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Decreasing Stress Levels through Animal Interaction

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Decreasing Stress Levels through Animal Interaction

School of Nursing

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine college students' feelings after playing with a support dog during a stressful time such as midterm exams and final exams. The goal of the research is to determine how effective the students perceive playing with pets has on decreasing their stress levels during stressful times. The reason this study is being conducted is to focus on the students' experiences and the thoughts and feelings that are occurring within themselves personally during the interaction with the dogs. It is based on their perception and feelings of stress relief rather than their physiologic proof of stress relief. For this study, seven students apart of Cleveland State University's Accelerated Nursing Program voluntarily participated in interacting with three dogs before their exam. During this time, they focused on playing with the dogs and forgot about their study notes or exam. They all interacted with the dogs at the same time, allowing them to see that their classmates are also relaxing. When the students returned from their exam, they engaged in a focus group in which they were asked several questions about their experience when interacting with the dogs. It was found that students did indeed experience a reduction in stress levels and felt more relaxed. Students also reported that they were more focused and concentrated during their exam and attributed that gained focus to interacting with the dogs earlier that day. They felt like they benefited from this experience and wanted more opportunities like it.

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