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## **Stress Management Podcast Capstone Project**

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### Abstract

The Stress Management Podcast Capstone Project sought to answer the question of how I might raise awareness about integrating holistic mental health services into my health coaching practice. This relevant topic centered on developing an innovative solution by drawing together two opposing perspectives from public health opinions and holistic health mindset. Launching a podcast proved to be a creative means for offering value to all stakeholders involved. Listeners received free holistic stress support, community and mental health professionals gained additional tools for their clients, while I established myself as an expert on mental health coaching. Exercising emotional intelligence regarding the sensitive nature of the topic was essential. The project best fit the action approach as it was a new professional obligation for me. Results included eight total listeners for the four podcast episodes. The podcast project successfully concluded with positive outcomes from a small but enthusiastic audience.

*Keywords: herbal adaptogens, stress management, health coaching, podcasts, botanicals, mental health*

## **Introduction**

The Stress Management Podcast Capstone Project aimed to meld my passion for preventive medicine with my education in public health by answering the question: how might I create awareness about integrating holistic mental health coaching into my practice to provide stress support to clients and the community? Surveys reflect an alarming rate of mental health and stress related symptoms with limited mental health professionals available to address demands, which justify pursuing the project (Bora et.al, 2010). Data regarding the use of adaptogenics herbs, lifestyle changes, and health coaching strongly point to each as a reasonable therapeutic option with great potential (Gordon, 2021). The primary stakeholders for this project were myself, my health coaching clients, listeners, followers, mental health providers, and community organizations. At its conclusion, this project provided a valuable service to each of the stakeholders and opened my opportunities as a health coaching professional.

## **Section 1: Innovative Approach**

### **Bringing Together Perspectives**

To solve the problem of how I might enter the mental health coaching niche and give community members holistic stress support I pulled from two opposing perspectives on the topic. From my public health education, I was aware that mental health is one of the dimensions of wellness that has been strained since the pandemic (Gordon, 2021). Public health models also support health coaching as an effective strategy for improving mental health (Bora et.al, 2010). My integrative health experience gave me a very different lens to see the problem through by offering botanical medicine like adaptogenic herbs as a way to combat stress (Winston & Maimes, 2019). My project attempted to combine both seemingly disparate ideas to form a new option and package it in a manner that would be appreciated by both camps of thinking.

### **Creating Innovative Approaches: Beyond Either/Or**

The innovation in the project's approach is evident in how it took two very different models and presented a novel solution for those seeking support for stress disorders by creating a holistic therapeutic option. Although health related podcasts are not new, there are none specifically addressing stress symptoms with herbal remedies. Additionally, the project put an innovative spin on research by using public health and integrative medicine sources to complement one another. Bora, Leaning, Morrese, & Robert back the benefits of using the health education and coaching model in mental health patients (2010). Dr. Tieraona Lowdog, gives validity to the use of herbal medicine for stress related symptoms such as anxiety and low moods (2010). The book *Herbal for Strength Stamina and Stress Relief* provided historical and clinical use of botanicals in stress related conditions cited in the podcast (Winston & Maimes, 2019). Each of these components of the project pushed it past either/or ideas and into an unconventional innovation.

## **Section 2: Emotional Intelligence**

### **Awareness of Self and Others**

Exercising emotional intelligence in the form of self-awareness and awareness of others was essential to designing the botanicals for stress podcasts in a manner that would be well received by listeners. It required awareness of my own "voice" and how others would perceive it. Listeners also needed to have enough self-awareness that they recognize stress as a problem in their life as well as determine that they are interested in seeking out solutions.

### **Consideration of the Audience & Value to Others: Emotional Intelligence**

The action-oriented approach of creating the Stress Management Podcast made the assumption that listeners are operating with a level of emotional intelligence that allowed them to

recognize the impact of stress in their life. It then inferred that this recognition led listeners to move to the contemplation stage of making a change as they looked for options to help them resolve their problem. It was important to craft scripts that connected listeners to their emotions about their symptoms to encourage engagement. This sensitive topic required the utmost emotional intelligence from me as a host to offer support rather than cause unintentional harm. Another important point of emotional intelligence was avoiding messaging that could be perceived as stigmatization of mental illness.

The research that I am doing to create the podcast is valuable to me because it allows me to become a better practitioner with a new skill set. It is valuable to listeners and clients because they get free support in finding holistic solutions for stress related issues. Mental health workers and other community organizations will find value in messaging that echoes the importance of people taking care of their mental health.

### **Section 3: Creative Thinking**

#### **The Creative Framework**

The creative framework for the Stress Management Podcast project came when I followed the integrative problem-solving process for answering how I might increase awareness about integrating holistic mental health coaching into my practice? I took a step back and looked at the issue from a new perspective, setting aside my fear of being judged to brainstorm a whole new slew of ideas. Design thinking with an open mindful mindset, maintaining curiosity, and reframing the problem were essential elements of the creative framework utilized.

#### **Unique Approach/es to Project**

Creating a podcast as a means of announcing my endeavors to incorporate mental health coaching into my practice stood against standard marketing tactics for advertising a new service.

Launching a podcast deviated from traditional social media marketing campaigns with a unique approach offering a value to listeners before becoming customers. The podcast was also the first of its kind featuring episodes focused on botanicals for stress related mental health concerns. Niche podcasts such as this engage listeners in a manner that piques interest and encourages them to follow through with an action transforming listeners into customers at three times the rate of other mediums (Vilceanu, Johnson, & Burns, 2021).

#### **Section 4: Your Innovative Solution**

##### **Accomplishment of Capstone**

The Stress Management Podcast Capstone Project accomplished its innovative goals with the publication of episodes covering topics like *Herbal Support for Stress & Anxiety*, *The Stress & Sleep Connection*, *Soothing & Stimulating Adaptogens*. By scripting and posting the podcast I successfully displayed my expertise on the topic in a meaningful and entertaining manner. The podcast served as a tool to instill trust in listeners which improves compliance and outcomes if they should become clients. Lastly, the podcast project became an avenue for increasing the current customer base by capturing an audience of listeners attracted to holistic stress care for emotional balance not yet tapped with other advertising.

##### **Innovative Approach to the Problem/Project**

Several ideas surfaced after contemplating how I might approach growing awareness about the new holistic mental health coaching services I offer. To measure each idea's creativity, I considered whether it solved the problem with relevancy and novelty (Petroni, 2018). The least innovative idea was starting a social media advertising campaign for a big-ticket emotional wellness masterclass common to many industry moguls. The most innovative and promising idea was launching a free podcast featuring botanicals for emotional balance. I settled on the action

oriented approach of expanding my professional duties to include podcasting about botanicals for mental health as the most novel option as it is a fresh market space not yet covered by other hosts. It is also a relevant issue as mental health statistics continue to reflect stress and mental health disorders as a pressing public health problem. I will continue to integrate innovation by coupling the podcast with additional social media formats and platforms. Tiktok is one area that I have not yet occupied with a global viewer base and unique algorithms that allow for material to reach a wider audience of subscribers or followers. Pioneering the holistic mental health and wellness coaching field beyond the capstone project has inspired me to move to the next level of innovation in my profession.

## **Section 5: Results**

### **Benefits to Stakeholders**

There were multiple stakeholders for this project including myself, listeners, current and prospective health coaching clients, community members and mental health professionals and organizations. After posting the first episode, I realized my original plan to use the podcasts analytics tools to show how it affected each stakeholder would not be possible. The analytics tools provided by the podcast host, Anchor.fm, showed information about the number of unique listeners, the number of plays, and where listeners tuned it (Ex: Apple Podcast, Anchor, Spotify, Facebook, Google Podcast). Listeners were anonymous unless they choose to engage leaving no way to determine which of the stakeholder categories listeners fall into. There were fewer listeners than hoped due to difficulties including major equipment failure and a delay in Apple approving and posting the podcast. The quantitative data I was able to glean is as follows: There were four podcasts posted with a total of 32 plays and 8 listeners who were all female. Facebook accounted for 57% of plays, Anchor 10%, Spotify 10%, Apple 3% and 20% was other. Based on



the comments and engagement in Facebook I suspect that the Facebook listeners were current clients. If this is true, then I can say that one of the outcomes includes the goal of offering clients additional botanical resources for stress care. The qualitative data came from podcast direct messages and comments on social media about the podcast. This includes a resounding positive response echoing listener and follower appreciation of the concept. Direct messages from podcast listeners expressed their gratitude and described how much they enjoyed the topic of herbs for mental health and stories shared in the episodes. I believe I achieved my goal of expanding my current content and offerings to include mental/emotional health support with the podcast. While I don't have a means of measuring the outcome for mental health professionals and the community, I can say that the podcast project fills a gap by offering holistically minded stress care solutions designed to complement rather than compete with other mental health measures.

### **Impact on Stakeholders**

The stress management podcast project reflected an obvious positive impact on stakeholders. Clients and listeners reflected entertainment and educational value as one positive outcome through their comments and engagement. Another positive impact of the podcast was increased awareness for using holistic options as a way of managing stress. The use of language that shifts away from a medicalized disorder and towards self care oriented language could have resulted in a wider population of listeners and community members opening up to the idea of mental health and stress management. Views and engagements on the topic may have resulted in professional peers and community members becoming aware of botanicals as an option for themselves and their own clients. This podcast project's impact is just the beginning as its effects will continue to gain traction and send ripples into the virtual and in person communities.

## Section 6: Conclusion

This Multidisciplinary Studies Capstone Project began with the idea I could use my unique background as a health and wellness coach to provide some much-needed relief to those experiencing stress and anxiety. As the pandemic lingered, community health officials noticed alarming upticks in reports of mental health conditions (Gordon, 2021). I felt confident that offering education about benefits of herbal adaptogens and nervines would be an effective tool for reducing common stress related symptoms (Winston & Maimes, 2019). I saw the capstone project as optimal timing for transitioning my professional practice to include mental health coaching. I selected the action approach for the project as creating a podcast focused on botanicals for emotional balance was a new service and outside of my normal duties. The action professional paper best suited presenting this project as the podcast is in audio format and does not lend itself to a visual presentation. Those reviewing the Capstone Project Paper can listen to the podcast at the link provided on [The Herb Mama Radio](#).

I learned new skills at each stage of the capstone project that I will carry over to my personal and professional life including brainstorming innovative solutions, project management, and measuring outcomes. Skills I learned specific to making the podcast were podcast scripting and creation as well as podcasting digital technology (audio setups, Anchor, Audacity). I was surprised to find that writing a good script and making edits required twice as much time as I anticipated. Another important lesson from the capstone project was discovering that outcomes and impacts can be intangible and difficult to measure. Acquiring new skills and expanding my health coaching services to include mental health support were benefits I gained directly from the project. A small but enthusiastic group of listeners and followers benefited from listening and community organizations and mental health professionals gained access to additional support for

their clients. After weeks of dedicated hard work the project concluded with positive outcomes and impact for each of the stakeholders as a podcast series providing herbal and lifestyle strategies for stress reduction.

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