

## An Attempt at Stress Management Education for University Students Utilizing a Self-counseling Sheet

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### Abstract

The objective of this study was to determine the effects of this stress management among university students using the self-counseling sheet for stress, which employs the SAT method and can be conducted by anyone familiar with the SAT procedure.

The samples are from students who took physical education (tennis lessons) taught by the author at T university. The survey papers were collected after the lesson, and incomplete forms and answers with filling mistakes were omitted. 38 samples (18 males, 20 females, average age  $19.03 \pm 0.4$  years old, response rate 95%) participated in the analysis. The survey was held in class (75 min long) at the beginning of February in 2009.

The following 3 educational materials were used for the teaching: 1. Stressor check table 2. Emotional Guideline Table 3. Self-counseling sheet for stress management based on the "SAT self-imaging method" (The author has partially modified the content of Munakata 1997). The term SAT (Structured Association Technique) here means the techniques which promote the self solution of problems and enable a realistic and proportionate assessment of their life by inspiration, association and intuition utilizing the conscious and the subconscious mind on the right side of the brain, which functions to solve the problem by asking structured questions. In class, after spending approximately 20 minutes explaining the "SAT self-imaging method," the subjects instructed to proceed on their own following the practice sheet.

The changing ratio of subjective stress level, before and after the self-counseling sheet and evaluation of all other completed forms, was used to measure the effect on stress management of the intervening lessons. SPSS ver.11 for Window was used for the analysis. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was adopted for comparison of the scale value before and after the lessons.

As a result, sheet completion was high and the subjective stress levels of the samples were significantly decreased after the lesson ( $z=-5.398$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Because

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only one intervention demonstrated a positive effect, it is believed that this method will have a definite effect on stress management by conducting the interventions periodically. In the future, it is desired to compare and determine the education efficacy of this method by setting a control, along with increasing the number of samples, to obtain more accurate data.

*Key words; stress management education, self-counseling sheet, university students*

## I. Introduction

In recent years, a variety of problems related to the mental health of university students, such as pleading the symptoms of depression and fatigue, have become serious social troubles of some concern<sup>1-7)</sup>. It has been inferred that these problems are produced as a result of a failure to cope with stress effectively when students feel some sort of psychological anxiety in various situations in daily life.

Although supportive care (symptomatic therapy) is commonly used to alleviate increasing stress problems in university students, the approach toward preventative education is lacking at present. In order to remain physically and mentally healthy, not only in their time at university but also throughout their life, it is indispensable for students to acquire self-care behavior to maintain and enhance their health in their school days. Specifically, acquiring techniques of stress management through health and physical education to identify and cope with stressors that affect each student, promptly and effectively, by themselves and to prevent the risk of adult disease including stress-related disorders is considered an extremely significant form of preventative education.

According to Munakata<sup>8)</sup> et al., psychosocial

stress is generated when one is aware of “things that one cannot get that one wants”, and the “thing that one cannot get that one wants” is defined as a stressor. Furthermore, stressors are explained using three variables; demand that is defined by the “stress function model”, predictability and support. Increase of demand, decrease of predictability and decrease of support maximizes the awareness of the stressor. Thus, when “predictability” looks good, i.e. specific responses to the stressor have been planned or established, stress decreases. Therefore, Munakata<sup>9-10)</sup> et al. developed a counseling sheet that can be used in the field of education to help to set up such goals for action through self-counseling. In this study, lessons of stress management that is utilized the counseling sheet using SAT self-image method developed by Munakata. The term SAT (Structured Association Technique) here means the techniques which promote the self solution of problems and enable a realistic and proportionate assessment of their life by inspiration, association and intuition utilizing the conscious and the subconscious mind on the right side of the brain, which functions to solve the problem by asking structured questions<sup>11)</sup>.

The objective of this study is to determine the effects of this stress management among university students using the self-counseling

sheet for stress, which employs the SAT method and can be conducted by anyone familiar with the SAT procedure.

## II. Methods

### 1. Participants

The samples are from students who took physical education (tennis lessons) taught by the author at T university. The survey papers were collected after the lesson, and incomplete forms and answers with filling mistakes were omitted. 38 samples (18 males, 20 females, average age  $19.03 \pm 0.4$  years old, response rate 95%) participated in the analysis.

The survey was held in class (75 min long) at the beginning of February in 2009.

For ethical consideration, the participants were given an explanation of the procedure and were asked for the consent to the research orally and in writing. The consent for participation was regarded as agreed by submission of the self-counseling sheet.

### 2. Teaching Materials and Course Content

The following 3 educational materials were used for the teaching : 1. Stressor check table<sup>12)</sup> 2. Emotional Guideline Table<sup>13)</sup> (Table 1) 3. Self-counseling sheet for stress management based on the "SAT self-imaging method"<sup>9)</sup> (Table 2) (The author has partially modified the content of Munakata 1997).

The outline of 1, the Stressor check table, is as follows :

This research adopts the scale that was developed by Munakata<sup>12)</sup> et al. in order to measure daily life stressors, and the reliability and validity of the scale have been verified.

With regards to the scoring for all questions,

2 points are given if "Very true" is selected. If "Mostly true" is selected, 1 point is given. The accumulative score of all 34 questions is the total score of the scale. A higher score shows a higher recognized stressor. From 0 to 4 points shows weak recognition, from 5 to 9 points moderate, from 10 to 18 stronger and a score of 19 or more shows a very strong stressor. The self-counseling sheet was used to identify the strongest stressor (Selecting 70% or above for the subjective stress is desirable when the maximum stress is 100%.) among the items that had been marked "Very true" (or, "Mostly true depending on the case") along with understanding the true and current stressor cognition among participants in this research. When a stressor has already been concretely identified by a subject, then the subject will have usually adopted stress coping behavior which reduces the effectiveness of the SAT technique.

In the class, "SAT self-imaging methods" were explained to the participants in detail, orally and with overhead projector slides, in order to conduct the self-imaging effectively. The teaching materials of Tables 1 and 2 were included. Then, they were instructed to complete their sheet individually in accordance with the practical worksheet.

### 3. Analysis method

The changing ratio of subjective stress level, before and after the self-counseling sheet and evaluation of all other completed forms, was used to measure the effect on stress management of the intervening lessons. SPSS ver.11 for Window was used for the analysis. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was adopted for comparison of the scale value before and after the lessons.

Table 1. Emotional Guidelines

Basic Emotions	(Table A) Derived Emotions	
<p>Happiness</p> <p>The emotion that matches or closely matches up to expectations.</p>	<p>Happy, delightful, pleasure, sympathy, hope, interest, happiness, relief, confidence, hospitable feeling, friendliness, appreciation, touched feeling, impressed feeling, motivation, growth, expectation, courage, sense of fulfillment, determination, beloved feeling, satisfaction, sense of responsibility, feeling of freedom, comfort, sense of peace, desire, wishful feeling, feeling of awe, feeling of yearning</p>	
<p>Anxiety</p> <p>The emotion that is a future-oriented mood in which one is ready or prepared to attempt to cope with negative expectations.</p>	<p>Anxiety, feel uneasy, feeling of little impatience</p> <p>Feeling impatient accompanied with confusion, panic, fear (Which of the following anxiety do you have?) crisis of life, abandoned feelings, low self-worth, (I am pathetic.)</p>	
<p>Anger</p> <p>The emotion when expectations that are considered to be normal to obtain cannot be obtained, or about not to be obtained (from oneself and others)</p>	<p>Contempt, frustrated, dissatisfaction, hostility, sense of guilt, distrust, anticipating an onrush, feeling of rejection, resentment, hate, grudge, rage, embarrassed, self-hatred, compassionate feeling for someone/something, regret, self-dispraise, feeling of guilt, (strong) pathetic feeling</p>	
<p>Sadness</p> <p>The emotion of resignation when you miss or are about to miss out on expected expectations.</p>	<p>Sorrow, feeling of loneliness, sense of isolation, feeling of helplessness, feeling of despair, sense of loss, empty feeling, wistful feeling, irrationalness, disappointment, disgusted with oneself, misery, resignation</p>	
<p>Suffering</p> <p>(The emotion when the continued situation cannot match up to expectations.)</p>	<p>Hard feeling, suffering, taxing feeling, torment</p>	
(Table E) Explanatory Note to the key situations		

(Table B) Words or Phrases to Express Inner feelings	(Table C) Clarification of Meaning of Emotions (expectations and requests) [want to ...] [should ...] [want someone to ...]	(Table D) Clarification of the basic needs of the mind
Sense of relief, pleasant feeling, glad, want to dance, happy, feel refreshed, fun, greatly pleased. "Wow, it's electrifying!", "Up and at them!", "Let's do it!", "I can do it!", "I want to do it!", "I hope to be that way.", beloved feeling, sweetness, hope to be so, mutual understanding, funny, being touched, electrifying feeling, "Thank god for that!", appreciation, "I shall never forget that day"	The emotion when there are some expectations and/or demands that have come true or are about to come true. What kind of expectations or demands have come true or are about to come true?	When the expectation is realized, which of the following 3 essential demands of the mind are satisfied?
"What will happen?", "I cannot do as I was expected", "Someone will criticize me", "How do I handle this?", "I am stumped", being scared, "I am on pins and needles", needing forgiveness, "Don't leave me!", "I'm scared", "I'm an idiot", life is worthless, the situation is hopeless, a trapped in your mind feeling, "Stop it!", "Help!"	The emotion when there are some expectations and/or demands, and there is no certainty. What kind of expectations does it take to make you unrealized the matter? What do you want the situation to be?	[Affection Seeking Need] Need recognition, to be loved, to get accepted, need praise, become well loved, to be counted on, considered to be a nice person, The situation goes as well as expected. One's concept of values is understood by others.
(Towards other parties) "Stop messing around!", someone looking down on me, "Behave!", "What an idiot!" "How come I am always the unlucky one?", "How come that person is chosen?", "No one can understand how I feel" (Toward oneself) "I am pathetic", "What am I doing?", "Don't be lazy!", I feel sorry for someone/something"	The emotion when you expect something, from yourself or other parties, but it is impossible to obtain or it is difficult to obtain: What do you want the situation to be?	[Self-trust Need] Giving credit to yourself regardless of the evaluation of the others. Wanting to love, wanting to believe, wanting to be like, wanting to mature, wanting to cherish oneself
"Help me", "I very feel alone", "Somebody, anybody, please come", "Everything goes well only if I am sacrificed", "I know that I am a failure", "Gee, that's how it goes", "That would be pointless", "I have no confidence", "I may make a nuisance of myself", "It can't be helped", "I am disappointed", "I know I am a helpless", "That's okay"	The emotion when you give up hope on a matter that you expected of yourself or the other person/people. What matters did you give up on or are about to give up on? What do you want the situation to be?	[Affection for Others Need] Wanting to acknowledge the person unconditionally, regardless evaluation. Wanting to love, wanting to respect, wanting to accept, wanting to give a praise, wanting to follow, wanting to be kind to others
Ask yourself "Which emotions continue and make you suffer, anxious, anger or sad? "and then clarify the emotion of anxiety, anger and sadness.		
Directed toward a bothersome situation: when someone is working hard and alone, when someone has to bear a burden without the understanding from others, when someone does something for only themselves, when there is no one to support you, when only you are sacrificed, when problems occur one after another, when making oneself endure, when one is spending life unlike oneself, when there is no one to share the happiness with you Toward a situation that is uncomfortable: when wrestling with a matter that has no predictability		

Table 2. SAT Self-counseling Sheet for Stress Management

Q 1. What kind of stimuli create stress for you? Please describe with thorough detail, based on the information from the Stressor Check Table. What is the level of stress when the maximum amount of stress is set as 100%? (Please assign a percentage value.)

Explanatory note: My family relationships have degenerated. My wife is confrontational about everything. My children don't communicate with me. Stress level 80%  
 Case Example A: The coach shouted angrily at me after every mistake and stressed me out during a tennis match. In addition, the doubles partner was disgusted with my performance. Stress level 90%

↓

Q2. (Refer to the "Guideline Table A")

What kind of emotions exist toward yourself or to other parties under the stressful situation? Define the emotion among: anxiety, anger and sadness using (your left finger to choose from) Table A. If multiple emotions exist, select the strongest emotion.

Explanatory note: Frustration  
 Case Example A: feeling of helplessness

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Q3. (Refer to the "Guideline Table C")

How do you want the situation to be? Create the statement using the following phrases [want to ...] [should ...] [want someone to ...].

Explanatory note: I don't want anyone to ignore me.  
 Case Example A: I want my mistakes or errors to be tolerated.

↓

Q4. (Refer to the "Guideline Table D")

Which "Basic needs of the Mind" shown on Table D will be satisfied, if the expectation (demand) that you stated in Q.3 is realized.  
 (\* Affection Seeking Need, Self-trust Need, Affection for Others Need)

Explanatory note: I want to become well loved (Affection Seeking Need)  
 Case Example A: I want recognition. (Affection Seeking Need)

↓

Q. 4-1 (When you choose "Affection Seeking Need" in Q.4)

There is a "Basic needs of the Mind" [ ... ] in Q4, what kind of self-image of yourself is associated with the expectation (demand) of [ ... ] from Q3?

Self-image (Explanatory note:) miserable myself  
 Case Example A: miserable myself

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Q.4-2 (Refer to the "Guideline Table A") What kind of emotions do you identify with for the "self-image"?

Explanatory note: Self-hating  
 Case Example A: Frustrated with myself; low self-worth

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Q. 4-3 (Refer to the "Guideline Table C") What is your desired outcome for the situation?

Explanatory note: Do not always depend on me.  
 Case Example A: I want to be given more praise for good merits.

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Q. 4-4 (Refer to the "Guideline Table D") Which "basic need of the mind", shown on Table D, will be satisfied if the expectation that you answered in Q.4-3 is realized.

Explanatory note: Self-trust Need  
 Case Example A: Self-trust Need

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Q5. (After recognizing the Self-trust need or Affection for others need) Now, how should you proceed?

Explanatory note I was frustrated with the situation, to the point where I couldn't express my feelings to my family. It is necessary to have open lines of communication with each other.  
 Case Example A: I was frustrated because the coach displayed a lack of concern about me. It is necessary to approach the coach more frequently.  
 (However, it seems difficult to establish a good relationship with the coach.)

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Q6. What specific actions would you like to take from now?

Explanatory note: I am going to communicate more with my family.  
 Case Example A: I am going to talk with my doubles partner in a more friendly and willing manner.

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Q. 7 After answering the questions 1 to 6, what percent level, would you estimate, is your stress level at?

Explanatory note: Stress level 30%  
 Case Example A: Stress level 20%

### Ⅲ. Results and Discussion

People feel stress when there are no specific action goals and a low level of future predictability. The median of the subjective stress level of the students significantly decreased from 80 to 40 after the counseling sheet ( $z = -5.398$ ,  $p = .000$ ). We conclude that the reason for this decrease is because the goals of the samples were elicited in the making of the sheets, and they were able to see a clear way to their goals to decrease awareness of their stressors.

In addition, we considered that stress decreased because the planned action goals were not action goals to achieve “social self”, they were action goals that were generated from the self demand of “for what it is”, which is not influenced by others.

People feel anxiety or fear when one has an action goal that has been generated by the “social self”; which is influenced by teachers’ and adults’ evaluations, and therefore there is a possibility to lead to degeneration of self-image and accumulation of stressors. When such an action goal has been set upon, it may not lead to a decrease in stress if one has experienced failure in achieving a feeling of satisfaction, because the goal addresses a target that has not been fully considered.

In that regard, this sheet makes the participant aware of self image and self expectation so that one can realize the actual self demand that is not the social self. By doing this, the participant can realize self-rewarding type behavior<sup>14)</sup> that is true self and it was hidden by other-rewarding type behavior<sup>14)</sup> due to daily evaluation of others. According to Munakata, modification from other-rewarding

type behavior to self-rewarding type behavior can be a key to decreasing stress. The setting of the action goal by this sheet can be considered a good method to enable and increase the motivation to self-rewarding type behavior. Moreover, it is inferred that it decreased the awareness of stressors.

The following is one example from the submitted sheets of a decrease in subjective stress levels from before to after the lesson. The student agreed to be the case example.

As shown in Table 2, case example A shows that the subjective stress level has drastically dropped down from 90 % to 20 %, and the completeness of the entire sheet was also good. In case example A, the sample could review the self action through the preparation of the sheet. Furthermore, the self awareness “I want to be given praise for my good points” in question 4-3 leads to satisfy the self-trust need in question 4-4. This embodies the true self demand that cannot be straightforwardly identified or expressed in daily life where there is a strong consciousness of others. Based on the true self demand, the setting up of action goals are moved ahead through questions 5 and 6 to drastically decrease the subjective stress level of case example A from 90% to 20%.

This process has the effect of enabling one to understand the demand of the “true self” by realizing self expectation and imaging oneself objectively. Therefore, re-setting the action goal from the demand of others to that of the self provides satisfaction and it leads to enjoyment of the action in itself. Even if failure is experienced, it does not generate anxiety or fears because it is not influenced by the evaluation of the others. We conclude that setting the action goal by using this sheet leads

to an effective stress decrease amongst students.

#### IV. Conclusion and the Future Tasks

This study determined the effects of stress management with university students using a self-counseling sheet for stress, based on the SAT method and can be conducted by anyone who acquires the SAT procedure. As a result, sheet completion was high and the subjective stress levels of the samples were significantly decreased after the lesson. Because only one intervention demonstrated a positive effect, it is believed that this method will have a definite effect on stress management by conducting the interventions periodically. In the future, it is desired to compare and determine the education efficacy of this method by setting a control, along with increasing the number of samples, to obtain more accurate data.

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## 自己カウンセリングシートを活用した大学生のための ストレスマネジメント教育の試み

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### 要 約

本研究の目的は、大学生を対象に、手順を習得すれば誰にでも実施可能なSAT法の1つである、ストレスのための自己カウンセリングシートを用いながら、本法のストレスマネジメントの効果を検討することである。

対象は、筆者が担当するT大学の共通体育（テニス）の授業を受講した学生であり、介入授業後に回収された実習用シートのうち、記入漏れや記入ミスのある回答を除外し、最終的に38名（男子18名、女子20名；平均年齢 $19.03 \pm 0.4$ 歳；有効回答率95%）を分析対象とした。実施期間は、2009年2月上旬の授業時（1回75分）であった。

教材には、1）ストレス源チェック表、2）感情のガイドライン表、3）「SAT自己イメージ法」によるストレスマネジメントのための自己カウンセリングシート（宗像、1997を筆者が一部修正）を使用した。SATは構造化された問いかけによって、右脳を活性化し、顕在意識や潜在意識のもとで、ひらめき・連想・直感を用いて、問題解決や本当の生き方への気づきを促す技法である。授業では、「SAT自己イメージ法」についての説明を約20分間行なった後、実習用のシートに従って各自で進めるよう指示した。

介入授業におけるストレスマネジメントの効果の測定には、自己カウンセリングシート実施前後の主観的ストレス度の比率変化、及びシート全体の完成度により評価し、分析にはSPSS ver.11 for Windowsを使用した。介入授業実施前後の尺度値の比較には、Wilcoxonの符号付き順位検定を

用いた。

その結果、介入授業実施前後で受講生の主観的ストレス度が有意に低下し（ $z=-5.398$ ,  $p=.000$ ）、シート全体の完成度も概ね良好であった。たった1回の介入でも効果が見られたことから、定期的に実践することで、本法はストレスマネジメントに一定の効果をもたらすものと考えられる。今後はさらにサンプル数を増やし、より正確なデータを入手すると共に、統制群を設定し、本法の教育効果を比較検討することが望まれる。