

We All Have Mental Health

A Mental Health Education Program for Grades 4-6

Lesson 2: Managing Stress and Discovering Coping Skills

Objective: To learn about how to manage stress

Overview: In lesson 2, students will learn about stress and healthy coping strategies. Students will engage in learning activities that promote effective stress management.

National Health Education Standards:

NHES 1 - Comprehending Concepts

NHES 7 - Self Management

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Describe stress.
- Demonstrate a variety of healthy practices and behaviors to cope with stress.

Teacher Preparation:

- Before this lesson, the teacher should review last session's exit tickets, and other student work.
- Teacher should also read the stress article.
- Teacher should set up a GoNoodle account to access and choose movement activities appropriate for their student population.

Materials:

- [Stress Article](#) by KidsHealth (printed for each student or digital access)
- Managing Stress Worksheet (1 per student)
- Set up coping strategies stations
 - Station signs/directions (materials listed on direction for each activity)
 - Paper for students to write on
- Exit Ticket (1 per student)
- Optional: Coping Diary (1 per student)

Slide 1-2: Recap

Recap by asking students: What is mental health? What do you remember from the last session?

Teacher says: "Everyone deserves good mental health. Everyone deserves the opportunity to live a healthy, happy, and meaningful life. Our mental health deserves the same amount of attention as our bodies. Mental health is balance, the ability to manage certain things, such as stress and emotions, and achieve one's potential."

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Teacher says: “We can’t control how we feel, but there are things that people can do to promote good mental health and reduce stress. Many of the decisions we make every day about what we eat, how much we sleep, how active we are, and other things we do can make an enormous impact on the way we feel.”

“Keep in mind: If anything shared today prompts a feeling that you need to talk to someone, trust that feeling and make sure you go to a trusted adult. Here at school, you can go to_____. Please feel free to ask questions at any time, but if you want to talk to me after this lesson, that is fine, too.”

Slides 3-5: What stands in the way of good mental health?

Teacher says: “What stands in the way of good mental health?” *Expected response: Students will likely offer many ideas; teacher should guide students to “unmanaged stress” as one thing that can get in the way of good mental health .* “What might too much stress do to our bodies?” *Expected response: stomach aches, headaches, sweaty, shaking, heart beating fast, sickness* “When do you know that you are stressed? What does it feel like in your body? *Teacher can share their stress response (i.e. stomach aches, tight shoulders) to prompt student responses.*

Teacher says: “Stress is a normal part of life, it helps motivate us to get things done and do our best. BUT too much stress can cause problems for our bodies and our minds.”

Slides 6-7: Low Battery & Stress Article

Teacher says: “Too much stress can lead to overwhelming feelings and so we need to be able to recognize when we are feeling stressed and we need to respond to that in healthy ways. Like a phone or other electronic device, people need to recharge, too. Just like a phone, if we don’t charge up (or take care of ourselves), we don’t work as well. Sometimes that charge is just enough to get us through (like plugging in your phone to finish a game) and sometimes that charging is a total reboot (like charging your phone all night long). When people use coping strategies, it’s just like charging a phone! It’s best to keep yourself (and your phone) in the green, we sometimes dip to yellow and even sometimes to red. We want to be in the green and we should use coping strategies to keep us there. As you work today, see if you can figure out what “coping strategies” are!”

Teacher says: “You are going to read (or listen to) an article about stress from a website that is full of great health information for kids. When you are done reading (or listening), highlight the sentence that you think is the most important one.”

Students read or listen

Note: if students choose to listen, provide them a paper copy so that they can mark up/highlight the sentence that is most important to them. Teacher invites students to share important sentences, allowing students to explain why.

Slide 8:

Teacher says: “There are many ways you can handle stress. It is important to know how YOU react to stressful situations in your life so that you can better manage these reactions. ”

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Students complete the Managing Stress Worksheet. Invite students to share out. During this sharing, it is important to recognize both positive & negative coping strategies and process what is and is not working for students.

Slides 9-10: Coping Skills, Activity and Follow-Up Questions

Teacher says: “Coping means to face and deal with responsibilities, problems, or difficulties in a calm, appropriate and successful manner. We use coping strategies sometimes without paying attention. It is what we do to make ourselves feel better when we are upset. Coping helps us tackle our problems and find solutions like asking for help or processing strong feelings for difficult situations we cannot change.

Note: Consider adding “coping strategies” and “stress” terms & definition to the posted area from lesson 1.

Teacher says: “Remember Sasha and Andre? What did they do to cope with their feelings?”
(Expected response: talk to trusted adult, take a break, hang out with friends, do something that you enjoy, exercise, talk to a friend) Why did what worked for Sasha not work as well for Andre (Expected response: because Andre’s feelings were overwhelming/more severe; what works for one person may not work for another person).

Teacher says: Around the classroom are different stations that have a different coping strategy at each one. You are going to choose 1-2 coping strategy stations to try out. When you’re making your choice about which station to go to, consider what you think would help you cope with stress best and/or choose something you’ve never done before.

*Teacher should briefly describe each station, using the signs provided.
Teacher should note that breathing / meditation exercises are purely invitational and students should not be required to participate. Remind students that these activities are exploratory in nature and therefore if something doesn't feel right, students should trust that feeling.*

Stress Management Coping Stations (materials available on Resource Portal under Level I Lesson 2: Coping Strategies Stations):

-Mindfulness

[4-7-8 Breath Video](#)

The 4-7-8 breath. This breathing exercise involves breathing in for a count of 4, holding the breath for a count of 7, and exhaling for a count of 8. You can adjust the speed of each breath based on how fast you count. When a person does this for the first time, they should do it seated or lying down and only for a few breaths, as it can make some people feel a bit giddy or light-headed.

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

-Progressive relaxation

Smiling Mind (free)

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HeadSpace: [Link](#)

Calm

[Script](#) (animal analogy - younger/less mature audience)

-Organization, to do lists

- organize your folders/backpack/desk
- Make a list of things you have to do, should do, want to do

-Talk with teacher/trusted adult (invite in counselor or other appropriate school staff member)

-Coloring

- [Colormandala](#)

-Journaling

- Write about your day / your life.
- Write about your favorite thing / person.
- What is your favorite memory from last year or this year?
- What's something you never want to forget?
- Write about anything that you want...in any style that you want! Just write.
- How are you feeling right now? Why?
- What do you hope for?
- What are you thankful for?
- What problem(s) would you like to solve? Why?
- What is important to you?

-Healthy snack (be mindful of school policies and allergy restrictions)

-Movement (walk around school, GoNoodle)

*If time permits, allow students to engage in a different station.

Slide 11: Exit Ticket

Slides 12-13: Discussion and Closure

Teacher lead discussion:

- How do you feel after doing this activity? (revisit thermometer slide) Listen and discuss.
 - It's important to find activities that help you feel good. If what you tried today didn't help you feel less stressed, remember that there are lots of other options and it may take a few tries to find what works best to make you feel good, but it's important to trust and listen to yourself! If you are having trouble finding coping strategies that work for you, be sure to reach out to your trusted adults.
- How many of these activities can you actually do? (tapping into self-efficacy)
- Who can help a person be mentally healthy? (expected responses: self, parents, friends, etc.)
- What healthy behaviors can you do to keep mentally healthy?
 - Consider offering "Optional Coping Diary" as an extension/optional homework assignment. **Teacher explains** "Pick two strategies from the lists to manage stress and improve mental health. Instruct students to practice over the next week and write or draw the coping skill they used each day. Students can have the opportunity to share their learning from the completed worksheet during one of the next sessions.

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Slide 15: It's OK to not feel OK

Teacher says: "It's OK to not feel OK; when we don't feel OK, we need to address it.

"Everyone deserves good mental health. Stress is normal, too much stress can increase the risk for health problems. Small improvements in nutrition, sleep, movement, and other coping skills can help us better manage stress and achieve good mental health."

"If anything shared today prompted a feeling that you need to talk to someone, make sure to go to a trusted adult at home or at school. Here at school, you can talk to _____. Please feel free to talk to me after this lesson, too."

Lesson Assessment:

- Exit Ticket:

Who is a trusted adult that you can talk to today after school about this lesson ? _____
What will you tell this trusted adult about this lesson?

- Review of student worksheets

For additional resources and support materials, check out the Additional Program Options and School Policy & Staff Development sections of our [Resource Portal](#).