



Stress in the Workplace

A Do Something Different Research Report



Executive Summary

Do Something Different has been used as a tool to successfully help people reduce their levels of stress by over 25% over the course of a month-long programme. The programme also had a beneficial effect on anxiety and depression. Crucially, Do Something Different also significantly increased the measure of 'Behavioural Flexibility', which may help reduce participants' susceptibility to stress over the long-term.

Background

Stress in the workplace is frequently perceived as being about the demands of the job, rather than something connected with the person, their habits and behavioural repertoire. In the Do Something Different framework, we recognise that how the person responds to each situation is key to how stressed they feel. Simply changing external factors does not provide a long-term solution to stress problems.

Researchers currently studying the Do Something Different approach at the University of Hertfordshire have found that if people have a flexible 'personality' (as measured by industry standard personality tests) they can be more responsive to the demands of different situations and are less likely to be stressed.

How Do Something Different works

Do Something Different works at an individual level with the aim of changing habits and behaviours and expanding 'personality'. A small change in the person can bring about big changes in how they perceive their job. On the other hand, the opposite is not usually true, so that major and expensive changes in work practices usually have little effect on how stressed the person is and how well they can cope.

Do Something Different enables people to reduce stress by increasing Behavioural Flexibility. Having more behavioural tools in the toolbox helps them to cope better with the demands of their work or the pressures in their everyday life. The greater an individual's Behavioural Flexibility, the more likely they are to have the appropriate behaviours relevant to any situation – both at an everyday level and when difficult circumstances arise. In this way stress, anxiety and depression can be minimised.

The research

This research study sought to examine how a Do programme could help to reduce workplace stress. By following the Do Something Different programme clients were encouraged to broaden their patterns of behaviour and their perceptions of their environment and their self-efficacy. Measures were taken to assess their levels of anxiety and depression as well as how they felt about themselves and their ability to cope with what life throws at them.

Participants

Thirty-four work clients participated in this study. They ranged from 19 to 63 years old and 21 of the clients were women. The criteria for the study meant that only clients who were experiencing high levels of stress (likely to be at least pre-clinical) took part. See Table 3 for pre-intervention assessment. Clients, predominantly white collar and professional staff, were either self-referred or referred by their organisation.

The programme

People completed relevant diagnostics and then received a 30-day Do Something Different programme.

Outcomes

The Do programme had profound effects on clients' anxiety, depression and stress scores as shown in Table 2 below. All changes were statistically significant. Correlation and multiple regression analyses confirmed that these changes were as a result of the Do Something Different programme.

Table 1: The effects of Do Something Different on stress, anxiety and depression.

Measure	Pre-intervention	Post-Intervention
Stress ¹ On a scale 0-5	4.1	3.2
Anxiety ² On a scale 4-16	13.5	10.2
Depression ³ On a scale 4-16	12.4	9.1

1. Stress is measured on a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being no stress and 5 being the highest possible measure.
2. Anxiety is measured on a scale from 4 to 16. Scores from 13 to 16 are considered to be clinical levels.
3. Depression is measured on a scale from 4 to 16. Scores from 13 to 16 are considered to be clinical levels.

Furthermore these changes meant that the Do programme was influential in changing individual classification in terms of levels of anxiety and depression. For example, of the 26 participants being scored at clinical levels of anxiety pre-intervention, only 8 were classified in this group post-intervention. See Table 3 for changes in classification.

Table 2: Pre- and post-intervention classification of anxiety and depression.

Measure	Level	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
Anxiety	Clinical	26	8
	Marginal	6	8
	Normal	2	18
Depression	Clinical	18	4
	Marginal	11	6
	Normal	5	24

The Do Something Different intervention was also successful in significantly increasing Behavioural Flexibility.

Table 3: The effects of Do Something Different.

Measure	Pre-intervention %	Post-intervention %
Behavioural Flexibility	15	29
Awareness of issues and self	55	67
Putting effort into the important things	54	62
Fearlessness	51	65
Taking self-responsibility	63	69

Conclusion

The Do Something Different programme in this study had significant and positive effects. Not only did it reduce stress, anxiety and depression it also increased Behavioural Flexibility which may give participants the ability to cope with stress better in the future.

Thank you.



dsd.me
@onedoatime
hello@dsd.me

+44 (0) 1273 041914

Do Something Different
11 Jew St
Brighton
East Sussex
United Kingdom
BN1 1UT