seminar helped them to understand their current stress level or that the seminar had no effect on their perceived stress level.

The post-workshop survey also asked participants to distinguish the effectiveness of music within the workshop. The majority of participants (72.2%) stated the music positively influenced their experience, while twenty-five percent (25%) felt the music had no effect on their experience (Figure 11). One participant (2.8%) indicated that they felt the group should have listened to a piece of music at the beginning of the workshop. Fifty percent (50%) of participants found the music used in workshop helped to decrease their perceived stress levels, approximately forty-seven percent (47.2%) felt there was no effect on their perceived stress levels, and one respondent (2.8%) found that the music helped grasp a better understanding of their perceived stress (Figure 12). Over half (77.8%) of participants stated they would be making more time for self-care routine into their personal routines, with only one participant (2.8%) indicating that they would not be implementing more self-care into their routine (Figure 13). Other respondents (19.6%) indicated that they would try to implement more self-care and/or that they did not have time to participate in self-care activities. Similarly, almost three-fourths of participants (72.2%) were influenced to increase their daily routines, a quarter of participants (25%) were unsure, and the remaining respondents (2.8%) said they would not make more time for self-care (Figure 14).

When asked if they would include music into their personal self-care routine, the majority (52.8%) expressed that they would include more music, approximately eleven percent (11.1%) stated that they were unsure, and the remaining participants (36.1%) already used music as a form of self-care (Figure 15). Participants also displayed an interest in creating more time in their schedules to make music purely for entertainment. Results in regard to making more time for musical entertainment were as follows; “Yes” (58.3%), “I Already Make Time” (36.1%), “No”

(2.8%), and “Other” (2.8%) (Figure 16). Participants (55.6%) stated that they would incorporate techniques from the workshop into their self-care, while others specified that they wouldn’t (5.6%) or that they were unsure (38.9%) (Figure 17).

An open response format was used for participants to share which techniques they would incorporate into their routines. Techniques included, “Listening to more music I enjoy”, “More music to de-stress”, “Music and imagery, mindful music listening” and “Just taking a moment to breath” (Table 2). Lastly, participants were asked to indicate whether or not they would be interested in attending a future workshop on how to use music as a form of self-care. Results were remarkably positive; over three-quarters (77.8%) of participants marked “Yes” on their surveys (Figure 18). The remaining respondents (22.2%) indicated that they were uninterested in attending future workshops (Figure 18).

## Discussion

The statistical analysis of the pre-workshop study proves that undergraduate music students face high levels of stress in their day-to-day lives. Over half of the study's participants indicated feeling stressed on a daily basis and 30% displayed high levels of stress at least twice a week. A variety of factors provided insight as to what causes students to have high perceived stress levels. Academic expectations were the top contributor, with extracurricular activities and personal factors, such as homesickness, family matters, and medical issues following close behind. Participants who checked off "Other" stated that meeting their own personal goals and/or money, bills, and their job were also factors that increased their perceived stress levels. Although the research group solely consisted of undergraduate music students, many of these factors are also relevant within the lives of undergraduate non-music students.

When asked to rate their current level of stress on a zero-to-five scale in the pre-workshop survey, three respondents chose "0", four were at a "1", seven individuals were at a "2", ten indicated they were currently at a "3", an additional ten participants were at a "4", and four were at a "5" on the scale. In the post-workshop survey, four participants felt no stress, seven had minimal stress, four were at a "2" on the scale, ten felt they were moderately stressed, seven were slightly above a moderate level of stress, and three were at their maximum stress level. There was a clear decrease in perceived stress within the data collected from the post-workshop survey. Notably, there was a 9.5% increase in the number of students who stated their perceived stress level was at a "1" in the post-workshop survey, compared to the pre-workshop survey. There was also a remarkable decrease in the number of participants who rated their perceived stress level at a "4". Between the pre and post workshop surveys, there was a 6.3% decrease in the amount of "4" s and a 1.9% decrease in the amount of "5" s selected. These

results show that educating students on self-care could help decrease students' perceived stress levels. The experiential used within the workshop, where participants discussed songs they would listen to as self-care when feeling overwhelmed, also led to a decrease in stress levels.

In the pre-workshop survey, frequency of self-care practices was notably different among each individual, with the most common response being "Once a Week" and "Two or More Times a Week" following close behind. After attending the workshop, over half of the participants stated that they were influenced to create more time in their schedules for self-care activities. A majority of participants who indicated that they already practiced self-care within their personal lives noted that it decreased their stress levels. This shows that undergraduate students are aware, to an extent, of the importance of self-care within their lives and, through self-care education, students can be influenced to take better care of themselves. The first step towards creating a strong, supportive self-care routine is being self-aware of the ways one can better connect and support themselves. The readiness of students to increase the amount of self-care they use within their day-to-day lives shows that the current population of soon-to-be professionals are eager to take care of themselves, which is a remarkable discovery.

This study also collected data on the frequency in which participants left time to create music purely for their enjoyment and whether or not participants already used music in their self-care routines. In the pre-workshop survey, data indicated that most participants did leave time within their schedules to make music purely for entertainment. In regards to participants using music as a form of self-care, a majority indicated that they do, to some degree, use music in their self-care routines. Participants were interested in incorporating the techniques used in the workshop in their daily lives. Particular interest was shown in music and imagery. This data supports previous research that guided and imagery (GIM) can be a useful stress reliever for

students and professionals. The music therapy degree program at this college has a strong emphasis on GIM, which could be a contributing factor as to why students portrayed interest in using GIM as a self-care technique. Participants also indicated that they wanted to include more time for their own music making and that they would attend future workshops on how to use music in various ways as a form of self-care.

The results of this study show that undergraduate major students benefit from self-care education. They also indicate that students, to some extent, use music within their self-care routines, but are not fully aware of the variety of ways, besides listening to music, that they can use music as self-care. It is evident that undergraduate students display an interest in self-care, but that they may not have the proper resources or curriculum to support their interests or needs. Although this study was conducted solely on undergraduate music students, the techniques used in the workshop's experiential are applicable to students in any degree program, music or non-music. The techniques students indicated as areas of interests or areas that are helpful to them could also be applicable to non-music undergraduate students.

### **Limitations**

As this study was done in partnership with Dr. Lisa Summer's Self-Care Workshop, which was only available to undergraduate music students, its participant group was limited to music majors only. All the participants were peers of the researcher, which could have led to biases on the participants' end. The researcher was also under a time restraint when creating the surveys, as they had to be created, edited, and ready to be sent out before the workshop day.

In regards to the data collection, there were inconsistencies in the amount of participants per survey, with the pre-workshop survey having 40 responses and the post-workshop survey receiving 36 respondents. Due to surveys being completed anonymously, the researcher was

unable to determine which pre-workshop surveys did not have a corresponding post-workshop survey response. Furthermore, the campus Wi-Fi was unable to support the number of participants within the room, requiring some participants to complete the surveys later in the evening, rather than directly before and after the workshop. To counteract this limitation, the researcher required participants to submit their responses by midnight the night of the workshop, in order to prevent skewing the data.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

For replication of this study, the use of coding should be implemented. Coding would allow each participant to remain anonymous but would link each participant's pre and post surveys to prevent having differing numbers of each survey. Using a wider range of students would also benefit the study. Including undergraduate non-music majors would help to gain a deeper insight on how non-music majors view self-care and whether or not they use music within their self-care routines. Including undergraduate students who are studying to enter fields with high burnout and turnaround rates within the participant pool would also help to educate these students on the vitality of self-care. Educating these undergraduate students on the need for self-care and helping them create their own self-care routine could potentially lower their risk of burning out once they are working professionally. Adding questions relating to participants' preferred music for self-care purposes and pertaining to the ways in which participants use music in their self-care routines would provide a greater understanding of the ways undergraduate students currently uses music as a self-care technique.

It would also be beneficial to make the workshop longer. Including multiple experiments within the workshop would help solidify the various ways music can be used as self-care to workshop participants. In addition, ending the workshop with an experiment where the



participants are induced into positive emotional state would enable the participants to leave the workshop feeling more rejuvenated. In turn, this could further encourage participants to increase their use of both self-care and musical self-care into their personal lives. Furthermore, workshops that focus on specific musical technique(s) could be implemented to educate participants more thoroughly on each use of music. Workshops focusing on songwriting, GIM, group singing, and improvisation could be conducted for students who are interested in learning more about an individual musical modality's use within self-care. These workshops would need to be led by an expert in the modality being addressed.

Data could also be collected through a longitudinal study following the course of a semester to gain a deeper understanding and greater statistical support of the benefits of music, over time, in undergraduate students' daily self-care routines. Future research could also focus on the effects of specific musical self-care techniques on students' stress levels. In addition, it would be beneficial to collect data on the burnout rates of professionals who started focusing on their self-care during their undergraduate studies to compare to the burnout rates of professionals who did not use self-care until entering the professional world.

Future research could focus more heavily on addressing the need for more self-care educational material within undergraduate degree programs. By analyzing and comparing how various colleges and universities throughout the United States address self-care in their curriculums, researchers would have a clearer view on the areas of self-care education that curriculums lack. In turn, colleges and universities nation-wide would have statistical insights that would enable them to adapt their curriculums and mental health resources into the resources that the growing population of undergraduate college students need. Greater academic and psychological support could increase school's retention and graduation rates, leading to an

increase of professionals in a variety of fields, particularly fields with high burnout and turnaround rates.

## **Conclusions**

This study supports the idea that self-care education should be implemented in college and university curriculums. Undergraduate students indicated that they would be interested in having more support within the realm of self-care and, specifically, in using music as self-care. Concurrent to previous research conducted on students' stress levels, this study identifies a variety of factors, including academics, extracurricular activities, and personal factors, that students pinpoint as stress-inducing. It was also found that many students do, to some extent, participate in self-care activities and have a basic understanding of the benefits that self-care can provide them as they learn how to cope with different stressors. It also supports the idea that using music as a form of self-care is a technique that can greatly resonate within college-aged individuals.

The study is foundational in the sense that it provides evidence that colleges and universities are lacking in self-care education, as well as giving these institutions ideas on how to implement the topic of self-care into their curriculums. At the undergraduate level, students are faced with a surplus of stressors that can negatively affect their physical, psychological, and cognitive well-being. Focusing on how colleges can best support their students' physical, psychological and cognitive well-being will create a generation of strong, healthy professionals who are self-aware and who are less likely to suffer from career burnout or physical or psychological symptoms that result from chronic stress. The accessibility and cost-effectiveness of using music for self-care is appealing to undergraduate students who do not have other

resources, including talk therapy and exercise courses, readily available to them or who are financially unable to access those other resources.

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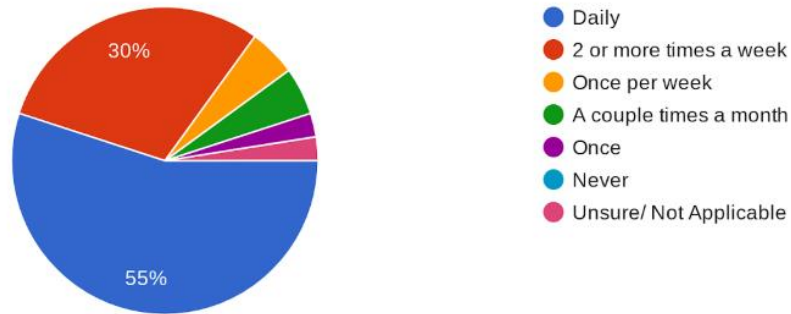
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## Appendix: Figures and Tables

In the past month, how often have you felt stressed?

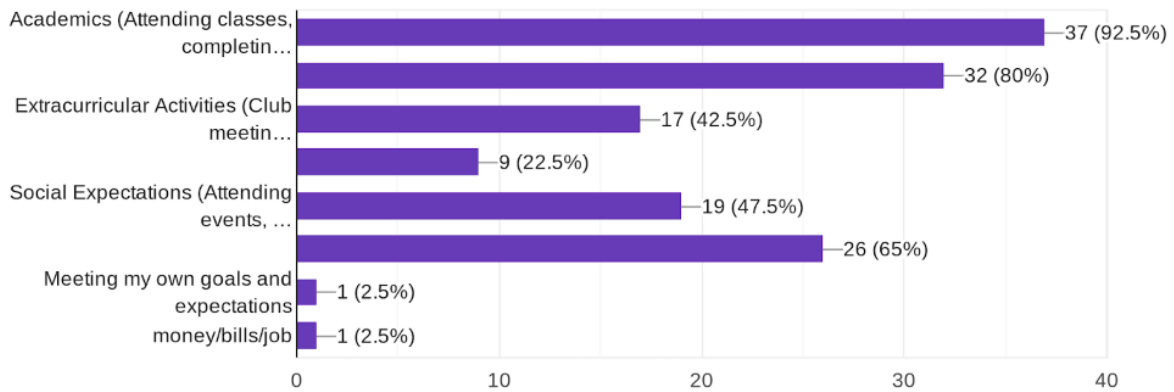
40 responses



**Figure 1: Frequency of Stress**

Which of the following activities/factors cause you stress? (Check all that apply)

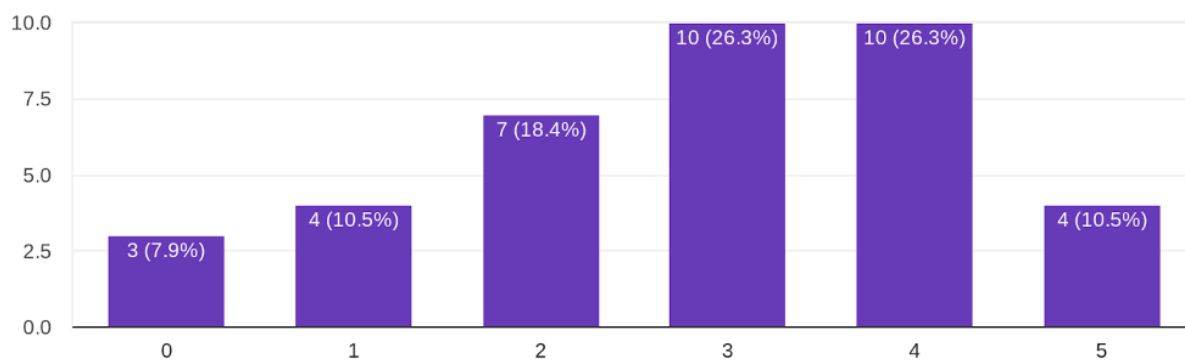
40 responses



**Figure 2: Factors of Stress**

In this current moment, how high is your stress level?

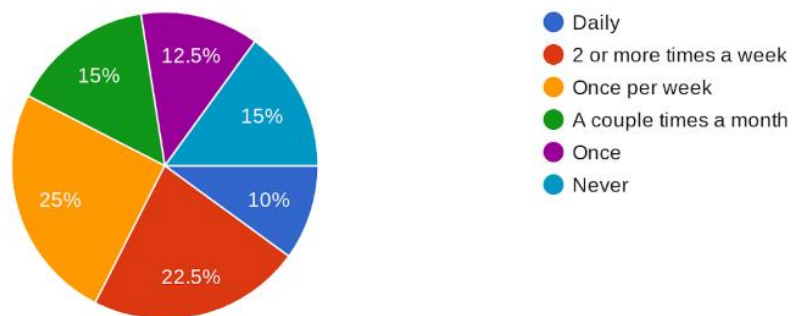
38 responses



**Figure 3: Current Stress Levels (Pre-Workshop)**

In the past month, how many times have you participated in self-care activities?

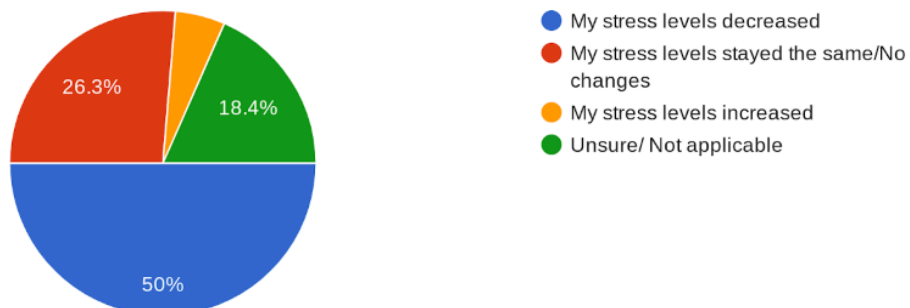
40 responses



**Figure 4: Frequency of Self-Care Practices**

If you did participate in self-care activities within this past month, how did these activities effect your stress?

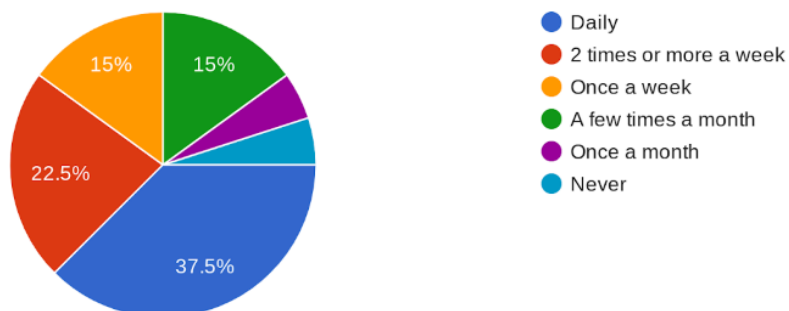
38 responses



***Figure 5: Effects of Self-Care on Stress***

How often, within this past month, have you used music purely for enjoyment (ie. not for academic or practice purposes)?

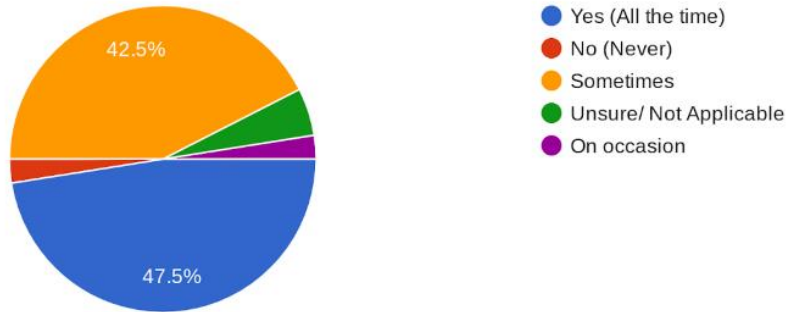
40 responses



***Figure 6: Music Use For Enjoyment***

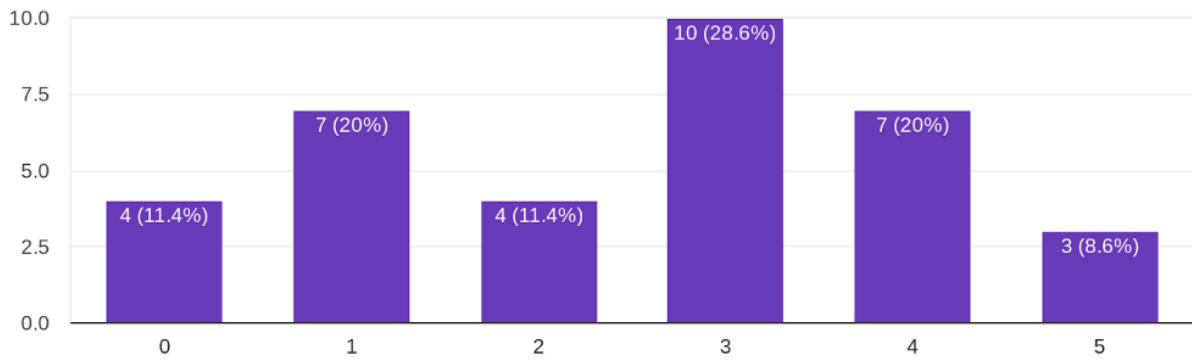


Do you use music as a part of your self-care routine  
40 responses

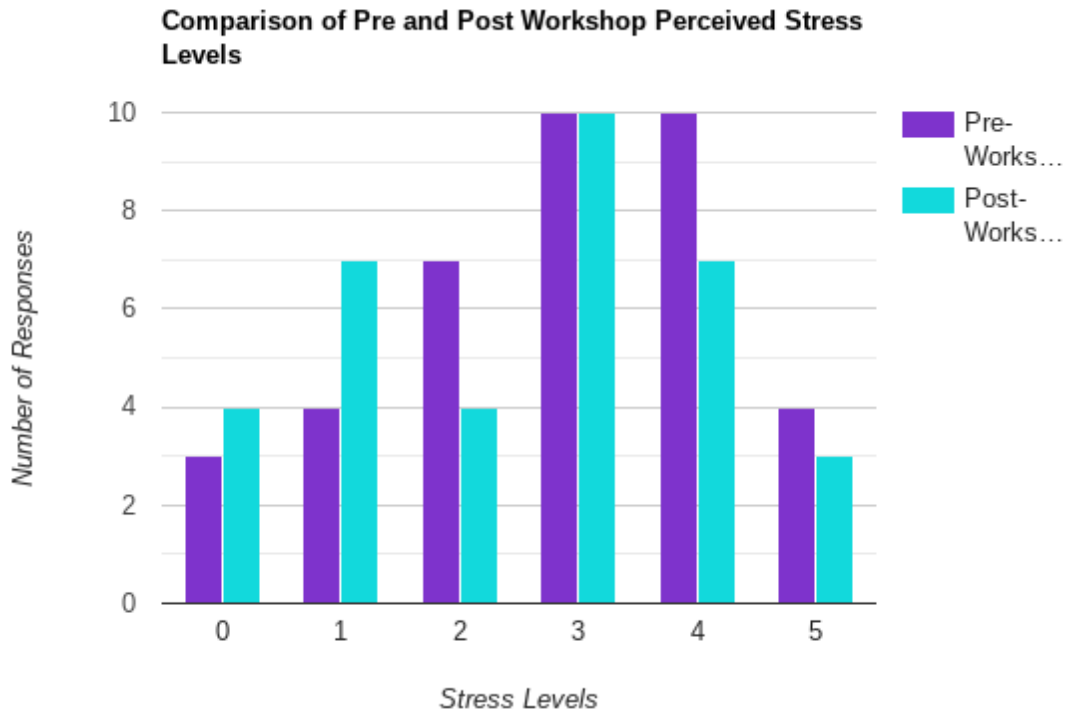


**Figure 7: Music as Self-Care**

After having attended this self-care seminar and experiential, what are your perceived stress level?  
35 responses



**Figure 8: Perceived Stress Levels After Attending Self-Care Workshop**



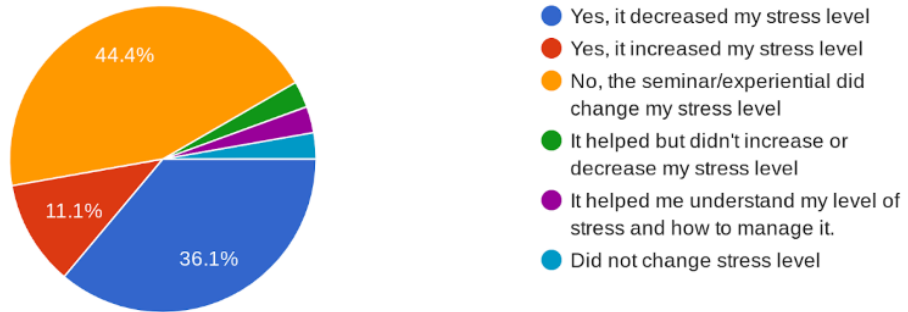
*Figure 9: Comparison of Pre and Post Workshop Perceived Stress Levels*

Stress Level	Pre-Workshop (%)	Post-Workshop (%)	Difference Between Pre and Post Workshop Stress Levels
0	7.9%	11.4%	-3.5
1	10.5%	20%	-9.5
2	18.4%	11.4%	+7
3	26.3%	28.6%	-2.3
4	26.3%	20%	+6.3
5	10.5%	8.6%	+1.9

*Table 1: Percentile Difference Between Pre and Post Workshop Perceived Stress Levels*

Did this seminar/experiential have any influence on your current stress level?

36 responses



**Figure 10: Effects of Self-Care Seminar on Perceived Stress Levels**

Did the music used in the experiential influence your overall experience throughout the seminar?

36 responses



**Figure 11: Effects of Music on Workshop Experience**

Did the music used in this experiential have any influence on your perceived stress levels after the seminar?

36 responses



**Figure 12: Effects of Music on Perceived Stress Levels (Post-Workshop)**

Will you be making more time for self-care in your personal routine?

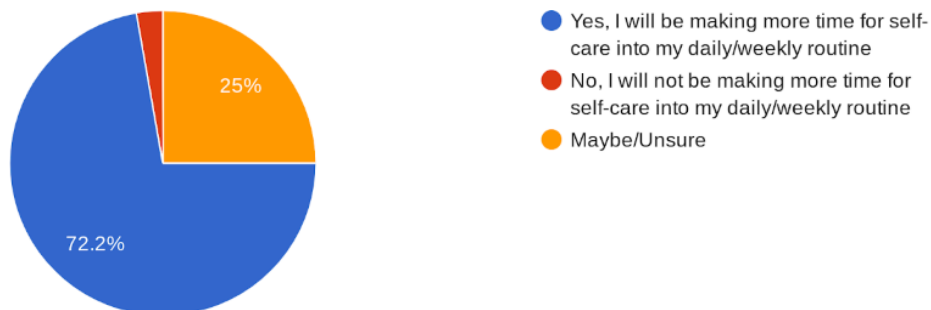
36 responses



**Figure 13: Self-Care in Personal Routines**

Has this experience influenced you to start/increase the amount of self-care practices you in your daily routine?

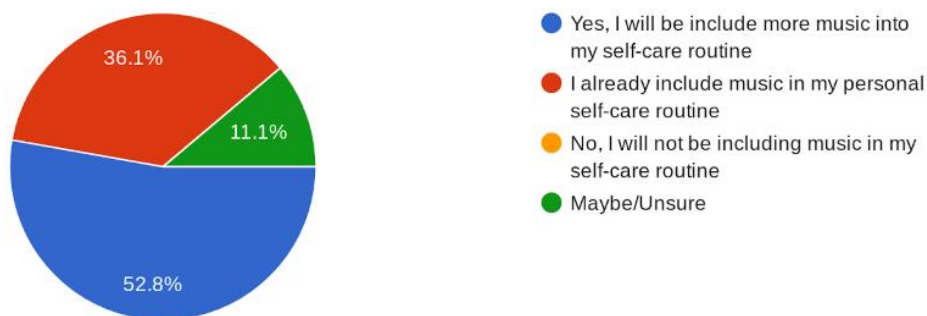
36 responses



**Figure 14: Influence of Self-Care on Daily Self-Care Practices**

Will you be including more music into your personal self-care routine?

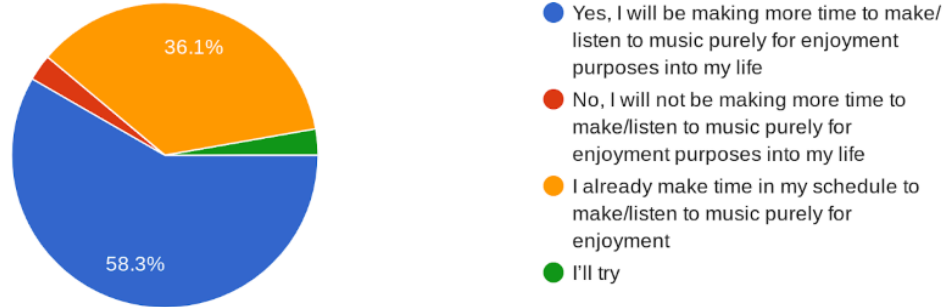
36 responses



**Figure 15: Increase of Music in Self-Care Routines**

Will you be making more time in your schedule to listen to and/or make music purely for enjoyment (ie. not for academic or practice purposes)?

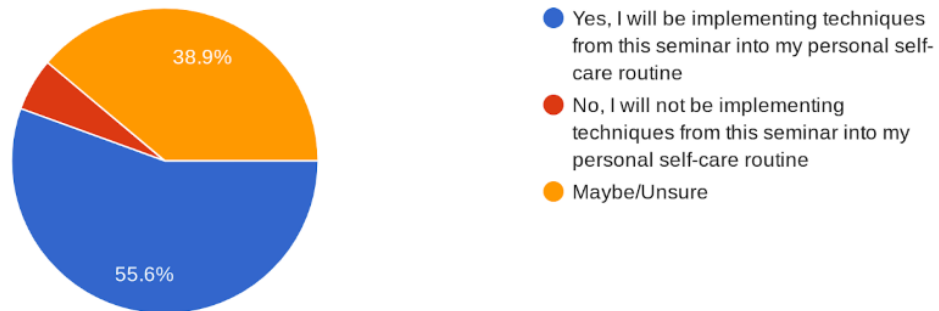
36 responses



**Figure 16: Effects of Workshop on Participants' Use of Music for Enjoyment**

Will you be implementing any of the techniques used in this seminar into your personal self-care routines

36 responses



**Figure 17: Implementation of Workshop Techniques into Personal Self-Care Routine**

# of Respondents	Technique
9	Listening to Music
9	Practicing More Mindfulness
8	Making More Time For Oneself
3	Music and Imagery

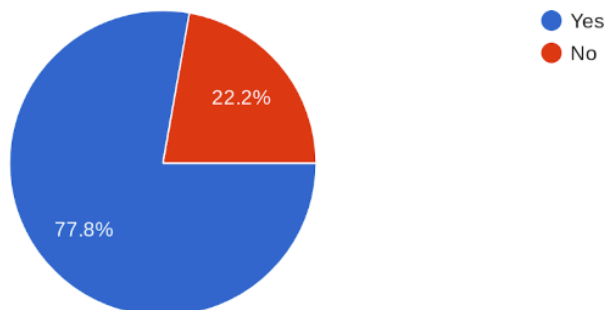
\*Total of 19 respondents

\*Some respondents listed multiple techniques

**Table 2: Techniques**

If the music department offered a workshop to teach you how to use music for self-care, would you attend?

36 responses



***Figure 18: Interest in Future Self-Care and Music Workshops***

## Information Sheet

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Lisa Summer

**Student Researcher:** Katie Parker

**Study Title:** Using Music as a Form of Self-Care for Music and Non-Music Undergraduate Students

Dear Potential Survey Participants,

You are being asked to participate in a research study, which will be used in Katie Parker's senior thesis, entitled *Using Music as a Form of Self-Care for Music and Non-Music Undergraduate Students*. This research study will be conducted through two surveys. One survey will be distributed before Dr. Lisa Summer's Self-Care Seminar and the second survey will be distributed at the end of the seminar. Dr. Summer's Self-Care Seminar will be held in Payer Hall in Miriam on Anna Maria College's campus, at 3 pm on October 10, 2019, during the regularly scheduled MUS 101 - 1 Performance Lab class. Participation in these surveys is optional. No personal or identifying information regarding any individual participant will be asked and surveys will be filled out and submitted anonymously. As the surveys coincide with Dr. Summer's seminar, all survey participants must attend the seminar in order to qualify to take the surveys. You must be enrolled in MUS 101 -1 and must be 18 years of age or older. If at any time you wish to stop your participation in the survey, you may do so, with no repercussions. Please ask the principle researcher any questions you may have about the research study.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of the first survey is to collect data on how often students participate in self-care activities, if they find self-care activities to be beneficial in dealing with the stresses of being a student, and to see if students implement music in their self-care routines. The second survey will collect data on participants' feelings regarding self-care after attending the seminar, whether or not they will start to implement music into their self-care routines, if they feel more educated on the topic of self-care, and if their stress and/or anxiety levels have increased or decreased after having gone through the self-care experiential. The data collected from these surveys will be used in the senior thesis *Using Music as a Form of Self-Care for Music and Non-Music Undergraduate Students*.

### **Procedure:**

The first survey will be sent via email to participants at the start of MUS 101 - 1 Performance Lab. Students will fill out the survey on an electronic device (ie. phone, laptop, tablet). The survey will take approximately five to ten minutes to fill out and submit. Students will then



participate in Dr. Summer's Self-Care Seminar. Once the seminar is complete, the principle researcher will send out a link to the second survey to participants, via email. This survey will take ten to fifteen minutes to complete and will also be accessible on participant's electronic devices.

**Risks and Inconveniences:**

The surveys will ask you to reflect on your personal self-care routine and tactics. The surveys will also ask you to reflect on your perceived stress levels and factors that influence your perceived stress levels. You may skip any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering. As the surveys will be conducted during the regularly scheduled class period, there will not be an excess in time commitment. The surveys will take up to 15 minutes to fill out. They will be filled out and submitted via Google Forms.

**Benefits:**

Your participation in this research study will benefit Katie Parker, junior music therapy major, as she will be using the data collected from this research study in her senior honors thesis, *Using Music as a Form of Self-Care For Music and Non-Music Undergraduate students* for HON 490, Honors Senior Seminar. Participation in this research study will benefit you by providing you with more information regarding different self-care practices.

**Confidentiality:**

You should be aware that the Anna Maria College Institutional Review Board may inspect study records as part of its mission to protect the safety of research participants. No personal and/or identifying information will be asked of you. If you choose to include any personal information within your survey responses, the principle researcher will delete the information from computer history. The only people that will see your survey responses will be the principle researcher, the faculty sponsor of this research study, and, if necessary, the Anna Maria College Institutional Review Board.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this research study is completely optional. If at any time you wish to stop the survey, you may do so without repercussions. You may attend Dr. Summer's self-care seminar without having to take part in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your participation in this study, please reach out to the principle researcher.

**Contacts:**

If you have any additional questions related to this study, please contact the researcher (Katie Parker, 508-405-6412 or [kjparker@amcats.edu](mailto:kjparker@amcats.edu)). [If you have any questions related to your rights as a research participant, contact the Anna Maria College Institutional Review Board Chair.](#)

## Self-Care Workshop - Survey One

*The data collected from this survey will be used in Katie Parker's senior thesis entitled, "Music as a Form of Self-Care for Music and Non-Music Undergraduate Students". Participation in this survey is optional and no personal or identifying information will be asked of participants. You must attend Dr. Lisa Summer's Self-Care Workshop in order to participate in this survey. The survey will be answered anonymously. It addresses students' perceived stress levels and their self-care techniques used to combat their stress, to prevent future career burnout, and as a way to connect more deeply with their inner selves. Answers will be based on the past month, September 2019 and the beginning of October 2019.*

### **1. In the past month, how often have you felt stressed?**

- a. Daily
- b. 2 or more times a week
- c. Once per week
- d. A couple times a month
- e. Once
- f. Never
- g. Unsure/ Not Applicable
- h. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **2. Which of the following activities/factors cause you stress? (Check all that apply)**

- Academics (Attending classes, completing homework, studying for tests/quizzes, etc.)
- Music Activities (Practicing, performing, etc)
- Extracurricular Activities (Club meetings, events, leadership positions, etc)
- On-site clinical hours (Pre-Practicum, Practicum, Internship)
- Social Expectations (Attending events, hanging out with friends, getting off campus)
- Personal Factors (Family matters, homesickness, medical issues)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **3. In this current moment, how high is your stress level?**

- a. 0 (No Stress)
- b. 1
- c. 2
- d. 3

- e. 4
- f. 5 (Maximum Stress)

**\*\*For the purpose of this survey, self-care will be defined as, "Techniques and/or activities used to take care of one's physical, psychological, cognitive, and/or emotional well-being".**

**4. In the past month, how many times have you participated in self-care activities?**

- a. Daily
- b. 2 or more times a week
- c. Once per week
- d. A couple times a month
- e. Once
- f. Never
- g. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. If you did participate in self-care activities within this past month, how did these activities affect your stress?**

- a. My stress levels decreased
- b. My stress levels stayed the same/No changes
- c. My stress levels increased
- d. Unsure/ Not applicable
- e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. How often, within this past month, have you used music purely for enjoyment (ie. not for academic or practice purposes)?**

- a. Daily
- b. 2 times or more a week
- c. Once a week
- d. A few times a month
- e. Once a month
- f. Once a month
- g. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Do you use music as a part of your self-care routine**

- a. Yes
- b. No (Never)
- c. Sometimes

- d. Unsure/ Not Applicable
- e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Self-Care Workshop - Survey Two**

The data collected from this survey will be used in Katie Parker's senior thesis entitled, "Music as a Form of Self-Care for Music and Non-Music Undergraduate Students". Participation in this survey is optional and no personal or identifying information will be asked of participants. For accuracy in data, all survey participants must have attended Dr. Lisa Summer's Self-Care Workshop. The survey will be answered anonymously. The survey will collect data on students' perceived stress levels after attending the self-care workshop and whether or not they will implement some of the techniques used in the seminar into their personal self-care routines.

\*\*For the purpose of this survey, self-care will be defined as, "Techniques and/or activities used to take care of one's physical, psychological, cognitive, and/or emotional well-being".

**1. After having attended this self-care seminar and experiential, what are your perceived stress level?**

- a. 0 (No Stress)
- b. 1
- c. 2
- d. 3
- e. 4
- f. 5 (Maximum Stress)

**2. Did this seminar/experiential have any influence on your current stress level?**

- a. Yes, it decreased my stress level
- b. Yes, it increased my stress level
- c. No, the seminar/experiential did change my stress level
- d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Did the music used in the experiential influence your overall experience throughout the seminar?**

- a. Yes, the music positively influenced my experience
- b. Yes, the music negatively influenced my experience
- c. No, the music had no influence on my experience
- d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- 4. Did the music used in this experiential have any influence on your perceived stress levels after the seminar?**
- Yes, the music helped to decrease my perceived stress levels
  - Yes, the music increased my perceived stress levels
  - No, the music had no influence on my perceived stress levels
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Will you be making more time for self-care in your personal routine?**
- Yes, I will be making more time for self-care
  - No, I will not be making more time for self-care
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Will you be including more music into your personal self-care routine?**
- Yes, I will include more music into my self-care routine
  - I already include music in my personal self-care routine
  - No, I will not be including music in my self-care routine
  - No, I will not be including music in my self-care routine
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Will you be making more time in your schedule to listen to and/or make music purely for enjoyment (ie. not for academic or practice purposes)?**
- Yes, I will be making more time to make/listen to music purely for enjoyment purposes into my life
  - No, I will not be making more time to make/listen to music purely for enjoyment purposes into my life
  - I already make time in my schedule to make/listen to music purely for enjoyment
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Has this experience influenced you to start/increase the amount of self-care practices you in your daily routine?**
- Yes, I will be making more time for self-care into my daily/weekly routine
  - No, I will not be making more time for self-care into my daily/weekly routine
  - Maybe/Unsure
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. Will you be implementing any of the techniques used in this seminar into your personal self-care routine**

- a. Yes, I will be implementing techniques from this seminar into my personal self-care routine
- b. No, I will not be implementing techniques from this seminar into my personal self-care routine
- c. Maybe/Unsure
- d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. If yes, what techniques do you plan on implementing into your personal routine?**

**11. If the music department offered a workshop to teach you how to use music for self-care, would you attend?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**12. If yes, would you attend on: (one or both)**

- a. Weekday
- b. Weekend

**13. What was the most beneficial part of this seminar/experiential?**

**14. Please leave any additional comments about your experience, if applicable, here**