

Managing Stress

Summary

Lesson introduces distress and eustress, explains the causes of stress, and offers ways to manage stress.

Main Core Tie

Health Education - 6th Grade

[Strand 2: MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH \(MEH\) Standard 6.MEH.2:](#)

Time Frame

2 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Large Groups

Materials

Picture Book - "Oh, Grow Up!" by Forence Parry Heide and Roxanne Heide Pierce

Small Dixie cup for each student

Pitcher of water

Pennies (about \$3.00 worth)

Background for Teachers

King Tut

King Tutankhamen (King Tut) was an Egyptian pharaoh in 1333 B.C. He became ruler when he was only 9 years old. He was also married (to his niece) at the age of 9. He ruled Egypt for only 9 or 10 years and died at an early age of about 19.

Stress

The teen years are a time of many changes. Your body is changing, you are gaining new responsibilities, and you are forming new kinds of relationships. Because of such changes, teens may experience stress. Stress is your body's response to change and a normal part of life.

Stress is not necessarily bad. Positive stress, called eustress, can make your life more pleasurable. It can help you reach your goals and motivate you to do your best. Eustress is an exciting feeling. It might help you find the energy to score the winning goal in a soccer match or do exceptionally well on a school project.

Some stress can have unhealthy effects, however. This type of negative stress is called distress. You might react to distress by having an upset stomach before giving a report, or by losing sleep after you argue with a friend. You can't always avoid negative stress, but you can learn to manage it.

To handle stress, you need to know what causes it. Anything that causes stress is called a stressor. Stressors range from everyday annoyances to serious personal problems. They also affect different people in different ways. Whereas you might feel nervous about auditioning for the choir, your friend might find the same situation exciting.

When a person experiences a great deal of stress, the body reacts as though it is in danger. The natural way to deal with danger is either to fight it or to flee from it. The process by which the body prepares to deal with a stressor is, therefore, known as the fight-or-flight response. One part of this response is the release of adrenaline. Adrenaline is a hormone that gives the body extra energy. There's a limit to how much stress your body can handle. Too much stress can result in headaches, digestive problems, and high blood pressure. It can make you feel anxious or depressed. Over time,

you might experience fatigue, or exhaustion, and a lower resistance to infection. This is your body's way of telling you that you need to rest and reduce your stress.

To handle stress you need a variety of stress management skills, or ways to deal with and overcome problems. One of the basic ways to manage stress is to follow a healthy lifestyle. Problems are always easier to deal with if you feel well. More specific skills for dealing with stress include knowing how and when to relax; keeping a positive outlook; being physically active; and managing your time.

Instructional Procedures

As you study Ancient Civilizations in your social studies class, you will probably discuss some of the more famous Egyptian pharaohs. One of these well known rulers is King Tut. Talk to the students about how young he was when he became both a husband and a ruler.

Ask the students what types of responsibilities he might have had. List them on the board. Have the students compare his list of responsibilities with a list of their own responsibilities. Ask them if they think King Tut was "stressed out". Talk about what stressors are. Explain the difference between distress and eustress.

As a demonstration, fill a Dixie cup completely full of water. Ask the students if they think it is full. Add water until the class agrees that it is full. Explain that the water represents their ability to manage stress. The pennies represent stressors. Carefully add one penny at a time to the cup of water. Assign a stressor for each penny as you add it. For example: This penny represents the argument I had with my mom last night. This penny represents the test I haven't studied for yet. etc. You will be surprised how many stressful situations (pennies) we can manage before our body can't handle any more (the water spills out).

Read aloud "Oh, Grow Up!" by Forence Parry Heide and Roxanne Heide Pierce.

Have the students pair up. Hand each pair a Dixie cup and a hand full of pennies. Fill the cups to the top with water. Instruct students to assign a stressor that they are currently experiencing to each penny and, taking turns, add them carefully to the cup of water. Have them count the number of pennies they can get into their cup without spilling. The group who gets the most pennies in their cup wins a prize (candy, points, sticker, whatever)!

In groups of three or four, have students devise their own list of stress-reducing strategies. Have them share their list with the rest of the class.

Extensions

Have students write a poem about the stressors of growing up. Have them copy the style of the authors of "Oh Grow Up!"

Assessment Plan

Students will be assessed on knowledge gained by taking a short quiz on stress.

Bibliography

Glencoe/McGraw-Hill - Teen Health Course 3 - 2003

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich - The World Past and Present - 1988

Authors

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