

Lifestyle training for employees in mental health care: effects of lifestyle improvement on perceived stress



J.J. Biesta, S.H. Booij, H.J.R. Hoenders, Center for Integrative Psychiatry & PsyQ, Lentis, The Netherlands

Contact: j.biesta@hilversum.psyq.nl



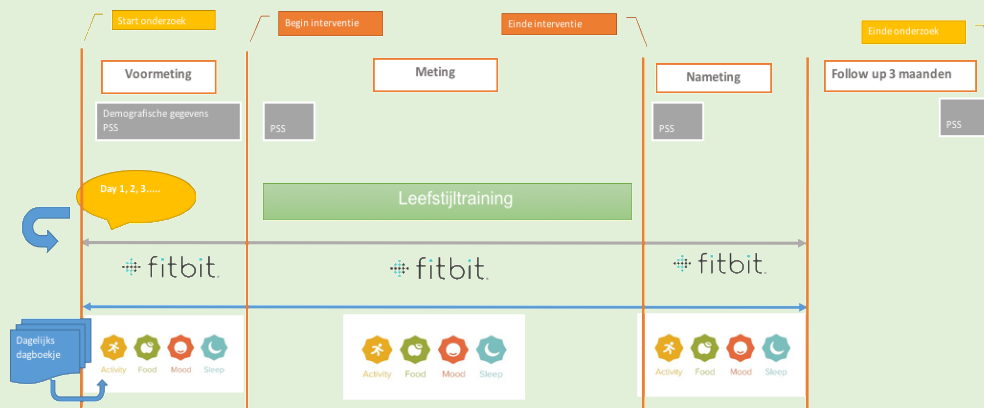
Objective

Stress among employees is increasingly seen as a problem in mental health organizations¹. Absenteeism in mental health care, partly caused by stress, has been constantly rising over the past years (by 6.1 in 2019)². Research has shown that a healthy lifestyle, such as a healthy diet and sufficient exercise and relaxation can work preventively and even curatively in the event of various psychological complaints^{3, 4}. In addition, a healthy lifestyle among employees can reduce perceived work stress⁵.

Aim of the study: To investigate the effect of a lifestyle training on the perceived stress level of the employees in mental health care.

The intervention

The lifestyle training is based on recent scientific information and focuses on nutrition, exercise, relaxation, sleep, meaningfulness, policy and implementation and aims to increase a healthy lifestyle. Duration: nine meetings over a period of four-five months. A methodology is used to achieve sustainable behavioral change based on the general principles of behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing and "stages of change"³.



The methods

Participants: 151 voluntary employees of Lentis participated in the lifestyle training and the study into the effectiveness of this training. 132 (Intervention 85, Control 47) of them completed inquiries related to perceived stress, before and after the intervention, and after three months (follow up). The intervention and control groups are fairly equal in gender (77.8% female vs 83.3% female), age (45.7 vs 44.3) and profession (74.4 % vs 73.3%).

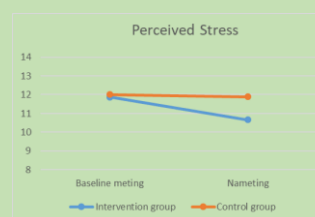
Measures: stress is measured by de Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)⁶. Participants also wore fitbits and filled in daily diary forms about their lifestyle (exercise, nutrition, relaxation and sleep).

Statistics: Differences in perceived stress between the intervention and the control group will be assessed by multilevel analysis. Time is included as within-subject factor, group is included as between-subjects factor. The interaction between the two is used to determine whether the intervention is effective.

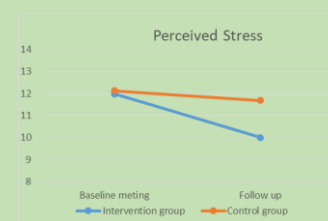
About us

Researchers at the Center for Integrative Psychiatry, Lentis, The Netherlands, aim to study the effectiveness and mechanisms of integrative medicine in the treatment of psychiatric disorders. Lentis launched a lifestyle project in 2015 and various lifestyle studies have been conducted since then.

Preliminary results



A paired sample T-test shows that the difference between the baseline measurement and the post-measurement (see graph above) of the intervention group is significant ($p=0.016$), as well as the difference between the baseline measurement and the follow up ($p=0.000$) (see graph below)



References: 1: Morse, G. et al. (2012). *Adm Policy Ment Health*, 341-352; 2: Vernet, www.oofggz.nl; 3: Hoenders, R. et al. (2014). *GGZet Wetenschappelijk*; 4: Walsh, R. (2011). *Am. Psychologist*; 5: Lindquist, T.L. & Cooper, C.L. (1999). *Stress Medicine*, 143-152; 6: Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). *J. Health Soc Behavior*, 386-396