Stress

You’re late for school, today’s assignments aren’t done yet, and you spill a drink on your shirt in the car. Let’s face it, you’re stressed! Your students feel stress, too, at school and at home. These activities can help them to learn more about what stress is, and how to effectively manage it.

Related KidsHealth Links

Articles for Kids:

Relax & Unwind minisite
KidsHealth.org/en/kids/center/relax-center.html

The Story on Stress

Five Steps for Fighting Stress
KidsHealth.org/en/kids/5-steps.html

Talking About Your Feelings
KidsHealth.org/en/kids/talk-feelings.html

When Tests Make You Nervous

School Counselors
KidsHealth.org/en/kids/school-counselors.html

Articles for Teens:

Stress & Coping minisite

Stress
TeensHealth.org/en/teens/stress.html

What Stresses You Out About School?

Test Anxiety
TeensHealth.org/en/teens/test-anxiety.html

Handling Sports Pressure and Competition
TeensHealth.org/en/teens/sports-pressure.html

School Counselors
TeensHealth.org/en/teens/school-counselors.html

Discussion Questions

Note: The following questions are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

1. A big test, an annoying little brother, and a bad haircut can all add up to a lot of stress! What stresses you out? How do you feel when you’re stressed?

2. Everyone deals with stress differently. How do you deal with it? Do some stress management methods work better for you than others? Why do you think some strategies are more effective in reducing your stress level?

3. What’s the difference between good stress and bad stress? Give an example of a situation in which stress could be helpful. When does stress become a problem?
Activities for Students

Note: The following activities are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

Stress Mail

Objectives:
Students will:
- Learn to identify common stressors
- Explore strategies for managing stress

Materials:
- Computer with Internet access
- "Stress Mail" handout

Class Time:
20 minutes

Activity:
Everyone you know is stressed about something - homework, the big game, an argument with a parent. You decide to reduce the stress level in people's lives by creating a new Internet service called Stress Mail. A stressed-out person can write you an email, and you'll respond by providing suggestions for dealing with the stress. Start by reading the emails on the "Stress Mail" handout. Choose one and write a response, using the information from the KidsHealth.org articles. In your response, make sure to:
- Identify what's causing the person's stress
- Provide one or two ways for reducing stress
- Offer a suggestion for avoiding stress in the future

Extensions:
1. Now that you've helped others to manage stress, it's your turn to help yourself! Create your own plan for stress management. In your plan, include the following items:
   - Things that make you feel stressed
   - Strategies for managing stress that might work for you
   - Changes you could make in your life to help avoid stress

2. Do you eat chocolate or run a mile when you're stressed? Take a poll of students at your school, and get the lowdown on how they handle stress. Analyze the results. What patterns and trends do you notice about stress management strategies? Do older and younger students deal with stress differently? How about girls and guys? Why do you think you got the results you did?
Stress Log

Objectives:
Students will:
- Write about stressful situations and stressbusting techniques for four weeks

Materials:
- Computer with Internet access
- "Stress Log" handout, pen or pencil

Class Time:
Several minutes a week outside class for four weeks

Activity:
Everyone deals with stress sometimes — from little things like missing the bus or having an argument with a friend, to big things like dealing with divorce or a sick family member. First, read the KidsHealth.org articles related to stress, then write down a couple of stressful situations that come up each week, how you dealt with them and how you felt afterward. Are there some things you might have handled differently?

Extension:
Choose one stressful situation that came up during the month you kept a stress log. Write a brief essay about the situation, how you dealt with it, and how you felt afterward. In retrospect, did you deal with the situation in the best way? If not, write a better way you could have dealt with it.

Reproducible Materials
Handout: Stress Mail
KidsHealth.org/classroom/6to8/problems/emotions/stress_handout1.pdf

Handout: Stress Log
KidsHealth.org/classroom/6to8/problems/emotions/stress_handout2.pdf

Quiz: Stress
KidsHealth.org/classroom/6to8/problems/emotions/stress_quiz.pdf

Answer Key: Stress
KidsHealth.org/classroom/6to8/problems/emotions/stress_quiz_answers.pdf
Stress Mail

Instructions: Read the KidsHealth.org articles on stress, then choose one of the emails below. Write a response, making sure to:

• Identify what you think is causing the person’s stress
• Provide one or two ways for reducing stress
• Offer a suggestion for avoiding stress in the future

From: kate@stressfulschedule.com
To: Stress Mail
Subject: Stress on the go

I am so stressed! I barely have a minute to relax all day long. Before school, I go to swim practice, and after school, I work on the school newspaper and have piano lessons. On Saturday mornings, I volunteer at the local hospital. Then the rest of the weekend, I try to catch up on the schoolwork that I didn’t have time for all week. I never see my friends, and I always eat on the run. I’m starting to have headaches and stomachaches. What should I do?

From: sam@stressedandlonely.com
To: Stress Mail
Subject: Stress in the family

My parents are getting a divorce, and I’m really stressed out about it. I can’t stop thinking about what’s going to happen to my family. I don’t feel like hanging out with any of my friends, and I don’t think there’s anyone I can talk to who will understand what I’m going through. When someone does try to talk to me, I snap at them and tell them to leave me alone. I don’t know what to do to get this knot out of my stomach.

From: will@woefullystressed.com
To: Stress Mail
Subject: Stuck in bed

ARGH! Everything is going wrong. I have a science fair project due at the end of the month and it will take me forever to do because science class is hard for me. To make things worse, we’re playing basketball in P.E. next week and I’ve never even dribbled a ball. With so much stress, there are some days I just don’t want to get out of bed.

From: nicholas@numericallystressed.com
To: Stress Mail
Subject: Math stress

I can’t remember the last time I got a good night’s sleep. I keep waking up because I’m so stressed about my math class. I just toss and turn, thinking about about the next question I’ll get wrong when the teacher calls on me. When the morning alarm goes off, I’m exhausted, and by the time math class rolls around, I can barely keep my eyes open. Help!
Stress Log

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<th>Stressful situation</th>
<th>How I dealt with it</th>
<th>How I felt afterward</th>
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Quiz

1. True or false: Stress is always bad.

2. Common physical symptoms of stress might include:
   a) headache
   b) stomach ache
   c) racing heart
   d) all of the above

3. Things that cause stress are called _________________.

4. True or false: Doing things like breathing exercises, yoga, or can help ease stress.

5. Underline healthy ways to deal with stress:
   a) talking to a trusted adult
   b) exercising, going for a walk, or riding a bike
   c) eating a dozen doughnuts
   d) listening to music
   e) throwing your phone out a window
   f) playing with a pet

EXTRA CREDIT:
6. The human body responds to stressors by activating the nervous system and specific hormones. The hormones _________ and _________ speed up heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure, and metabolism.
Quiz Answer Key

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EXTRA CREDIT:
6. The human body responds to stressors by activating the nervous system and specific hormones. The hormones adrenaline and cortisol speed up heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure, and metabolism.