 Stress management

Duration: 60 minutes

Purpose of the task

Stress is any change (internal or external) to our body that we have to adapt to and is a natural part of our life. While everyone has a different reaction to stress, if left unchecked, research has shown that stress can lead to things such as anxiety, depression, poor concentration as well as drug and alcohol abuse. It is therefore vitally important that students learn about, and practice stress management techniques to build their resilience for stressful times.

Teacher Further Learning:

* Edutopia article – Can stress help students? [www.edutopia.org/blog](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/can-stress-help-%20students-renee-jain)

Course outcomes

1.1 Assess personal strengths and skills to achieve positive outcomes in a range of challenging and changing situations.

1.2 Critically evaluate services and resources to identify sources of reliable information and support.

1.3 Build positive thinking, self-belief and a sense of empowerment to take action to promote meaningful futures for self and others.

7.2 Demonstrate the capacity to seek help for self and others.

What do we want students to know, understand or be able to do?

* Participate in stress management activities, including Mindfulness.
* Evaluate the suitability of stress management techniques.

Required resources and materials for preparation

Student activities are set around:

* small group
* whole group
* individual activities
* offline and online

Equipment required:

* butchers paper
* pens/textas
* access to the internet and laptop/tablet/phone
  + Eustress – Distress clip – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWwG25sCRwA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWwG25sCRwA)
  + Dave Levin at Character Lab – [vimeo.com/109847825](https://vimeo.com/109847825)
  + WOOP – [woopmylife.org](http://www.woopmylife.org/)
  + ReachOut – Stress strategies – [au.reachout.com/stress-strategies](http://au.reachout.com/stress-strategies)
  + ReachOut – Beating exam stress – [au.reachout.com/beating-exam-stress](http://au.reachout.com/beating-exam-stress)
  + ReachOut – Helping a friend with stress – [au.reachout.com/helping-a-friend-with-stress](http://au.reachout.com/helping-a-friend-with-stress)
* small balls such as nerf balls (soft)
* WOOP Worksheet downloadable from [characterlab.org/goal-setting](https://characterlab.org/goal-setting)

Suggested content

| Learning context | Content |
| --- | --- |
| Mental health and wellbeing  Focus: Developing self-efficacy and mental fitness | Building resilience   * acknowledging controllable factors * seeking, accessing and accepting help and support |
| Mental health and wellbeing  Focus: Support for self and others | Skills and strategies for managing change and challenges   * plans and expectations, e.g. being realistic * stress management * perspective taking |
| Independence  Focus: Building self-concepts and independence | Self-management   * managing change and initiating contingency plans * responsibility for self and actions * planning, setting, tracking and modifying goals * strategies for future success |

Teaching notes

Creating a safe and supportive learning environment

There are a number of strategies that can be used to create a supportive learning environment which enables students to feel safe to learn and ask questions. They include:

* making students aware at the beginning of Life Ready sessions that disclosing personal information that indicates they may be at risk of harm will be reported to the school principal in all instances. This includes personal disclosures related to instances of abuse, drug use, neglect or sexual activity under the legal age of consent.
* being aware that some parts of Life Ready can be confronting and sensitive for some students.
* enabling students to withdraw if they find issues personally confronting to protect them from making harmful disclosures. Equally, it is important to be prepared for issues that arise as a result of a student making a public disclosure in the classroom.

More information on creating a safe and supportive learning environment can be found on the [Life Ready website](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready).

Evaluating resources before use

Preview and evaluate all strategies, resources and teaching and learning approaches in full before use with students to determine suitability for student learning needs, stage of development and local school context. Consider the age, maturity, cultural background, sexuality, gender, sex, health and other characteristics of students in your care. Apply professional judgements to all strategies, teaching and learning approaches and resources including audio visual materials (e.g. videos, media clips and YouTube), interactive web-based content (e.g. games, quizzes and websites) and texts.

Use the [resource review flowchart](https://schoolsequella.det.nsw.edu.au/file/083acd3a-daca-4307-9afe-bc6c888f694a/1/final-resource-flowchart-html5.zip/index.html) to decide about the suitability of teaching and learning resources.

Materials should be reviewed in full and endorsed by the school principal before use in NSW government schools.

Communication with parents and caregivers

Some aspects of Life Ready may be viewed as sensitive or controversial, such as learning about abuse, child protection, drugs, respectful relationships, sexual health, sexuality and violence. Inform parents and carers, prior to the occasion, of the specific details of the Life Ready program, so that parents and caregivers have time to exercise their rights of withdrawing their child from a particular session. In this regard, a parents or caregiver’s wish must be respected.

Establishing how parents and caregivers will be informed about programs and involved in consultation is a school-based decision. Where parents and caregivers indicate they wish to withdraw their child from a program it is useful to negotiate which parts of the Life Ready program they are concerned about. A sample information letter is available on the [Life Ready website](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready).

Learning experiences

Activity 1- Eustress vs Distress

Group discussion

* Whole group brainstorm:
  + what is stress?
  + what causes stress?
* Students watch the YouTube clip – Eustress – Distress [https://www.youtube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWwG25sCRwA)

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* The clip explains different types of stress – Eustress and Distress.
* Students record as many interesting facts as they find throughout the clip.
* Students discuss the interesting facts they found with the whole group.

Small group discussion: Ways of coping with stress

* Students work in groups of 3 to record all the positive and negative ways people cope with stress. Each group has 6 minutes to complete their lists.
* Students then combine 2 small groups to create a larger group to share their answers.

Whole group discussion: How do you cope?

* As a whole group, students share at least one strategy they have used or would use to cope with stress.
* Guiding points:
  + what was the cause of the stress?
  + what strategy/ies did you use?
  + describe how this strategy worked for you.

Activity 2- Practical ideas for you and your friends

Ball toss

* This activity is designed to give students an example of a physically based stress relieving activity.
* Students stand in an open area (move chairs/tables if needed to create an open space).
* Using a soft ball such as a nerf ball, students throw the ball underarm around the room in silence.
* **Rules:**
  + everyone must be silent.
  + underarm throws only.
  + you cannot throw the ball back to the student who you received it from.
  + if you miss the ball or make a sound you are out until the next round.
  + game continues until there are only 2 students remaining.
  + for increased difficulty, use two or more balls.
* **Discussion questions following activity:**
  + physical activity is great for relieving stress. What’s your favourite physical activity?
  + how does your body feel physically when you are stressed?
  + how does your body feel when you are relaxed?

Individual task: Visualising your goals for stress management

Teachers: Prior to this activity, to gain an understanding of WOOP, view this short clip: [https://](https://vimeo.com/109847825)

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* Visualising our goals is one way that we can manage stress as we seek to stop, think in the moment, be realistic and put plans in place to achieve them.
* ‘Mental Contrasting (the Wish, Outcome, and Obstacle part of WOOP) is a visualisation technique that helps people to gain insight into their wishes and to clearly identify the obstacles that stand in the way of realising these wishes. WOOP is an evidence-based self- regulatory strategy that people can use effectively on their own to change their behaviour across everyday life (e.g., health, school, work, play, relationships).’ (information from [http:// www.woopmylife.org/)](http://www.woopmylife.org/))

WOOP:

* Students head to the website [woopmylife.org](http://www.woopmylife.org/)to read and understand WOOP.
* Students complete a WOOP.
* If using mobile devices, students can download the free app WOOP to and through college from iTunes or on [Google Play](https://play.google.com/store/apps/developer?id=WOOP&hl=en) and complete their first WOOP.
* If students do not have access to mobile devices, a WOOP worksheet is available for download here [characterlab.org/goal-setting](https://characterlab.org/goal-setting).

Graffiti Walk: Exploring stress management

* Place 6 large pieces of butchers paper around the room with the following headings:
  + tress strategies
  + beating exam stress
  + helping a friend with stress.
* Students work in 6 groups
* Each group starts on a graffiti sheet.
* Students spend 2 minutes at each graffiti sheet and move around the room recording as many ideas as they can at each graffiti sheet, until each group has completed answers to each of the three themes.
* Invite each student to explore further ideas for the theme of their choice using the following fact sheets from ReachOut.com:
  + stress strategies: [au.reachout.com/stress-strategies](http://au.reachout.com/stress-strategies)
  + beating exam stress: [au.reachout.com/beating-exam-stress](http://au.reachout.com/beating-exam-stress)
  + helping a friend with stress: [au.reachout.com/helping-a-friend-with-stress](http://au.reachout.com/helping-a-friend-with-stress)

Note: prior to session, these factsheets can be downloaded and printed from ReachOut.com if students do not have access to mobile devices, laptops or desktop computers.

Activity 3- Mindfulness

* Explain to students that mindfulness is all about focusing on the present and allowing thoughts, emotions and worries to pass through.
* Students work through the following practical mindfulness activities.

Smiling Mind – Exploring the breath

* Options for conducting this session include:
  + Listen and explore using the Smiling Mind website [smilingmind.com.au](http://smilingmind.com.au/)
  + Use a mobile device (tablet/phone) by downloading the free Smiling Mind app (available through [iTunes](https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/smiling-mind/id560442518?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4) or [Google Play](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.smilingmind.app&hl=en)). Use the app as a whole group with a speaker attached to the tablet/phone OR individual students use the app using mobile devices and headphones.

Smiling Mind – Reflection activity

Students complete a Think-Pair-Share activity using the following questions as prompts:

* + what are your first impressions of Smiling Mind?
  + would you promote Smiling Mind to your friends? Why? Why not?
  + have you participated in mindfulness previously? If so, what was the program/app/ technique? How does it compare to Smiling Mind?

Mindful Colouring

* Free Mindful Colouring Sheets can be downloaded from [education.com/ worksheets/mandalas](http://www.education.com/%20worksheets/mandalas/)
* Students work alone to complete at least 20 minutes of mindful colouring using one of the downloaded colouring in pages.
* Remind students while colouring that they are to focus their attention (be mindful) on:
  + completing the colouring-in in silence
  + choosing which colour pens/textas to use
  + colouring in each component and
  + the sounds they can hear