

HANDOUT 19A

Stressed Out!

What is stress? Stress is the body's automatic response to any physical or mental demands or pressures from external circumstances that create internal tension within you. When you experience these demands or pressures, your safety and well-being feel threatened and your body rushes to defend itself.

What is the body's stress reaction? First, the body experiences ALARM when it recognizes a stressor and prepares for it by secreting hormones that

- raise your blood pressure
- heighten your awareness
- increase your perspiration
- increase your breathing rate
- make your mouth feel dry
- produce butterflies in your stomach
- make your hands feel cold and clammy
- increase your heart rate
- make your muscles tense up

The body seeks release and relief from the stressor (stressful situation). If you don't do something to reduce or relieve the stressor, you are unable to cope with the immediate situation effectively, will feel exhaustion, increased discomfort or fear, and may feel frozen in the moment (I'm stuck and I can't get out!).

Is stress bad? Not all stress is bad. The stress reaction is necessary and can be beneficial. It allows us to respond quickly in threatening situations and can give us a boost of energy to deal with the situation.

What is bad stress? Stress can be harmful when there isn't any relief from it, when it doesn't go away or lessen. It makes it very difficult to function normally and feel okay about yourself. When too much stress happens too often, the result can be a constant state of exhaustion.

What is good stress? Stress can be good and can bring a sense of pride and accomplishment when it results from successfully rising to a challenge, overcoming an obstacle, and stretching one's abilities.

What causes stress?

- fear of failure
- feeling alone in the world
- too much to do and not enough time
- upcoming tests and deadlines
- too many choices to think about
- a family crisis

feeling overloaded or overwhelmed by a particular event or situation
not feeling ready or prepared for what's coming up
a friendship or dating relationship with too much conflict or tension
one-sided relationships where you give, but you don't feel you get enough back
severe peer pressure to do things you're not comfortable doing
what you want for yourself is different from what you think others want of you or for you
not enough quiet time or down time for yourself
not feeling you can meet expectations from teachers, parents, friends
events and crises that shake your sense of security

What are the results of feeling stressed?

low energy	irritability	lack of enthusiasm
distance from peers	exhaustion	crying
procrastination	arguing constantly	sleeping too much or too little
muscle aches	headaches	changes in sleeping habits
distance from family	loss of sense of humor	changes in eating habits

What is stress management?

Stress management is the ability to manage excessive demands from people, events, or situations in ways that feel constructive and productive.

What are some strategies for managing stress?

1. Remove yourself from the situation and give yourself a break, even if it's only a few minutes.
2. Notice your physical reactions and do something immediately to relax and release the tension (walk, exercise, listen to music you love, daydream for little while, meditate, etc.).
3. Take a nap or catch up on sleep one day of the week.
4. Talk to a friend or family member.
5. Make a "To Do" list of three to five things you want to accomplish this week.
6. Learn to say NO to excessive demands.
7. Be assertive and let others know what you need.
8. Rethink an old routine or habit and do it in a different way.
9. Break up a task into chunks so you feel a sense of accomplishment when you complete each part of the task.
10. Tackle a difficult task when you have the most energy and feel fresh.
11. Eat healthy foods. They give longer-lasting and more stable energy.
12. Let the small stuff go. Decide which situations are not worth fighting about. What would take less energy to do than to fight about not doing?
13. Every day, try to balance a really demanding task with doing something that's fun, easy, and satisfying.



HANDOUT 19B

Reducing Stress in My Life

1. I feel stressed when _____

The stress reaction I experience is _____

The cause of this stress is probably _____

The results of feeling this stress include _____

I want to try out these two things to manage this stressful situation more effectively:

I can _____

I can _____

2. I feel stressed when _____

The stress reaction I experience is _____

The cause of this stress is probably _____

The results of feeling this stress include _____

I want to try out these two things to manage this stressful situation more effectively:

I can _____

I can _____

3. I feel stressed when _____

The stress reaction I experience is _____

The cause of this stress is probably _____

The results of feeling this stress include _____

I want to try out these two things to manage this stressful situation more effectively:

I can _____

I can _____

HANDOUT 20

Self-Care Check-Up

Read through the following habits, routines, and activities. Put a ☆ next to things that you do regularly in your life. Put a ✓ next to things you do occasionally. Put an (X) next to things you've never done. Then reread the list and circle five things you'd like to try that might make a positive difference in how you feel physically, emotionally, interpersonally, and spiritually.

Taking Care of Your Physical Self

- _____ Eat a healthy balanced diet
- _____ Eat three meals a day and keep snacks to once a day
- _____ Exercise, work out, or walk regularly
- _____ Get regular medical care and check-ups
- _____ Get enough sleep so I feel rested (at least seven hours a night)
- _____ Make space for quiet time away from all things electronic
- _____ Participate in a physical activity regularly (dance, individual or team sports, martial arts, yoga, drill team, etc.)
- _____ Create a daily personal hygiene and skin care routine
- _____ Dress and fix your hair the way you like
- _____ Take time off every week to catch up on rest

Taking Care of Yourself Emotionally

- _____ Take time for self-reflection (How am I doing? How am I feeling? What do I need to do to feel okay?)
- _____ Write in a journal
- _____ Check yourself (Listen to your inner thoughts, feelings, conscience, and beliefs before acting)
- _____ Say no when you feel like you're on overload
- _____ Reread favorite books, rewatch favorite movies, listen to favorite music
- _____ Use self-talk for personal encouragement and motivation
- _____ Identify comforting activities, surroundings, and treasured objects and seek them out
- _____ Visualize yourself (imagine yourself in your own movie) accomplishing tasks that lead you to feel proud, competent, or successful

- _____ Rehearse hard conversations that you want to have with a friend, family member, or teacher
- _____ Find things that make you laugh
- _____ Allow yourself to cry

Interpersonal Self-Care

- _____ Allow people to get to know who you really are
- _____ Connect with important people in your life on a regular basis
- _____ Take time to play
- _____ Do something nice, unexpected, helpful, or special for a friend or someone in your family
- _____ Make space for new people in your life
- _____ Connect by phone or e-mail with friends and family whom you don't see often
- _____ Confide your hopes and fears to a friend, family member, or mentor who listens to you with full attention
- _____ Participate in a youth group outside of school

Nurturing Your Spirit

- _____ Spend time in nature
- _____ Take care of a pet, plants, or a garden
- _____ Sing or play music
- _____ Do something that gives you pleasure and doesn't cost any money
- _____ Create, perform, compose, construct, or write something of your own making
- _____ Do something that you haven't tried before
- _____ Participate in a religious/spiritual community or congregation
- _____ Contribute your time and resources to something you believe in
- _____ Attend a support group with peers who are working through a similar personal issue or family situation