

Do the purposes of stress balls still make them successful promotional products?

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Introduction

Stress balls are objects, usually in the form of a ball, that can be purchased or made at home. They were primarily created with the purpose of alleviating stress through the act of squeezing or fidgeting with the polyurethane foam texture of the ball. Due to their convenient size and shape, they are popularly used as promotional products in giveaways. But are stress balls the best product to use in giveaways and are they efficient in their role? This research paper aims to explore the various assumptions surrounding the purposes of stress balls and their efficiency, and therefore role as a promotional product. This will first be done by looking into the origination of stress balls. Then, we will look at several studies and articles surrounding the drawbacks and benefits of stress balls. Lastly, with the gathered information, we will conclude if stress balls still work as a promotional product in giveaways.

What are stress balls and their purpose?

It is believed that stress balls originated from Baoding Balls in Ancient China. These traditional balls are meant to be rotated in one's palm. With time and practice, the individual is meant to learn how to move the balls in their palm without having them touch them. This process is meant to provide a calming effect by reducing stress and improving the brain by exercising the hand muscles (Mindworks Team, 2021). Similar to Baoding Balls, stress balls are intended to do the same. By squeezing and fidgeting with the ball, the nerves and muscles are stimulated, reinforcing strength. They are said

to be countless benefits to using stress balls. They “reduce stress and anxiety, strengthen muscles, lower blood pressure, improve concentration, improve sleep, enhance emotional stability and more” (Brown Hill Surgery, 2021). To see if this is correct, we will look into various studies and articles to further investigate the efficiency of stress balls.

Physical

Stress balls are suggested to be good for hand muscle strength. There is no research regarding the benefits of stress balls for hand strength; however, we will look into two examples of conditions in which stress balls are encouraged and vice versa.

An article centered on Carpal Tunnel Syndrome claims that the act of squeezing stress balls aggravates the symptoms of the condition (First Hand Medical, 2019). Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a condition in which tingling, numbness, and pain can occur in the hand and/or arm (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 2022). To alleviate pain or discomfort, it is recommended to refrain from using too much force and to relax your grip. By understanding the symptoms of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and the function of stress balls, we can conclude that stress balls are not encouraged in this scenario.

On the other hand, several articles claim that stress balls help arthritis symptoms. Arthritis is an inflammation of the joints which causes stiffness and pain as one ages (Macon, 2021). To help treat arthritis, two out of many recommended treatments are physical therapy and regular exercise to strengthen the muscles around

the affected joints. By understanding what is encouraged to help treat arthritis, we can conclude that stress balls could be of good use.

Psychological

On the other hand, there are several studies that have been conducted regarding stress ball use with attention and stress.

The first study examined the attention of sixth-grade learners whilst using stress balls (Stalvey & Brasell, 2006). Students tend to distract others in learning environments not just by talking with other students, but by attending to one's own needs through movement and short attention spans. After several weeks of investigation, they saw the frequency of distractions decrease and their attention increase, which in turn, improved the students' attitude, attention, writing abilities, and peer interaction when it came to using stress balls. This was found to help all students and those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as well. Interesting examples from their research showed data entries in which the students were able to focus their attention on their work instead of taking part in distracting and bad habits such as biting one's nails.

However, the second study explored the attention of college students whilst using fidget spinners and stress balls. This research found that stress balls compared to fidget spinners did not have much of an effect on attention (Riley-Lomedico, Hanshaw, Nash & Pettijohn, 2018).

Furthermore, moving away from attention, there has been a study looking into the use of stress balls in combination with stress (Srivarsan, Sridevi & Preetha, 2021). This study investigated the stress management of college students using stress balls.

The researchers found that the stress management of college students was more significant when it came to using stress balls.

Discussion

When looking at the use of stress balls with physical treatment, there is not much research done within that domain. However, by understanding the treatment and symptoms of the two exemplary cases, we can conclude that stress balls could help to strengthen muscles but they should not be considered the first line of treatment.

Additionally, as we looked at the use of stress balls with stress and attention, there is a bit more that can be said. When it comes to attention, stress balls have been found to help students focus, especially younger students. In older students, perhaps fidget spinners would be of better use, especially for individuals with ADHD.

In terms of stress, stress balls have been found to increase stress management in college students. This is an inexpensive and fun way to help one focus on the present moment and decompress, but should not be used as the first line of treatment.

Conclusion and stress balls as a promotional product

Stress balls are a great form of promotional product. You can get them in all sorts of different shapes, sizes, and colors and they hold longevity which makes them great at promoting one's business. But are they successful with their purpose? After investigating the efficiency of stress balls, it is safe to say that they are not harmless and could help certain physical conditions and certain psychological needs such as attention and stress. However, it should be understood that stress balls have not been clinically researched, especially in terms of physicality, to help. Stress balls should not

be the main or first line of treatment when it comes to physical pain, stress, or attention, but can be used as an inexpensive and easy distraction. Thus, stress balls still work as a promotional product as they are a great form of promotion when it comes to promotional products in giveaways and as it has some general benefits.

On a final note, perhaps it would be interesting to investigate fidget spinners as a form of promotional product in giveaways as there seems to be an increase in benefits when it comes to attention, and perhaps more.

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