

# THE EFFECTS OF GETTING UNSTRESSED (GUST™), A WHOLISTIC MULTI-MODAL PROGRAM, ON ADOLESCENTS' WELL-BEING

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This study examined the effects of a wholistic multi-modal program on the well-being of adolescents, aged thirteen to nineteen. The program was designed to manage and reduce stress in a self-directed format, with a selection of specific techniques that addressed the teenagers' self-concept and their experiences of anxiety, and to provide tools to assist in decision-making. The dependent measures used included the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale (N-S), and the Self-Description Questionnaire II (SDQ II). The experimental design was a pre-test/post-test with a control group. The independent variable was constructed as a one-day, eight-hour workshop in which all 72 adolescent research subjects participated. The wholistic multi-modal program intervention yielded statistically significant differences for the treatment group ( $p < .05$ ), lowering state anxieties. Findings also indicate statistically significant improvements ( $p < .01$ ) in the Total Self-Concept scores of the adolescents, as well as in two of the eleven sub-scales. The results provided evidence of a shift towards a more internal locus of control ( $p < .01$ ). No statistically significant differences were found for the trait anxiety levels of the treatment group, nor between the treatment and control groups.

**Background.** In addition to cognitive and psychological domains, which generally tend to be the focus of well-being (other than the physical realm), this study addressed the spiritual void that exists for the adolescents. The program considered the adolescent as a whole person. It therefore allowed the possibility to reflect on the larger questions of meaning, choice, and identity. Rather than changing exterior circumstances for the adolescents, GUST™ offers an approach that afforded the adolescents with the cognitive and spiritual awareness as well as the practical tools to create changes from the inside out. The educational aspects of Socratic teaching style, group sharing and validating of commonalities across participants' situations and learning experiences, and open discussions in a group setting, in which the practical skills are taught, applied, practiced, and discussed, further invited and facilitated safe and internally motivated changes in attitude and behavior.

## INTERVENTION: Eight-hour Workshop

**Dowsing Rod Demonstration:** Visual demonstration of subtle energy fields and their potential impacts.

**Whole Self Model:** Visual and intellectual basis for further discussion of energy fields, Higher Self, and how stress can manifest itself on various levels.

**Discussion about Stress Grounding, Centering: Breathing, Balancing Brain, Emptying Mind:** Balancing the brain and emptying the mind, particularly through a focus on breathing, are considered the cornerstones of any stress management, relaxation and meditation work and thus essential for all that follows in this workshop; providing practical exercises participants can use anywhere and any time.

**“Air” Meditation:** The How-To of emptying the mind.

**Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** Shifts conscious awareness to where stress is held in the physical body and provides an effective technique of releasing physical tension; allows for further practice of Grounding and Centring.

**5-Step Meditation:** Further application of above techniques while adding a self-realization component.

**Place of Peace Discussion & Guided Imagery:** All of the above building blocks are brought together in this guided imagery exercise, where the participants find an inner Place of Peace they can use from that moment on.

**Muscle Testing/ Dowsing:** From the point of awareness the participants have gained to this point, they are able to tap into their intuition and connect with their Higher Selves.

**Biofeedback:** Provides a direct experience of self-regulation of autonomic physical experiences—“mind over matter”—confirming that people can help themselves to change.

**Autogenic Training:** Another application of previously learned components, in particular the psychoneuroimmunology connection.

**Chakras: Discussion & Guided Imagery:** Connects everyday physical and psychological experiences of participants, such as stomach cramps because of nerves, headaches, throat tightening etc to energy fields, whole self model; providing a visual/kinesthetic experience of energy centres and how to achieve balance on multiple levels.

**Review: Breathing, Centring, Grounding:** Reiterating the obvious and essential: the most basic method to deal with stress—and life in general—is the ability to ground and centre.

**Higher Self Discussion & Guided Imagery:** After experiential encounters in the various activities with the Higher Self during the workshop, the concept is further discussed, other opinions/experiences are shared, and then the participants are given the opportunity to further acquaint themselves with their own Higher Self.

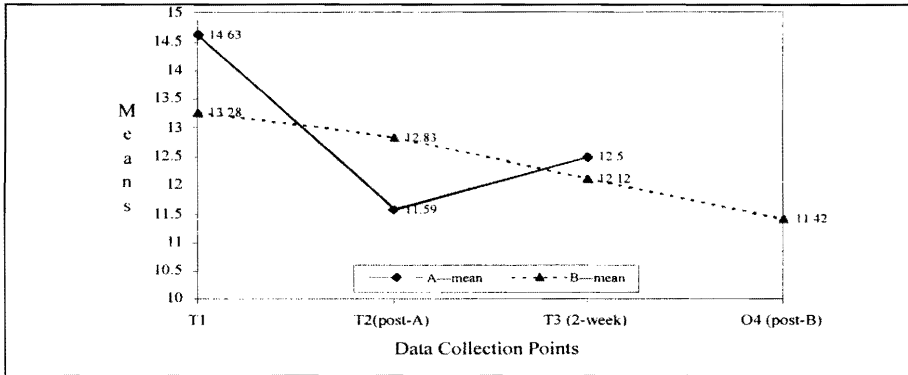
**Review: Balance:** Once again, emphasizes the basics: grounding, centring and the importance of balance on multiple levels.

**Therapeutic Touch™:** Brings all components together, in order to deal with predominantly physical and emotional pain energetically; demonstrating the immediate impact of Therapeutic Touch (TT™) and its meditative/relaxing/healing qualities Finding Guide Discussion & Guided Imagery: Gives permission to the participants to further explore their connections with the universe and emphasizes the fact that help is available from various sources.

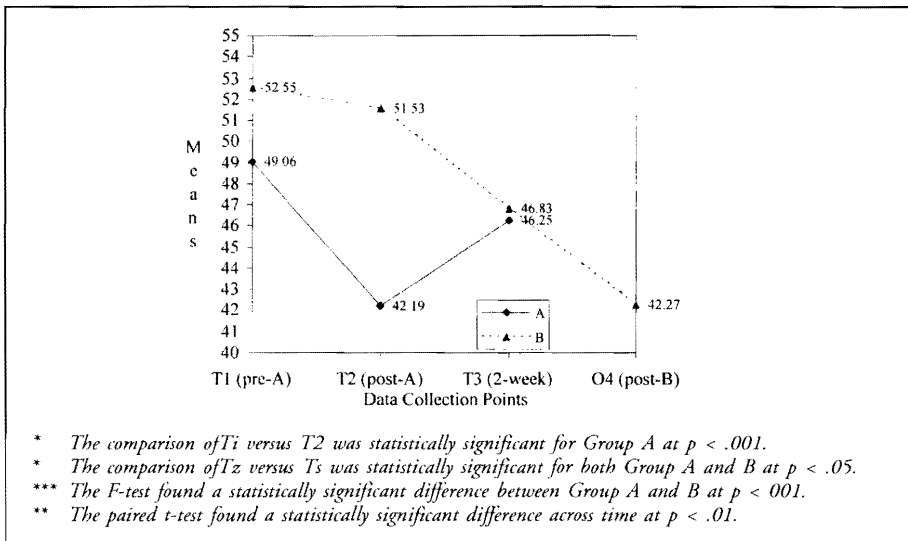
**Inner Counselor Process:** Culminating experience that requires application of all other components taught thus far; also provides the participants with the opportunity to change behaviour patterns if so desired.

**Final Dowsing Rod Demo:** Demonstrates to participants quite effectively what they have learned over the course of the day; helps them feel proud of their accomplishments and abilities to take care of themselves.

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**Figure 1.** Locus of Control: Means by Group from Week 1 to Week 5. The results obtained from this study provide evidence to support the hypothesis that the adolescents experienced a shift towards a more internal locus of control due to their participation in the one-day GUST<sup>TM</sup> program. The test of Group by Time interaction from the two-way repeated measures ANOVAs indicated statistically significant differences for the locus of control ( $F(2, 140) = 3.95, p .05$ ). Further testing found statistical significance comparing  $T_1$  with  $T_2$  ( $F(1, 70) = 18.76, p .001$ ) in Group A. Comparing  $T_2$  with  $T_3$  ( $F(1, 70) = 2.74, p = .102$ ) suggests the intervention remained stable over time.



- \* The comparison of  $T_1$  versus  $T_2$  was statistically significant for Group A at  $p < .001$ .
- \* The comparison of  $T_2$  versus  $T_3$  was statistically significant for both Group A and B at  $p < .05$ .
- \*\*\* The F-test found a statistically significant difference between Group A and B at  $p < .001$ .
- \*\* The paired t-test found a statistically significant difference across time at  $p < .01$ .

**Figure 2.** State Anxiety: Means by Group from Week 1 to Week 5. The results of the two-factor repeated measures ANOVAs testing the Group by Time interaction did not indicate statistically significant differences in the trait anxiety scores ( $F(1) = 1.83, p = .164$ ), and therefore no further F-tests were executed.

**Design.** The study was designed as an experimental pre-test/ post-test control group design with limited random assignment. Additionally, there was a probe at week 5 post-intervention, although only for Group A (O4) to assess the stability of the intervention. The design included four observation times for both groups, referred to as O1 through O4. However, only three of the data collection points correspond to each other between the groups, referred to as baseline (T<sub>1</sub>), two weeks later (T<sub>2</sub>), and post-data (T<sub>3</sub>).

**Results.** The findings in this research study suggest that the exposure to GUST™ does appear to improve the well-being of adolescents. Well-being was operationalized through three major determinants: locus of control, levels of state- and trait-anxiety, and self-concept.

**State Anxiety.** The results of the two-factor repeated measures ANOVAs of the state anxiety scores provide evidence to support the hypothesis that the intervention lowers the state anxiety levels. The lower anxiety levels appear to be holding over time.

**Self-Concept.** The results obtained from this study provide evidence to support the hypothesis that the adolescents' self-concept improved due to their experience with the GUST™ program and remained stable at the two-week follow-up. Both the analyses from the two-way repeated measures ANOVAs and the paired *t*-tests conducted for the control group indicated statistically significant changes. These were found in the Total Self-Concept scale (*t*[3]), *p* < .01), as well as two sub-scales; Physical Appearance (*t*[39], *p* < .05) and General School (*t*[39], *p* < .05). Thus, the results of the paired *t*-tests conducted for Group B at immediate pre- and post-intervention points (O3 versus O4) also support the hypothesis that the intervention improves the adolescents' self-concept.

**Conclusions and Discussion.** The GUST™ program presents the adolescents with the opportunity to become intentional participants in the creative process. The qualitative data constitute proof of how readily and quickly many of the teenagers can become conscious co-creators in their lives (“I am in control of everything that has to do with me”). Many adolescents are searching to fill the spiritual void—often termed as lack of connectedness—and are keen to find a meaningful way to do so. The GUST™ program offers a feasible option for them, tailored to their needs, filled with many techniques, and structured to facilitate self-healing on the adolescents' journey back to wholeness.

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