

LESSON: Stress Management**COMPETENCIES:**

1. Identify causes of stress.
2. Define symptoms of stress.
3. Examine positive forms of stress management.

INTRODUCTIONS:

To introduce students to the unit on stress management do an informal exercise in biofeedback. Give them the following fake assignment:

1. Your assignment is a term paper worth 400 points. It will be the major part of your grade this term.
2. you are to study the dating and marriage practices of a foreign country and compare them to those practiced in Utah.
3. Write a double spaced, typed research paper, 12-15 pages long.
4. Use a minimum of eight resources, two of which must be personal interviews of people who have lived in the country on which you are reporting.
5. Have a cover sheet, bibliography and footnote page.
6. Refer to special reference books which have been put on reserve at the library.

After students have become stressed over this assignment, have them identify the reactions of their bodies to this type of exercise. Are they nervous? How do they breathe, rapidly? What do their muscles feel like, is their stomach tense?

Now describe in detail a more peaceful situation and ask them to see if they can change their bodies' response. This helps to introduce stress management skills as students learn to alter their breathing, heart rate, and muscle tension when experiencing stress.

(Explain that the term paper is not a real assignment, just an exercise to let them see what has happened to their bodies when they encounter stress.)

You may also give each student a biodot to observe during this exercise and through out the class period. The BIODOT shows body temperature as it changes. By observing the biodot you can tell if your system is reacting to a stressful situation. Having them place it between their thumb and index finger. Post the meanings of the color changes on the board or transparency. Have the students observe the changes in their own dots throughout the class period. (Biodots may be ordered from Biodot International Inc, Box 2246, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206, 1-800-272-2340.)

LECTURE:STRESS

The first thing we need to do is evaluate stress itself. There are countless books and research projects on stress. For our purpose, we are going to keep it fairly simple and direct. However, if you are having a great deal of difficulty in dealing with stress, you may wish to pursue this topic through your own investigative reading, classes, or counseling.

The term “stress” actually refers to the body’s reactions to any demand placed upon it. Stress can be good and bad. If the stress stimulates you to work harder or challenges you to be a more productive person, it may be healthy and helpful. However, when stress becomes overwhelming and causes you to feel that you have lost control, then it becomes a detriment and limits your ability to function.

If stress is your body’s reaction to demands put upon it, we need to introduce a new term that labels what the demand actually is. The **stressor** is the activity, emotion, or responsibility which is placing a demand upon you and causing stress. It may be anything, from a decision of which dress to buy for the prom to remaining true to the values you hold dear. It can be related to school, home, work, friends, physical appearance, drugs and alcohol, etc.

Have students complete the “Stress Test” to see how they score.

DEALING WITH STRESSORS:

1. **Identify the stressor. (Recognize what it is that is causing the stress.)** Have students identify the stressors they face in their lives-things that cause stress for them. Remember even good events cause stress. Have them rank the stressors according to the amount of stress generated by each event. Below are some ideas:
 - Fighting parents
 - Divorce
 - Death
 - A new baby in the house
 - Breaking up with or getting a new boyfriend/girlfriend
 - The oil light going on in your car
 - Having an argument with someone
 - Losing your keys
 - Passing a police car when you are speeding
 - Vacation
 - Receiving an award
2. **Identify your control over the stressor.** This may take some thinking and some honesty. Sometimes the stressor comes from an outside force, but sometimes it is a result of choices we make and is self-inflicted. For example, there is nothing you can do about your parents’ fighting or dying. These are stressors that you have no control over. You have control over how you care for your car, how fast you drive, how you treat your friends and family, how organized you are; even simple things like putting your car keys in the same place all the time allow you to control the stress of not being able to find your keys when you are in a hurry and need to leave quickly.
3. **Identify whether you can eliminate the stressor; if you can, do so.** For example, don’t drive fast, decide to spend less money so you don’t have to work such long hours, take good care of your body.
4. **If you cannot eliminate the stress, then build your skills to deal with it.** This is an important area that needs some time and attention, so we will deal with it in more depth later in this lesson.

Let's review how good we are at identifying stress and their sources. You are stressed about the test you are going to take in biology today. A first response may be that the biology is causing you stress. If the biology teacher did not give you adequate warning that a test was coming up, then the teacher may be the stressor. But if you have known for several days that you were going to have a test, you need to look a little closer at yourself. You don't think you'll do well because you are unprepared. You are unprepared because you didn't have time to study. What were you doing the past three or four nights? As you examine how you spend your time you will find that you really are in control of your stress, if you choose to be.

There are many symptoms that tell us we are under too much stress. Let's identify the most common symptoms.

Stress Symptoms

Accident prone	Hair-twirling/pulling	Procrastination
Anger/ Irritability	Headache	Rocking back and forth
Anxiety	Heart palpitations	Shaking
Apathy	Hyperactive/Listless	Sighing
Blushing	Hypochondria	Sleeping disorders
Chain smoking	Inability to be alone	Stomach cramps
Clammy hands	Inability to talk	Stroking face
Clenched fists	Increased heart rate	Talking too much
Continual boredom	Insomnia	Talking too fast
Depression	Lack of interest in life	Tearful
Desire to run away	Leg-wagging	Temper flare-ups
Diarrhea/Constipation	Lip-biting	Tic in eye or elsewhere
Dry mouth	Lump in throat	
Eating disorders	Menstrual irregularities	
Fatigue/Weariness	Muscle spasm/tightness	
Feeling faint	Nausea	
Fingernail biting	Nervous cough	
Guilty feelings	Nightmares	

5. Discuss with students ways to reduce stress. Using the teacher information have students go through the routine of using the 3 different stress breaks listed below. Discuss with students ways to eliminate stress in our lives.

Student assignment: Have students feel out the stress tally.

6. Using Humor to reduce stress.

Rootword “umor” which means fluid like water.

Water wears sand down.

3 humor skills

1. Ability to see the absurdity in difficult situations.
2. Ability to take yourself lightly while taking your work seriously.
3. A disciplined sense of Joy in being alive.

Humor can help you:

Thrive in change
 Remain creative under pressure
 Works more effectively
 Play more enthusiastic
 Stay Healthier

Stupid: Means ignorant and uneducated. People do stupid things because they do not know any better.

Silly: Originally means to have a good prosperous day.

Humor is an actual attitude on the brain.

Stage of Humor Development

1. Giggling Prankster Stage – Early childhood, 1-5 years old
2. Foolish Comics Stage – middle childhood, 6-9 years
3. Puzzling Riddler Stage – late childhood 9-12 years
4. Punning Wit Stage – Early adolescent 12-15 years
5. Satirical Critic Stage – Adolescent + adult

You may play the clip from “Mary Poppins” where they are at the Uncles house. Discuss how laughing made them feel.

Find something good to laugh about each day.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

7. For the remaining of the class period have students experiment with different methods to reduce stress.

Have students do the following exercises:

- Baby position: If classroom space allows have students lay on the floor in the fetal position. Legs curled up against chest.

- Walk, Stretch, Power, Float: Students will walk around, stop and stretch arms & legs, show power and then move around the room as if they are floating.
- You are three dimensional, feel yourself breath: Turn off lights, have students close their eyes and mentally imagine themselves as being three dimensional. Have students concentrate on their breathing in and out.
- SBS exercise (Stand, Breath, Sit)
- Every kid (from 3 to 30) likes to make stuff out of modeling clay or play-dough! Every student is given a small piece of clay and asked to create an object that relates to some source of stress in their lives. After which (you guessed it) they can smash the clay into a harmless blob. It's fun and can be psychologically beneficial!
- Turn out lights, listen to a relaxation tape to end the class.

TEACHER INFORMATION

STRESS BREAKS

The typical stress response to frustration is that epinephrine will flood your system, your heart rate will increase, your breathing will become shallow, and your muscles will tense up. This happens automatically. However, you can learn to relax but it will take practice.

10 second stress break:

- ❖ Identify what is annoying you. Simply identifying the problem can reduce stress.
- ❖ Tell yourself, “I don’t have to become too tense over this.”
- ❖ Take two easy, deep breaths (counting from 1-4 as you inhale and exhale).
- ❖ Relax any tense spot quickly, to the best of your ability (stiff neck, muscles, etc.)
- ❖ Stretch and resume your activity.

20 second stress break:

- ❖ Sit down and take a deep breath, slowly inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth.
- ❖ Gently shake your head from side to side in a “no” motion and up and down in a “yes” motion.
- ❖ Take a few more deep breaths, as before. At the same time, quiet your mind by slowly saying to yourself, “relax,” or, “be calm”, or words that work for you (a favorite poem or words to a favorite song).
- ❖ Now go back to whatever you were doing, but approach the activity more calmly.

2 minutes stress break:

- ❖ Take two deep breaths and exhale each slowly.
- ❖ Locate a tense spot on your body and relax it as much as possible (forehead, jaw, shoulders, back, hand).
- ❖ Do two brief exercise – slowly:
 - Head Rotation: Rotate your head slowly around in a circular motion, once or twice in both directions.
 - Shoulder Roll: Slowly roll your shoulders forward and backwards a couple of times in each direction.
- ❖ Recall a pleasant thought, memory, or feeling for 10-15 seconds.

- ❖ Take one more deep, slow breath, exhale slowly and return to your activity.

TEACHER INFORMATION

REDUCE YOUR STRESS

There are many types of stress in our lives. Below you will find lists of stress reducers for specific areas of stress. All of these ideas may not work for you, so select the ones that will and learn to use them to make your life less stressed.

COMBATING EMOTIONAL STRESS:

1. Avoid self-pity.
2. Analyze your problems – try to resolve them.
3. Break big jobs into bite – sized pieces.
4. Plan for change.
5. Develop self-esteem in yourself and family members.
6. Nurture religious faith – pray or worship as you see it.
7. Avoid criticism – look for the good in situations and people.
8. Shun the “SUPER PERSON” urge.
9. Learn to deal with anger.
10. Establish priorities.
11. Know and accept your personal limits.
12. Eliminate guilt, worry and fear, and negative self-talk.
13. Get unpleasant tasks done early in the day.
14. Write down your feelings.
15. Read self-help books.
16. Deal with causes or sources of stress.
17. Rehearse, ahead of time, what you will do in stressful situations.
18. Don't blame others.
19. Keep things in perspective.
20. Get professional counseling.
21. Create self-fulfilling prophecies.

RELIEVE STRESS BY IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS:

1. Talk about problems with trusted friends or counselors.
2. Avoid loneliness or learn to enjoy your own company.
3. Learn to avoid unpleasant situations. Is it really worth fighting for?
4. Create or join networking/support groups.
5. Give the other person a break – do something nice for someone else.
6. Avoid unnecessary competition.
7. Make friends with non-worriers.
8. Learn to delegate.
9. Learn to forgive – mend fractured relationships

10. Be “necessary” to others.

TEACHER INFORMATION

ORGANIZATION REDUCES STRESS:

1. Plan your life and set goals
2. Have duplicate keys, scissors, tape, important papers, etc.
3. Write things down
4. Don't procrastinate – that just makes the situation worse
5. Be prepared to wait. Carry a book or something to do while waiting.
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LIFESTYLE CHANGES TO REDUCE STRESS:

1. Balance work with play
2. Learn to accept what you cannot change – don't fight the inevitable
3. Take one thing at a time
4. Get away from stressors with scheduled breaks
5. Compromise
6. Program fun and humor into life
7. Learn problem solving techniques – and use them
8. Learn relaxation techniques
9. Try new things
10. Adjust lifestyle to avoid rush hours or other situations that annoy you
11. Learn to say no
12. Fix things that don't work well
13. Simplify
14. Become more flexible – some things are not worth doing perfectly
15. Develop back-up plans, just in case something happens
16. Unplug the phone
17. Use earplugs
18. Have personal time EVERY day
19. Find a positive addiction – peaceful and playful. Do it regularly.
20. Know your own stress levels, and live within them
21. Change our daily routine
22. Eliminate time wasters
23. Learn and practice communication/assertion skills

PHYSICAL STRESS REDUCES:

1. Get enough sleep and rest (avoid sleeping pills)
2. Monitor breathing – shallow breathing results in muscle tension
3. Exercise regularly – relaxed muscles make relaxed nerves
4. Listen to your body. Headaches, upset stomach, excessive worrying, and an inability to concentrate, are symptoms that you need some help.
5. Avoid any kind of self-medication
6. Eat balanced meals
7. Take breaks often. Stand up and walk around, do light exercises, etc.
8. Make your environment fit your needs
9. Dress comfortably

10. Look your best
11. Take a hot bath or shower to relax nerves
12. Pace yourself – don't try to do everything at once
13. Have regular physical check-ups
14. Physically remove yourself from stressful situations

TRANSPARENCY

METHODS OF COPING

1. Change our life style
2. Learn progressive relaxation
3. Use mental imagery
4. Get adequate rest
5. Learn relaxation techniques
6. Eat a proper diet
7. Get regular exercise
8. Develop hobbies or new sports you enjoy
9. Keep balance between work and play
10. Eliminate bad habits
11. Learn to pace yourself
12. Realize your limits and plan around them
13. Learn flexibility and to accept imperfections
14. Avoid loneliness – learn to develop friendships
15. Avoid self pity
16. Don't be afraid to compromise
17. Learn to accept what you cannot change
18. Talk about your troubles to people you can trust
19. Develop a positive attitude
20. Take a mini vacation
21. Learn to accept what you cannot change
22. Learn from your experiences – don't dwell on them
23. Maintain healthy weight
24. Involve others in decision making
25. Take a walk
26. Plan some time just for yourself each day
27. Read books that demand concentration
28. Have a place to retreat where you can be alone
29. Use humor
30. Concentrate on what you are doing

TRANSPARENCY

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Accident prone	Leg-wagging
Anger/ Irritability	Lip-biting
Anxiety	Lump in throat
Apathy	Menstrual Irregularities
Blushing	Muscle spasms/ tightness
Chain smoking	Nausea
Clammy hands	Nervous cough
Continual boredom	Nightmares
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Feeling faint	Stroking face
Fingernail biting	Talking too much
Guilty feelings	Talking too fast
Hair-twirling/pulling	Tearful
Headache	Temper flare-ups
Heart palpitations	Tic in eye or elsewhere
Hyperactive/Listless	
Hypochondria	
Inability to be alone	
Inability to talk	
Increased heart rate	
Insomnia	