

Effects of Positive Journaling on Salivary Cortisol and Perceived Stress Levels

Cortisol is a hormone released when the body is experiencing stress, often in threatening situations. Even in times of relative safety, the body can release cortisol, in response to milder, external stressors, such as school or work. Intervening factors such as meditation, time in the sunlight or avoiding technology can be used to regulate cortisol and stress levels. To determine the impact of the intervening factor journaling on managing stress levels, cortisol levels in 32 undergraduate neuroscience students were measured over a period of 7 days. Participants were asked to perform positive journaling, by reflecting on positive aspects of their day, and complete a pre-study and post-study survey. Only data for 21 students was included in the statistical analysis. Differences in survey responses were correlated with cortisol levels and survey responses to discover a relationship between journaling & cortisol levels, and between journaling & perceived stress levels. Statistical analysis showed no statistically significant data from the correlations, showing it cannot be proven that journaling helps decrease cortisol & perceived stress levels.