

ROGER J. KLEIN, Psy. D.

The Effects of Sedative Music, Muscle Relaxation, and Success Imagery on Self-Report of Anxiety, Self-Concept, and Depression Among Elementary School Children

A stress-management program entitled Ready...Set...R.E.L.A.X. (Release, Expand, Learn, Appreciate, X-pand) used a combination of sedative music, muscle relaxation, and success imagery for the purpose of reducing the harmful effects of anxiety among elementary age children and subsequently increasing their performance on the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT).

The experimental (E) group subjects were 123 1st through 6th grade students enrolled in a Catholic school. The control (C) group subjects were 120 1st through 6th grade students enrolled in a second Catholic school in the same city. The two groups represented the entire enrollment of their schools and were matched in socioeconomic levels, ability levels, and age.

Pre- and post-testing was completed at grades one through three using the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS), Depression Inventory for Children and Adults, and the MAT. Children in grades four through six completed the RCMAS, the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Inventory, and the MAT.

The Ready...Set...R.E.L.A.X. program consisted of the following components: a. an educational inservice program held separately for the parents of the subjects, teaching staff and students; b. the principal reading the original relaxation and success imagery scripts over the intercom with follow-up discussion led by the classroom teacher; c. relaxing music and a quiet reading time on days scripts were not read. The first year program did not include follow-up discussion nor any scripts dealing with preparation for taking the MAT. Both the first year and the second year were included in the analysis of data.

Within- and between-group comparisons of anxiety, depression, and self-concept suggested that children in grades 1-5 benefited most from the program. In particular, grade one and two subjects showed a significant treatment effect in all measured categories. Results of the MAT indicated significant gains for both the E group and the C group from year one to two. However, the E group scores were significantly higher than the C group in every instance except at the sixth-grade level. Finally results of between-year comparison showed that self-report of anxiety, depression, and self-concept remained generally stable between post-testing the first year to pre-testing the second year.

The Ready, Set, R.E.L.A.X. program was intended to help elementary-age children reduce harmful levels of anxiety. The current project provides an economical and easily implemented procedure that can be used with small or large groups of students.

INDEX WORDS: Anxiety, Children, Music, Imagery, Self-Concept, Stress-Management, Relaxation, Depression