

---

## LESSON C

### Dealing with Stress

**FOCUS:** Everyone has stress in their life, in fact some stress is necessary for survival. Analyzing stress as a drain of personal resources will help students recognize possible solutions and methods for dealing with stress without becoming overwhelmed.

#### ACTIVITIES:

1. Come into class and give an impossible assignment or an unannounced test. Tell them it's a significant part of their grade or that it will determine whether or not they will be able to pass the class. Be serious. Example: Assign a 10 page research paper. Go through the expectations, tell them there are resources in the library you've put on reserve and they must use 5 of these as references for their paper...

Ask the students how they are feeling right now. Do they have stress, why, what would the alternatives be? After discussing how they feel tell them the assignment isn't real. Ask again how they feel. Talk about the different kinds of stress and the role it plays in our lives (both positive and negative).

2. Have students evaluate the stress in their own lives. Use Student Handouts "Warning Signs of Stress" and "The Adolescent Life-Change Event Scale."
3. Have students participate in the following activity to make them aware everyone has a breaking point and learning how to cope with stress is essential for survival.

Ask for a volunteer for a demonstration. Have members of the class name situations that cause stress in their lives. As the students identify stressful activities or situations stack books on the arms of the volunteer to represent each activity. Check periodically to make sure the volunteer's arms are held out straight. Continue to stack books until the stress becomes too difficult (stop when the point has been made, before the student drops any books) This may be repeated with different volunteers to show everyone has a point where they can't take any more.

Examples of what books might represent: Zits, New person living in house, Not making team/cheerleading etc, Insurance goes up, Dumped by boyfriend or girlfriend, Speeding ticket, Not getting "right" grades, Gaining weight, Not having "right" clothes, Not favorite child, Not enough money, Being gossiped about, Not popular, Car won't start, Best friend moves, Attending new school etc.

Discuss coping strategies. See Teacher Information "How To Cope With Stress." Try a relaxation exercise.

5. Have students create a "Personal Care Package" for times when they may feel too much pressure or get down.

---

Include: POSITIVE THINGS ONLY - PREPARE WHILE YOU ARE UP

1. Favorite Song - makes you feel good about life
2. Favorite Poem - or some written work describing how you would like to feel.
3. Something tangible that is very special to you. Papoose blanket
4. A letter to yourself from yourself. Do not share this with anyone. Talk to yourself like you are your idol.
5. A picture - NOT of someone or something living. Dogs get hit, boyfriends break up parents die. Something that can't become negative.
6. Letter or card from someone saying something good about you.

Source: Jessica Eldridge, Family Support Center, Provo, UT

Period\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_

**WARNING SIGNS OF STRESS****EMOTIONAL SIGNS:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ feelings of sadness
- \_\_\_\_\_ the "blahs"
- \_\_\_\_\_ feelings of worthlessness
- \_\_\_\_\_ feeling upset
- \_\_\_\_\_ insecurity
- \_\_\_\_\_ irritability
- \_\_\_\_\_ feelings of restlessness
- \_\_\_\_\_ difficulty concentrating
- \_\_\_\_\_ working too hard
- \_\_\_\_\_ denying your problems
- \_\_\_\_\_ ignoring your symptoms
- \_\_\_\_\_ feeling suspicious

**PHYSICAL SIGNS:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ physical exhaustion
- \_\_\_\_\_ overuse of medicine
- \_\_\_\_\_ headache
- \_\_\_\_\_ sleeplessness
- \_\_\_\_\_ appetite changes
- \_\_\_\_\_ weight gain or loss
- \_\_\_\_\_ indigestion
- \_\_\_\_\_ nausea
- \_\_\_\_\_ nervous diarrhea
- \_\_\_\_\_ worrying too much about illness
- \_\_\_\_\_ frequent illnesses

**BEHAVIORAL SIGNS:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ keeping to yourself
- \_\_\_\_\_ avoiding work
- \_\_\_\_\_ neglecting responsibility
- \_\_\_\_\_ drinking too much alcohol
- \_\_\_\_\_ gambling
- \_\_\_\_\_ spending sprees
- \_\_\_\_\_ sexual promiscuity
- \_\_\_\_\_ being late to work
- \_\_\_\_\_ poor appearance
- \_\_\_\_\_ poor health habits
- \_\_\_\_\_ being accident prone
- \_\_\_\_\_ credit trouble
- \_\_\_\_\_ shoplifting
- \_\_\_\_\_ traffic tickets
- \_\_\_\_\_ violent actions

Source: Colorado Core Curriculum "Life Management," Colorado State University, 1991.

Period \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**THE ADOLESCENT LIFE-CHANGE EVENT SCALE**

**Directions:** Circle the unit to the right for each event you have experienced in the past year. Add up the units and read at the bottom to indicate whether or not you may show signs of stress of becoming sick from your stressful life.

1. A parent dying .....	98
2. Brother or sister dying .....	95
3. Close friend dying .....	92
4. Parents getting divorced or separated .....	86
5. Failing one or more subjects in school .....	86
6. Being arrested by the police. ....	85
7. Flunking a grade in school. ....	84
8. Family member having trouble with alcohol. ....	79
9. Getting into drugs or alcohol. ....	77
10. Losing a favorite pet. ....	77
11. Parent or relative in your family getting very sick. ....	77
12. Losing a job. ....	74
13. Breaking up with a girlfriend or boyfriend. ....	74
14. Quitting school. ....	73
15. A close girlfriend getting pregnant. ....	69
16. Parent losing a job. ....	69
17. Getting very sick or badly hurt. ....	64
18. Hassling with parents. ....	64
19. Trouble with teacher or principal. ....	63
20. Having problems with acne, weight, height. ....	63
21. Attending a new school. ....	57
22. Moving to a new home. ....	51
23. Change in physical appearance (braces, eyeglasses). ....	47
24. Hassling with a brother or sister. ....	46
25. Starting menstrual periods (for girls). ....	45
26. Having someone new move in with your family. ....	35
27. Starting a job. ....	34
28. Mother getting pregnant. ....	31
29. Starting to date. ....	31
30. Making new friends. ....	27
31. Brother or sister getting married. ....	26

**Scoring:** Of those people with over 300 points during a year, 80% will get sick. With a point total of between 150 and 299, people have a 50% chance of getting sick, and people with less than 150 points total have a 30% chance of getting sick.

You can control your chances of serious illness by decreasing the amount of stress in your life.

Source: Colorado Core Curriculum "Life Management," Colorado State University, 1991.

## HOW TO COPE WITH STRESS

### REMEMBER:

Moods do not last  
Life is not all ups nor is it all downs  
All actions have a reason  
You don't have to justify all your stresses  
When you're down, you are the only one you can rely on  
Positive self-talk  
Talking with others  
Facing the stressor and changing it  
Try to accept what cannot be changed  
Taking time out for yourself  
Exercise - work off stress with physical activity  
Get enough sleep  
Recreation - loaf a little  
Hobbies  
Don't let things slide  
Take one thing at a time  
Have a management plan  
Deep breathing  
Muscle relaxation  
Relaxation  
Guided Imagery

Relaxing can be very helpful. Many tapes are available to talk you through a relaxation exercise, but the following can be done simply and quickly in class to give students an idea of what a relaxation exercise is.

### Take a Little Vacation

#### To relax:

Legs straight out in front of you - tight, bottom and tummy tight let down  
do again - add arms out tight clenched fists  
do again - add tight neck, locked jaw, facial movements  
do over and over, may take 10 to 110 times to relax

Put head on table. Breath in and out focus on breathing  
Follow breath to fingers, toes

#### RELAX

Begin to move fingers, toes, sit up (continued on next page)

---

No talking, heads down. Feet flat on floor, head down. Breath in and out. Take a deep breath Let it out slowly Repeat Again - blow out all stress

Again - follow the air as you breath it in down your arms - out your fingers.

Again concentrate on heart pumping

Again follow air out of lungs down your arms hands fingers

Focus on breathing

Again in to lungs - out to arms

Maybe arms are feeling tingly Where tingles stress is leaving focus on breathing. Again lungs arms legs air is relaxing body everywhere it reaches calves, feet toes.

Again cleansing fresh follow through body taking all stress and tension away

You're in an open meadow, green thick grass maybe you'd like to take off your shoes and feel the grass with your toes. Its cool and refreshing soft.

The warm sun is heating your body and cleansing your soul walking along see the stream. Hear it - smell the water. Dangle your feet in the stream. Enjoy this , this is your meadow you are there nobody can go in unless you let them. This is your safe place You can always go back Always enjoy it. Look at the blue sky and the fluffy clouds. You're at peace with the world. You're at peace with yourself. Lay down and feel the earth. Absorb its natural, pure energy. Begin to sit up and take the energy with you.

Move your fingers and your toes sit up and take the earths pure energy with you.

\*\*\*\*\*

Three attitudes describe the stress-hardy personality:

- Commitment: an attitude of curiosity and involvement in whatever is happening.
- Control: the opposite of helplessness. Belief that we can influence events coupled with willingness to act rather than be a victim of circumstances.
- Challenge: the belief that life's changes stimulate personal growth instead of threaten the status quo.

Suzanne Kobasa

\*\*\*\*\*

Avoid: drugs, alcohol, caffeine, cigarettes, sleeping, daydreaming, watching television, taking it out on others, over eating, self medication