

The CRAFT Program: Yoga and Mindfulness for Enhancing the Mental and Emotional Health and Well-being of Student Musicians during Pandemic Times

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Abstract

The CRAFT program, based on mindfulness, yoga, positive psychology, and emotional intelligence, is a neuroeducational program for enhancing the well-being and academic experience of higher education students. The acronym *CRAFT* stands for the following terms representing its five elements: Consciousness, Relaxation, Attention, Fulfilment, and Transcendence. The objective of the present communication is to explain the theoretical framework of the CRAFT program and discuss preliminary findings retrieved amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Student musicians enrolled in CRAFT-based (CRAFT participants; $n=40$) and non-CRAFT-based (controls; $n=53$) subjects completed a questionnaire specifically developed to explore the degree to which they implemented coping strategies during the lockdown to improve their health and well-being as well as the different perceived benefits they may have derived from it. One-way ANOVAs, Chi-Square tests, and a deductive content analysis were conducted. Significantly more CRAFT participants, 92%, than controls, 58%, implemented techniques for enhancing their health and well-being during the lockdown, $\chi^2(1) = 13.41, p < .001$. Similarly, a higher proportion of CRAFT participants, 78%, than controls, 52%, reported benefits from their practice implementation experience, $\chi^2(1) = 5.399, p = .020$. Perceived benefits voiced by CRAFT participants included enhanced conscious awareness, emotional self-regulation, psychological distress, mental clarity, relaxation, concentration,

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transformative attitudes, resilience, and wellness. These results appear to show that CRAFT program exposure may promote a sense of agency and inner responsibility amongst its practitioners for independently using CRAFT strategies in stressful real-life contexts. Further mixed-method research of phenomenological inquiry within longitudinal and experimental controlled design studies with various arms is encouraged.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, higher education, lockdown, perceived benefits, positive psychology