

# Managing mental health for a marginalized subgroup: The health promotion program SAM for students

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As students are a vulnerable group for mental disorders, tailored interventions for promoting mental health and well-being are urgently needed. Programs of the third wave of CBT (e.g., ACT, MSC) showed promising results for addressing these issues and hence, SAM synergistically combines all these approaches. Since mindfulness is still the core element of those methods, SAM adopted this foundation but further included related concepts broadening the potential therapeutical utility. The name was derived from the German terms of the three pillars of program content (Selbstfürsorge, Achtsamkeit, Mitgefühl) and was developed in a multi-stage process using a participatory design with students at the University of Klagenfurt. This process included several feedback and revision loops to optimize the program and meet the needs of this target population. To investigate the efficacy of the program, which was delivered via a self-administered 21-day intervention, a RCT was conducted. It was hypothesized that SAM would 1) increase students' mindfulness, self-compassion, and wellbeing and 2) decrease levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. The final sample consisted of N = 118 students who (82.2 % women, mean age = 25.83) were previously randomized to either the SAM program or a low dose educational content group (nutrition, exercise, relaxation, and stress reduction). A mixed model MANOVA yielded non-significant interaction and group effects but a significant time effect in the expected direction. These results implicate that even small interventions might improve outcome domains. However, the SAM program could benefit from these insights and is currently under revision.

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