



Contribution ID: 98

Type: Vortrag

Can Music Benefit Stress Recovery?

Monday, 5 September 2022 11:00 (20 minutes)

Background: This study aimed to explore the effect of music on stress recovery using both subjective measurements and physiological indices.

Methods: Participants ($N = 105$) underwent the Trier Social Stress Test before being randomly allocated to four groups: group 1 listened to researcher-selected music; group 2 listened to self-selected music; group 3 listened to water sound; and group 4 remained in silence. During recovery, Visual Analogue Scales (VAS) was used, and saliva samples were collected for cortisol and saliva alpha-amylase (sAA) analysis.

Results: The change of VAS scores was significantly different ($F(3, 99) = 3.11, p = 0.030, d = 0.71$); the area under the curve with respect to increase (AUCi) of sAA was also different ($F(3, 95) = 3.36, p = 0.022, d = 0.85$); whereas there were no differences for the AUCi of cortisol. The planned contrasts revealed that, for VAS change, group 4 was higher than groups 1-3 ($t(99) = 0.049, r = 0.20$). For AUCi of sAA, group 1 was higher than group 2 ($t(95) = 0.003, r = 0.30$).

Conclusion: Music or nature sounds decreased recovery. Self-selected music was better than researcher-selected music on sAA.

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Session Classification: RG Stress und Stressbewältigung

Track Classification: Gesundheitspsychologie