

Stress Management

Purpose: To learn practical skills to identify stressors and utilize resources to manage stress

Objectives: This workshop will give you the tools to effectively:

- identify stressors
- place stressors in categories: internal & external
- identify stress management resources
- manage stress and maintain control

Benefits: Participation in this workshop will help you:

- identify and cope with stressors in your school life and at home

Supplies: Some supplies are optional or can be substituted for other material

- Paper and pens/pencils for every participant
- Post-Its, a white board or chalk board and a marker or chalk
- Copies of the “Stress Scenario” handout)
- Copies of the “Stress Reliever Tips” handout

Part 1 (20 min): Introduction / Purpose, Objectives, Benefits / Ice Breaker

1. Introduce yourself to the participants by stating your name, city, occupation and an interesting fact about yourself.
2. The purpose of this lesson is to help participants identify stressors and to provide tools to cope with stress which will improve overall performance in academics (or anywhere else in the participant’s lives).
3. Begin the icebreaker: “Demonstrate Please.” This icebreaker is for 5-8 people.
Instructions:
 - a. Have the participants form a circle sitting down.
 - b. Pass out one piece of paper and a pencil to everyone.
 - c. Have the participants write down both something he/she likes to do and something he/she does not like to do, but have them keep this piece of information to themselves. (Please inform the participants that they have 1 minute to write this.)
 - d. Ask everyone to stand up, but maintain the form of the circle.
 - e. Randomly choose one person to go into the center of the circle with what he/she wrote.
 - f. Read the exact following statement: “Now that you have written down something you like to do and something you do not like to do, you must “act it out” to express those two items. However, you cannot speak during this process.” (Have one of the participants do a quick demonstration. Make sure it is something that he/she did not write down for the icebreaker.)
 - g. Tell the person in the center of the circle to “act it out” while everyone else shouts out what he/she thinks that person is trying to communicate. If the person in the center of the circle speaks, he/she is out of the game.
 - h. After people have figured out that person’s like and dislike, the person in the center may choose the next person to go into the center.
 - i. Repeat steps g & h until everyone gets a chance (Keep track of time).
4. Debrief icebreaker and connect to overall workshop: Purpose: To express your likes and dislikes through body movement, without talking. Objective: To promote

greater communication and to get to know one another. Stress is reduced when people get to know one another.

Part 2 (20 min): Introduction to Lesson

1. Circumstances of Stress (5 min.)

Discuss two types of circumstances that cause stress: internal and external.

Internal Circumstances: Situations that occur because of something you do or something you control. This includes your ability to organize your time wisely. In other words, stress control is in your hands.

External Circumstances: Situations that occur suddenly, which are not always under your control, such as an unexpected breakdown of a car. In other words, these situations may lead to spontaneous stress.

- Ask if there are any questions regarding what these terms mean.
- Make sure the participants are clear with the objective and the definitions.

2. Causes of Stress (10 min.)

Discussion questions:

- What causes stress? (Have each participant share his or her response.)

Definition: Stress could be caused by emotional or mental pressure.

- What is stress to you? (Have each participant write a response on a post-it.)

1. Draw a table on a white board, organized by “internal causes” and “external causes.”
2. Ask the participants to place their post-its in the correct category: external, internal, or between both categories.
3. When all participants are done, ask them why they think their situation belongs in internal or external.

3. Stress Management Resources: People and Time (5 min)

Discuss the following resources with the participants:

- People: individuals and organizations you can rely on or go to for help, such as family and close friends.
- Time: Although it is a given constraint (there are only 24 hours in a day), you may manage your task differently to fit a time frame, such as overlapping your activities. The use of a planner/calendar/Blackberry can help plan out days/weeks/semesters.

Part 3 (10 min): Scenario Activity & Discussion

1. Divide participants into eight groups (doesn't matter how many are in a group)
2. Distribute one scenario to each group (refer to the “Stress Scenario” handout).
3. Each group will collaborate and decide the type of circumstance (internal or external) and the best solution to handle the situation by using the resources: people and time
4. After 5 minutes, bring the groups together and create a dialogue reminding them that there is no right answer and that the best resource is based upon the individual and his or her circumstance.

Part 5 (10 min): Workshop Debrief

- Relevant Questions
 - What are the two types of circumstances that cause stress?
 - What are two types of stress management resources?.
 - What do you feel was the most important thing you learned from today's presentation?

- Review today's activities and make sure that each participant understands the importance of identifying stressors and using the resources learned to cope with them.
- Q & A: Does anyone have any questions or comments?
- Give each participant the "Stress Reliever Tips" handout
- Thank the participants for their cooperation!

Scenarios

- 1) Scenario #1: George has been working all semester on his final paper. He has spent much time at school and at home working on the paper and has sent it to many of his friends for editing. The night before the paper is due, George's computer crashes, and he loses all of his saved work. Considering people, time, and money, how can George work his way out of this difficult situation?

- 2) Scenario #2: Jason has devoted this weekend to studying for an important test that he will have on Monday. Saturday night, his mom tells him, unexpectedly, that the family will be attending a family reunion and he is expected to go. Considering people, time, and money, how can Jason manage both studying for his test and attending the family reunion on the same night?

- 3) Scenario # 3: Larry was driving to work one day, but, unexpectedly, his car began making a strange noise. Larry and everyone he knows are not familiar with cars and mechanics, so considering people, time and money, how can Larry handle this unexpected situation?

- 4) Scenario#4: Jenny has worked very hard to complete all of her work before she leaves on a 3 day school field-trip. After finishing two papers, and turning them in, Jenny finds out that there will be a short essay and a pop quiz on a book the day she gets back. Considering people, time, and money, what can Jenny do to prepare for her quiz and essay?

- 5) Scenario#5: After working at Jamba Juice for a month, Aaron needs to complete some paperwork regarding his employment. He has asked his boss for the paperwork, and, after two or three reminders, he has not received it. His co-workers have claimed that he will never get the paperwork because the boss is very unreliable. Considering people, time, and money, how can Aaron gain the necessary paperwork without damaging his work environment?

- 6) Scenario#6: Jim's internship is very stressful. He is looking forward to his three-week vacation with family and friends before he goes back into work. Unfortunately, his boss asks him to complete a project that he will not be able to finish before his big vacation. Considering people, time, and money, how can Jim complete the project without cancelling his vacation?

- 7) Scenario#7: Ryan is in a tough spot. His mother and father are out of town for the week on a business engagement, and Ryan is responsible for finding his own way to school. After the second day of the week, Anthony's bike, which he has been using to get to school, breaks. Considering people, time, and money, what is one way for Anthony to make it to school?

- 8) Scenario#8: Emily is growing frustrated because she spends most of her time at work doing one of her co-worker's jobs. She has tried to talk to the co-worker about doing more work, but the co-worker refuses to accept responsibility. Emily has been forced to stay late after work to clean up the co-worker's mess. Considering, time, and money, how can Emily solve this potentially stressful situation?

Top 10 School Stress Relievers

Most participants experience a significant amount of stress, but with all of the activities and responsibilities that fill the average person's schedule; it's sometimes difficult to find the time to try new stress relievers. The following is a list of stress relievers that are most appropriate for participants: relatively easy, quick, and relevant to a student's life and types of stress. They'll help you to function at your best and enjoy the journey.

1. Power Naps

Participants, with their packed schedules, are notorious for missing sleep. Unfortunately, operating in a sleep-deprived state puts you at a distinct disadvantage. You're less productive, you may find it more difficult to learn, and you may even be a hazard behind the wheel!

2. Visualization

This one is easy, effective, and can help you do better in school. Visualizations can help you calm down, detach from what's stressing you and turn off your body's stress response. You can also use visualizations to prepare for presentations. They can also help you reduce stress and score higher on tests by vividly seeing yourself performing just as you'd like to.

3. Exercise

One of the healthiest ways to blow off steam is to have a regular exercise program. Participants can work exercise easily into their schedules by doing yoga in the morning, walking or biking to campus, or reviewing for tests with a friend while walking on a treadmill at the gym. Starting now and keeping a regular exercise practice throughout your lifetime can help you live longer and enjoy your life more.

4. Breathing Exercise

When your body is experiencing a stress response, you're often not thinking as clearly as you could be. A quick way to calm down is to practice breathing exercises. These can be done virtually anywhere to relieve stress in minutes, and are especially effective for reducing anxiety before or even during tests, as well as during other times when stress feels overwhelming.

5. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

Another great stress reliever that can be used during tests as well as before bed (to prepare for sleep), or at other times when stress has you physically "wound up," is something called Progressive Muscle Relaxation, or PMR. This technique involves tensing and relaxing all muscles until the body is completely relaxed. With practice, you can learn to release stress from your body in seconds.

6. Music

Music is a convenient stress reliever that has also shown many cognitive benefits. It can help you relieve stress and either calm you down or stimulate your mind. Participants can harness the benefits of music by playing classical music while studying, playing upbeat music to "wake up" mentally, or relaxing with the help of their favorite slow melodies.

7. Staying Organized

It's a fact that clutter causes stress, decreases productivity and even costs you money! Many participants live in a cluttered place and even have cluttered study areas. This can have a negative effect on grades. One way to reduce the amount of stress that you experience as a student is to keep a minimalist study area that's free of distractions and clutter. It's worth the effort!

8. Eat Right

You may not realize it but your diet can either boost your brain power or sap you of mental energy! While a healthy diet isn't generally thought of as a stress management technique or a study aid, it can actually function as both! A healthy diet can keep you from experiencing diet-related mood swings, light-headedness and more.

9. Self-Hypnosis

Participants often find themselves "getting very sleepy" (like when they pull all-nighters), but – all kidding aside – self-hypnosis can be an effective stress management tool and a power productivity tool as well. With it you can help yourself release tension from your body and stress from your mind and plant the seeds of success in your subconscious mind with the power of auto-suggestion.

10. Positive Thinking and Affirmations

Did you know that optimists actually experience better circumstances, in part, because their way of thinking helps to *create* better circumstances in their lives? It's true! The habit of optimism and positive thinking can bring better health, better relationships, and yes, better grades.