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An Online Resource to Promote Well-Being Among College Students With Social Anxiety Disorder

Valerie Maxine Sanderson, M.Ed., Steven M. Gerardi, PhD, OTD, OTR, and Jerilyn Callen, OTD, OTR

Background

Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is the second most common anxiety disorder that affects American adults (Anxiety and Depression Association of America [ADAA], 2018). Even though effective treatment is available, less than 5% of individuals diagnosed with SAD sought treatment within the initial year of diagnosis and more than a third of individuals diagnosed with SAD reported that they sought treatment only after 10 or more years from initial onset of symptoms (ADAA, 2018).

A student's ability to participate in meaningful occupations such as school, rest and sleep, leisure, and eating are negatively impacted by SAD (Clarke & Fox, 2017). Students with SAD are often in a state of hyperarousal, which has shown to hinder cognitive functioning, processing and recalling information, and ability to follow directions which are required for academic tasks (Davis, 2011).

Problem

Online resources that specifically discuss how SAD influences students' ability to participate in occupations and provide evidence-based, occupation-based interventions and routines that students with SAD can utilize to enhance occupational performance in the academic setting are not currently available.

Purpose

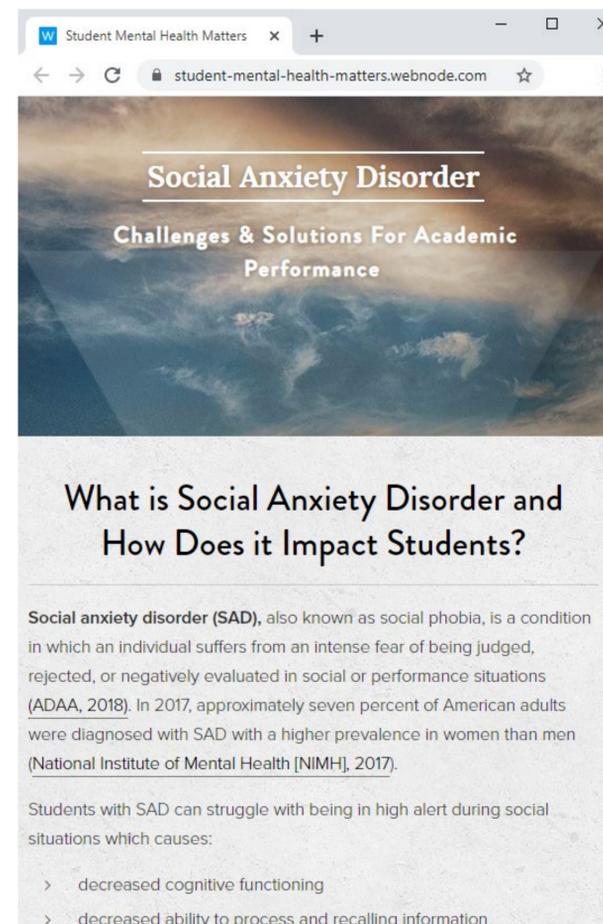
To create an educational online resource for individuals with SAD that contains evidence-based occupation-based interventions that have been shown to decrease anxiety and promote adaptive habits and routines

Methods

- Based on the model of human occupation (MOHO)
- The literature was reviewed to identify topics to be included
- Educational topics selected in consultation with mentor and capstone coordinator
- Topics included in website to address anxiety and enhance school participation:
 - Physical activity
 - Animal companionship
 - Arts and crafts
 - Music
 - Diaphragmatic Breathing
 - Sleep Hygiene
 - Accommodations
 - Additional Resources
- Webpage further influenced by the 14-week experience with The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) San Antonio Local Affiliate

Results

Information gathered from the literature and mentored practice setting experience was synthesized into the website: **Student Mental Health Matters (SMHM)** (Sanderson, 2020).



Discussion

The **SMHM** website provides an easily accessible, free, occupation-based internet resource that promotes unguided interventions, supports, and strategies to help students engage in academic activities despite living with SAD challenges. By implementing solutions presented on the website, a student can better manage negative stressors and symptoms when exposed to an anxiety-producing situation (Kählke et al., 2019), and thereby be better able to participate in meaningful occupations.

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