

Highbridge Voices High School Summer Program

STress in our community

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Highbridge Voices
Summer Term Project

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Stress is one of the most biggest problems faced by Americans every day. But stress is all around us. In the South Bronx, it is evident that people are experiencing stress. In conducting further research about this topic, I believe that stress is a significant problem in the South Bronx. Of course, there is evidence I collected that supports this claim. The evidence in question includes a 30-person sample survey from people of South Bronx, an interview with a stress expert, and a little research. This information was all collected during my term at the Highbridge Voices Summer Program. During said term, I learned a lot about the people in my neighborhood, and what the general health looks like for my community. I believe that you too will see how the South Bronx is a home for the burden we call stress.

But first of all, what made me research this topic was curiosity about my community's health. My community ^{is} ~~resides in~~ the South Bronx. So I wondered how much people are suffering or experiencing stress both physically and mentally. I conducted some research about stress and the effect of the body. I found out that stress releases a important hormone secreted by the adrenal gland. It is a hormone that your body needs, Cortisol. This hormone can do a number of things to help your

body including regulation of blood pressure, Insulin release for blood sugar maintenance, and a proper glucose metabolism. Even though we have all these benefits from Cortisol, what role does this play for our health?

The truth is that too much Cortisol can be bad for us. Sometimes when people experience too much stress, whether it be from work or school, their Cortisol levels get very high causing them to have impaired cognitive performance, decreased bone density, lower immunity responses and more. Cortisol can cause death from chronic ailments such as heart disease. This is one of the reasons I picked Stress as a topic because I believe it is such a common problem in our community.

So to really find out more, I made a 4-question survey to find out if the people around me are experiencing stress. The questions asked the participants if they are stressed, what would make them stressed, if they know anybody who is stressed, and how stressed they would rate themselves. The results (located on Page 7) prove that people are experiencing stress, and that can be good as well as bad (bad because they can have high cortisol levels. This can end up in things that I discussed earlier.

I then gave an interview with an expert (Located on pg. 9) on the matter of health and stress. The expert in question is Dr. Cynthia Ackrill, a speaker and coach in the topic of stress, performance, and leadership. She is known for her humor and her topics that she talks about in various different sessions/coaching, one of them being stress. I contacted her to find out her information and get some professional expertise concerning my topic. I discussed the topic of stress and how she handled it. Dr. Ackrill warned me to separate how stress is perceived to the actual definition, one reason being is because each individual story is different. Each person's story is unique and she says that listening to the story She also mentioned that in order to realize you have stress, you must accept the fact that you are stressed. I factored these strategies into the analysis of my data. What was interesting was that she mostly worked with busy people such as physicians who have demanding jobs. I thought this was interesting because I think it describes most people here my community. Most people I talked to said they had a demanding job or felt pressure in school. And this ties into the whole point of health in our community.

All in all, people will get stressed; it's inescapable. I understand that all people have unique stories, and that plays a part in our understanding of stress. It is who we are. But what is most concerning is the Cortisol levels. This is what plays a part in our health. When people experience chronic stress, this especially can be a problem. This makes me think of my survey data and how most people who took the survey are experiencing stress and know people who are stressed. In this new understanding, the points bring up more questions. How can I help with stress in my community? How can we help with Stress? I believe that this is the direction my research is headed. I also spoke with Dr. Ackrill and she actually gave me some insight concerning this matter. She told me that we can help people understand the bigger picture. The bigger picture being the big idea of stress and that it is not unique. This is one thing that we can do to help out.

After looking at all this data, I believe that stress is a problem in the South Bronx. And with all our help, I believe we can conquer stress that plagues our streets and overwhelms our community.

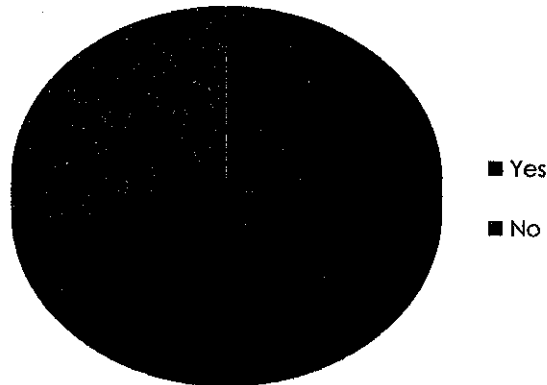
Survey RESULTS*

*** RESULTS BASED OFF OF 30-Person Survey.**

□ RESULTS FOR QUESTION 1

Do you consider yourself stressed daily? (Yes, No)

Results for Question 1



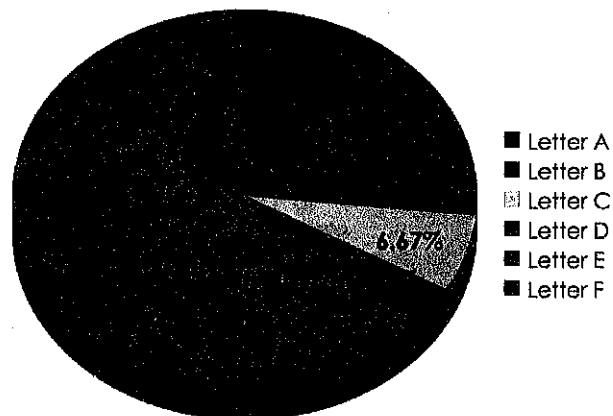
From 30-Person Survey

□ RESULTS FOR QUESTION 2

Which of the following would make you stressed?

Results for Question 2

- A. Money**
- B. Relationships**
- C. Social Insecurities**
- D. Physical Insecurities**
- E. All of the Above**
- F. None of the Above**



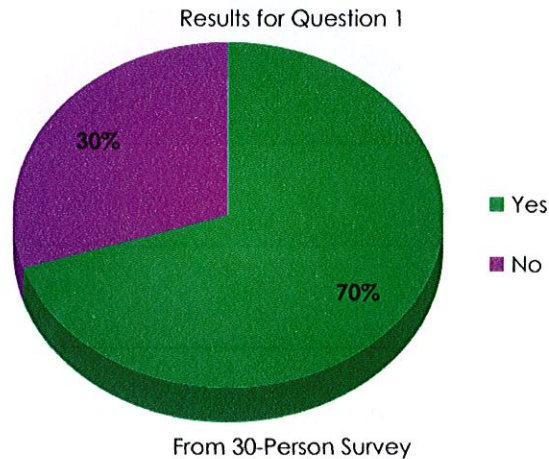
From 30-Person Survey

Survey RESULTS*

* RESULTS BASED OFF OF 30-PERSON SURVEY.

❑ RESULTS FOR QUESTION 1

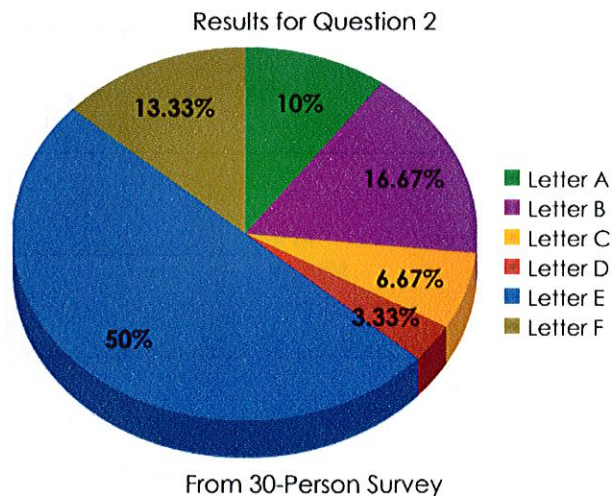
Do you consider yourself stressed daily? (Yes, No)



❑ RESULTS FOR QUESTION 2

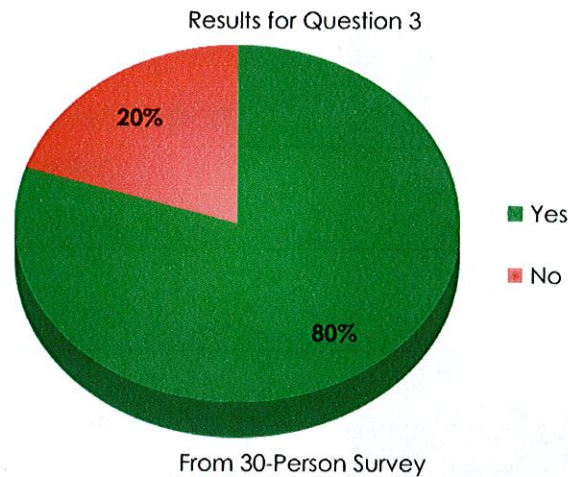
Which of the following would make you stressed?

- A. Money**
- B. Relationships**
- C. Social Insecurities**
- D. Physical Insecurities**
- E. All of the Above**
- F. None of the Above**



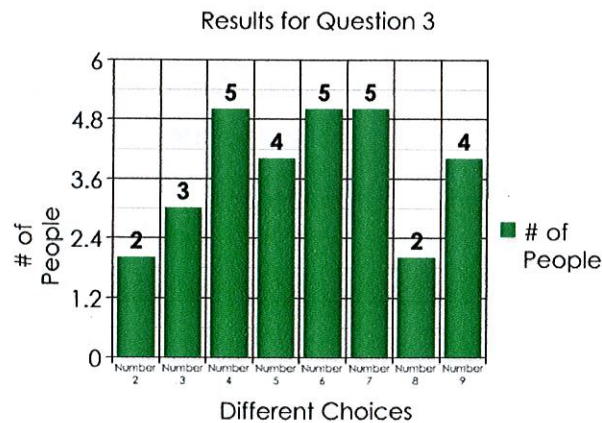
❑ RESULTS FOR QUESTION 3

Do you know anybody who you consider to be stressed? (Yes, No)



❑ RESULTS FOR QUESTION 4

On a scale of 1-10 (10=Most) how stressed do you consider yourself?



From 30-Person Survey

**This chart displays the relationship between the different choices chosen to the number of people who chose that option. (Out of 30 persons)*

Interview Information*

*THIS INCLUDES QUESTIONS ASKED, AND INFORMATION ABOUT PERSON INTERVIEWED

❖ Person Interviewed:

Cynthia Ackrill, MD

- Dr. Ackrill is a stress expert, coach, and speaker.
- Usually helps people who experience physical stress which has a toll on their emotional stability.
- Has appeared on several different networks, and media.
- Contact was made using her website at www.cynthiaackrill.com/contact/
- The interview was scheduled for Tuesday 8/5, but was rescheduled to and conducted on Thursday 8/7 at 10:00 am.



❖ QUESTIONS ASKED/ANSWERS

- 1. What are the characteristics of someone being stressed?**
 - a.** Wants to be heard, very dismissive, and story tells the stress.
- 2. What do you do to help such a person?**
 - a.** Dr. Ackrill listens to the story to find out the severity of the individual case.
 - b.** Builds trust with client.
 - c.** 3-Part Plan:
 - i. Raising awareness of stress
 - ii. Cool down/power up self
 - iii. Check and Balance Energy

3. What can people in a community do to overcome stress?

- a.** Differentiate how stress is perceived to how it is defined to us.
- b.** Bring themselves to the bigger picture.
- c.** Take care of yourselves and lifestyle

4. What kind of people do you work with and why do they contact you?

- a.** Works with busy people who work a lot and have demanding jobs. (Ex. Physician)
- b.** The people Dr. Ackrill work with seem like their life is out of control.
- c.** She then brings that person to the bigger picture ~~that~~

5. Do you experience stress yourself?

- a.** Dr. Ackrill experiences stress and knows how to manage it.
- b.** She uses knowledge to help the people around her today.

This interview was conducted, recorded, and was written down in this paper with Dr. Cynthia Ackrill's permission.