

Summary

The Stress Less, Nurse Strong project aimed to increase stress awareness and improve self-efficacy with evidence-based holistic interventions among undergraduate nursing students. The project was implemented to address high rates of stress among this population. The four-week project revealed students experience moderate levels of stress and resonated most with guided meditation.

Introduction

Student nurses experience moderate stress at rates as high as 75% (Straud & McNaughton-Cassill, 2019). Guided meditation and the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) are evidence-based, holistic practices that lower stress, are highly accessible, and have no cost. (Deshpande et al., 2024 & Dark-Freudeman et al., 2022).The purpose of this project was to determine whether a two-week practice of guided meditation and Emotional Freedom Technique enhances stress awareness and self-efficacy among junior and senior nursing students.

Methods

The study design was employed using a mixed method approach to 21 participants. It utilized the Perceived Stress Scale (Figure 1), a video recorded demonstration and education module, and a post-survey (Figure 2) that incorporated a Likert-scale assessment of perceived achievement of project objectives and optional qualitative feedback.

Figure 1

PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE
Adapted from the New Hampshire Employee Assistance Program

A precise assessment of personal stress can be obtained using a classic stress assessment tool called the Perceived Stress Scale. Originally developed in 1983, the popular tool explores your thoughts and feelings across different topics in the last month. For each question, you will be asked to rate how often you felt a certain way. Each question is different, even if some appear similar, so answer quickly! The best approach is to answer quickly and avoid creating the number of times you felt a particular way; rather, indicate what comes like a reasonable estimate.

For each question, choose from the following alternatives:
0 – never 1 – almost never 2 – sometimes 3 – often 4 – very often

_____ 1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?

_____ 2. In the last month, how often have you felt you could not control the important things in your life?

_____ 3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?

_____ 4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

_____ 5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

_____ 6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?

_____ 7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

_____ 8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?

_____ 9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of the things that happened that were outside of your control?

_____ 10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Figuring Your PSS Score

You can determine your PSS score by following these directions:

- First, convert your scores for questions 4, 5, 7, and 8. On these four questions, change the scores like this! $0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1, 4 = 0$
- Now add up your scores for each item to get a total. **My total score is _____.**
- Individual scores on the PSS can range from 0 to 40 with higher scores indicating higher personal stress.
 - Scores ranging from 0-13 would be considered low stress.
 - Scores ranging from 14-26 would be considered moderate stress.
 - Scores ranging from 27-40 would be considered high stress.

Two people can undergo the same circumstances and have two very different experiences. This is what makes the Perceived Stress Scale both unique and important. The total score can fluctuate between high and low stress depending on the individual's perception.

Reference:
New Hampshire Department of Administrative Services. (n.d.). *Perceived stress scale*. <https://www.das.nh.gov/realms/docs/psscarv01/2018m/02scale.pdf>

This is the Perceived Stress Scale administered to students to increase stress awareness. This scale was adapted from the New Hampshire Employee Assistance Program.

Figure 2

This post-survey was administered to the nursing students during week four of the project.

Enhancing Stress Awareness and Holistic Management in Undergraduate Nursing Students
POST-SURVEY

With sincere thanks, the hope is that you found the learning activities related to stress awareness and mitigation both informative and useful. If you could please take just a few moments to provide feedback about your experience, it would be most appreciated.

Please answer true or false for the following questions:

1. I feel I understand the effects of stress on health	True False
2. I feel I understand how Guided Meditation mitigates stress	True False
3. I feel I understand how EFT mitigates stress	True False
4. I feel I know how to use Guided Meditation	True False
5. I feel I know how to use EFT	True False

Any additional comments you have may be shared here:

Results

A total of 21 participants completed the Perceived Stress Scale with a mean stress score of 24.3 ± 5.0 (Figure 3). Sixty-seven percent (14/21) of students completed the education module with a 100% (14/14) pass rate. There were nine post-survey respondents who all reported understanding the impact of stress on health and the role and application of guided meditation in stress reduction (Figure 4). Post-survey summative assessment results indicate Emotional Freedom Technique understanding and application was 56% (5/9). Received qualitative feedback was uniformly positive (Figure 5).

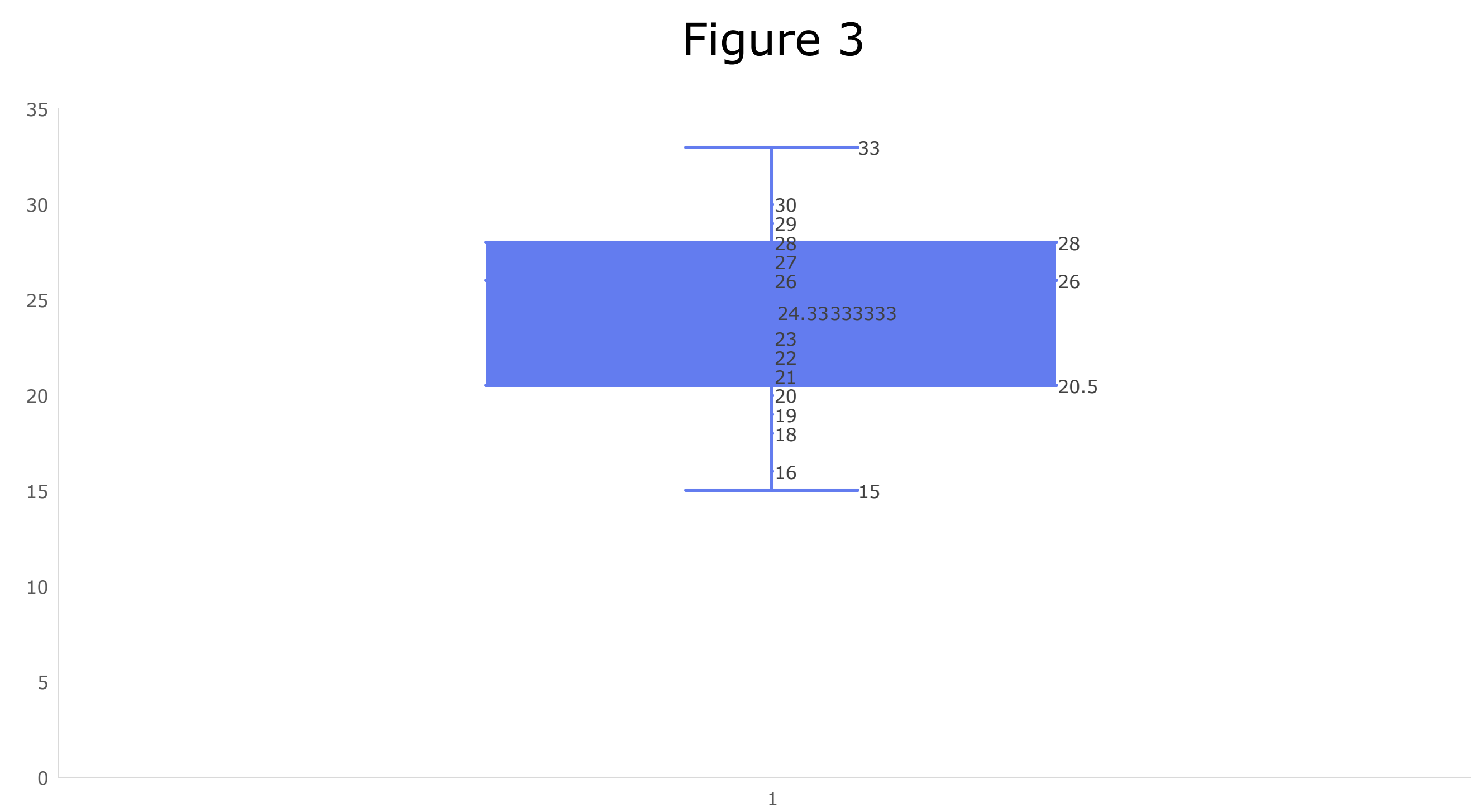


Figure 4

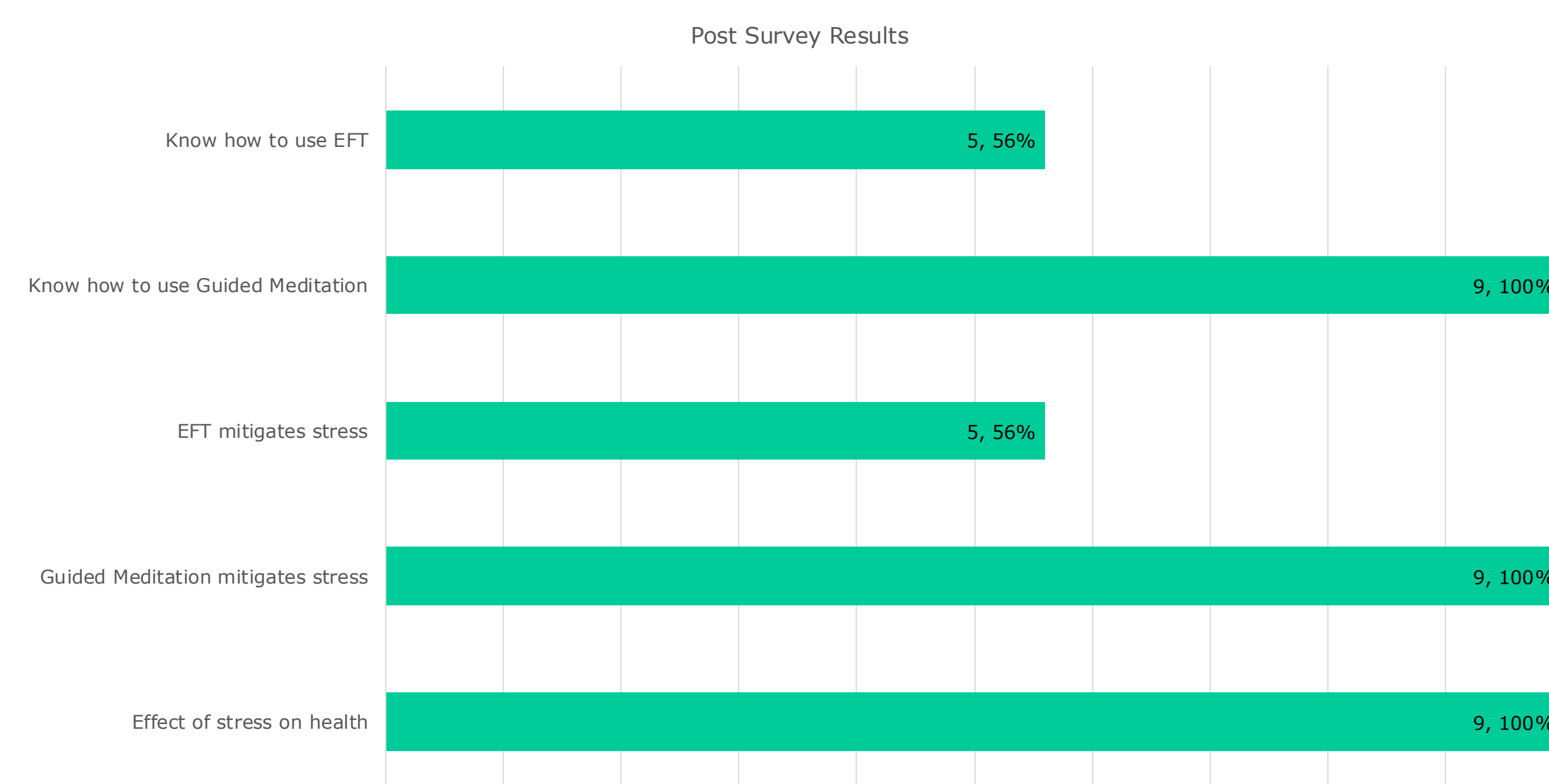


Figure 5



Discussion

- Literature reports 75% of undergraduate nursing students experience moderate stress scores (Straud & McNaughton-Cassill, 2019) and this is reflected in the mean stress scores of the project
- Guided meditation showed strong student acceptance and comprehension
- EFT requires additional hands-on practice for student confidence
- Holistic stress interventions align with nursing students' preferences
- Future implementations should include extended EFT practice sessions
- Future implementations should measure post Perceived Stress Scale results

Limitations

- Small sample size
- Self-report bias
- Limited post-intervention data collection
- Short follow-up

Future Implications

- Nursing students need evidence-based strategies to build resilience to stress and avoid burnout
- Undergraduate nursing programs should incorporate education about stress awareness, interventions, and the resulting implications if left unmanaged
- Focus on larger, more diverse samples to strengthen the evidence base
- Incorporate longitudinal designs to strengthen the evidence base

References

- Dark-Freudeman, A., Jones, C., & Terry, C. (2022). Mindfulness, anxiety, and perceived stress in university students: Comparing a mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) against active and traditional control conditions. *Journal of American College Health*, 70(7), 2116–2125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2020.1845180>
- Deshpande, A. G., Johnson, J. R., Casta, A. M., Marien, M. S., & Reiff, M. (2024). The impact of a mindfulness-based stress reduction program on university students' mental health: A mixed-methods evaluation. *Journal of American College Health*, 72(9), 3791–3801. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2023.2198028>
- Straud CL, & McNaughton-Cassill M. (2019). Self-blame and stress in undergraduate college students: The mediating role of proactive coping. *Journal of American College Health* 67(4), 367–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2018.1484360>