



MEDIA RELEASE | March 2017

Spring break project investigates how youth manage stress

While spring break may be more traditionally associated with partying in the sunshine, 10 young people (aged 15–23) have spent the last two weeks taking part in a “Youth Research Slam” creating and delivering a research project about how young people manage stress.

Supported by the McCreary Centre Society, the youth used their own experiences and those of their friends to create a survey which asked participants about the stress in their lives and what techniques they used to cope with it. They also received input into the creation of the survey from 12 members of the Youth Action Team from Belmont Secondary School on South Vancouver Island.

The survey was finished and available on-line at the end of the first week of spring break, and young people used their social networks to get it out. By the following Monday at 9am when the survey closed, 586 young people from around the world had completed it.

The second week of spring break was spent learning to analyze the data, pull out key messages and create a report, which was then shared with an invited audience of professionals who work with youth.

Annie Smith, Executive Director of McCreary commented on the project: *"This has been a really exciting and rewarding couple of weeks. Watching young people so passionate about improving mental health in the province and also about learning to do good community-based research is a humbling experience and I think the wealth of data they have captured in their survey will be really helpful to teachers, counsellors, parents, and others with an interest in young people's health."*

Commenting on the results of the survey, one youth who took part in the Research Slam said *"The results show they aren't teaching us how to deal with our problems. They're just putting a Band-Aid on the problem and sweeping it under the rug. I would like to see more programs or classes to help youth manage stress better."*

Another participant, Omya Kafi from Surrey commented *"I think the survey shows us that having goals can be a double edged sword. We are encouraged to set goals and when you reach them it feels wonderful but when things don't go well and you don't achieve your goals, it just adds to your stress."*

A copy of the report created by the young people will be available shortly at www.mcs.bc.ca. The youth who created the survey have decided to keep going with their project and are now creating a workshop to take the findings back to youth groups and begin a dialogue about positive ways young people can manage stress.

Society is a non-McCreary Centre Society is a non-government, non-profit organization committed to improving the health of B.C. youth through research and community-based projects.

Founded in 1977, the Society sponsors and promotes a wide range of activities and research to address unmet health needs of young people.

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BACKGROUNDER

The Youth Research Slam was a project of the McCreary Centre Society's Youth Research Academy, a group of group of youth aged 16 to 24 with government care experience who, with the support of McCreary staff, develop, analyze, and disseminate research projects of interest to youth with government care experience and service providers. The aim of the Youth Research Slam was to give young people an introduction to community based research and the opportunity to design and deliver a project of interest to them.

The survey the young people created asked a series of 38 questions about what causes young people stress, how they manage it, who supports them and what is helpful. A total of 586 youth filled out the survey (60% were 12–18 years old, and the rest were aged 19–24).

A SELECTION OF KEY FINDINGS:

Most youth experienced at least a little stress in the past week, and 24% reported extreme levels.

When asked about stress in the past week, youth most commonly reported feeling bothered by stress on all 7 days (36%).

The main causes of stress in young people's lives were school (78%), thinking about their future (72%), and their mental health (58%).

When asked how well they manage their stress, 40% of youth felt they managed it poorly. Only 4% felt they managed their stress very well.

When they felt stressed, the top 5 things youth did that increased their stress were keeping to themselves, sleeping less than usual, trying not to think about it, taking it out on others, and eating more than usual.

The top 5 things that helped alleviate stress were listening to music, doing art or something else creative, surfing the internet, turning to someone for support, and spending time in nature.

Youth in BC were twice as likely as youth in other places to feel that smoking marijuana was effective in lowering their stress (22% vs. 11%).

We asked youth who they turned to for support when feeling stressed in the past year. Their most common answers were their friends, family members, and romantic partners.

Youth were also asked where they went for support when feeling stressed in the past year. Most (63%) reported they turned to the Internet. The next most common answer, was a Mobile App (36%). Most youth who accessed these services found them at least somewhat helpful. However, 70% of youth who accessed a Telephone Help Line did not find it helpful.

Circumstances where youth felt some stress could be helpful included on a first date, when starting a new job or new school, when playing sports or performing, and when studying.