**Lesson 5: Stress**

**Overview:** Students will recognize stressors; understand how stress can affect us physically emotionally, and mentally; and engage strategies to manage stress. Students will explore resources that can support managing stress and recharge ME health.

National Health Education Standards

**Standard 1:** Students comprehend functional health knowledge to enhance health.

**Standard 2:** Students analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, social media, technology, and other determinants on health behaviors.

**Standard 7:** Students demonstrate observable health and safety practices.

Healthy Behavior Outcome (HBO):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **HBO 2** | Engage in activities that are mentally and emotionally healthy. |

**Lesson Objective**- Students will be able to:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objective** | **Assessments** |
| 1. Define stress and how the body responds to stress. | Attachment 5.2 – What Is Stress? |
| 1. Identify causes and symptoms of stress. | Attachment 5.2 – What Is Stress? |
| 1. Describe how stress influences how we feel, think, and act. | Attachment 5.2 – What Is Stress? |
| 1. Recognize feelings, thoughts, and actions that require the support of trusted adults and health resources. | Attachment 5.3 – Managing My Stress |
| 1. Describe the benefits of talking with parents and other trusted adults to support mental and emotional health. | Attachment 5.3 – Managing My Stress |
| 1. Describe personal behaviors and practices that could improve mental and emotional health by managing stress effectively. | Attachment 5.3 – Managing My Stress |

Introduction:

* **Strengthen ME Health**
* Begin class with a mindfulness activity; we suggest the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique. Identify five things they can see; four things they can feel; three things they can hear; two things they can smell; and one thing they can taste. Share a reminder about the interconnection between the dimensions of wellness, highlighting the role of social health in ME health.

Teaching Steps:

Activity 1: What is stress?

* How would you feel? When I say the word “stress,” what square or feeling in the Feelings Index would you choose?
  + We have a surprise test today.
  + Your team just won the championship!
  + You won an award for your hard work.
* To describe your feelings, you can use the sentence, “I feel \_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”
* Class discussion: What do these situations have in common? They all could be perceived as stressful situations that could be positive or negative depending on how you perceive and respond to the situation.
* What is [stress](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/so-stressed-out-fact-sheet)?
  + Stress is the body’s physical or mental reaction to a stressor. Everyone feels stress from time to time.
  + Stress can be a one-time or short-term event, or it can happen repeatedly over time.
  + Your body’s response to stress is (for the most part) INVOLUNTARY based on a PERCEPTION of something to be dangerous, difficult, or painful.
  + A stressor is something that causes or contributes to stress.  A lot of times we think of stress as negative, but there are several things in our lives that are positive and can motivate you but also cause stress. Stressors can be physical, such as pain, thirst, hunger, and illness.  Stressors can be emotional, such as worry, fear, anger, and love. Stressors can be social, such as relationships. Some stressors – such as flying, taking a test, speaking in public, being highly scheduled, or financial demands – are common. Others are less common. People tend to be stressed whenever a situation feels out of their control – when they feel that they don’t have the ability to cope with or manage the situation effectively. Stress typically goes away once the situation is resolved.
* What Stresses You Out? Please respond with one word. Students could answer more than once.
  + *Possible strategies for students to anonymously share –* Crumbled paper, word wall, sticky notes.
* What are examples of stressors in your life?
  + It might be helpful to categorize these stressors as positive or negative stressors. Whether they are positive or negative it is helpful to understand your stressors and how you can manage your stress.
  + Quick write: Give students one to two minutes to write down their answers on a self-made T-chart (one side is eustress; the other side is distress).
* What are some factors that commonly cause stress for teens?
  + Here’s a simple breakdown of different categories of stressors that teens face. No need for students to write everything down; this is just to make them aware.
  + Explain:  “As you already know, you’ll face many stressors during middle school and during your teenage years.
    - The No. 1 stress reported by middle and high school students is academic pressure.
    - The second-leading source of stress reported among these groups involves relationships – with parents, romantic partners, and friends.
    - Other commonly reported sources include financial concerns, responsibilities at home, body image struggles, peer pressure, popularity concerns, bullying (including cyberbullying), and criticism and disapproval.
  + Though you can’t always control the daily stressors you face as a teenager, you can learn to manage your emotional reactions in stressful situations; build your coping skills; and learn relaxation techniques that can help you minimize the effects of stress.
* Explain:  [Fight/Flight/Freeze](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M)
  + Your brain has an upstairs and downstairs. Upstairs controls conscious thought, while downstairs controls your body’s functions. Your downstairs brain is not good at making decisions; it just reacts to stimuli. Your downstairs brain is designed to help your body react to danger: Fight (face the danger), flight (run away), or freeze (stay still and think of your next move). Think about how helpful this would be before modern times, when you might run into a bear in the wilderness.
    - Heart beats faster.
    - Pupils widen so you can see better.
    - You feel a rush of energy.
    - Blood rushes to your legs so you can move quickly.
    - You breathe faster.
    - You sweat to cool the body.
  + This is all the result of your downstairs brain perceiving danger and signaling adrenaline (hormone) to be released. You are alert and ready to act. Your body is trying to help you be ready to react to a dangerous situation.
  + You can use strategies and resources to use your upstairs brain to think and act in healthy and safe ways.
* What are anxious feelings?
  + Some people feel anxious when they are stressed. Anxiety is also another word that people use often. Anxiety is your body’s reaction to stress even if there is no current stressor. Anxious feelings can interfere with your health in many ways. It can affect your sleep; cause tension, uneasiness, and worry; and impact your immune, digestive, and cardiovascular systems. If you recognize you’re having anxious feelings that won’t go away, reach out to a trusted adult or mental health resource who can support you.
* How does stress impact me?
  + Our stress response can impact all aspects of our health and wellness.
  + Some physical effects of stress include:
    - Headache
    - Weakened immune system
    - High blood pressure
    - Clenching of the jaw or grinding the teeth
    - Digestive disorders
  + Some mental/emotional effects of stress include:
    - Difficulty concentrating
    - Irritability
    - Mood swings
    - Some social effects of stress include:
    - Loss of friendships (withdrawn)
    - Irritability
    - Using alcohol or other drugs

Activity 2:  Our Stress Response – Come On, Six

* In this activity, we’re going to see how you respond to a stressful situation by playing a game.
* Any person in the group may start by rolling the die. The object is to roll a six.
* If the first person does not roll a six, they pass the die to the person on their left. That person has one chance to roll a six.  This pattern continues until someone rolls a six.
* When someone rolls a six, that person takes the pencil/pen and starts to write out numbers on their piece of paper from 1 to 100. RULE: Numbers must be written one at a time in consecutive order, and they must be legible.  The person writing must count out loud.
* Everyone else keeps rolling the die, skipping the person who is writing.
* The person continues to write numbers until someone else in the group rolls a six.  At this time, the person writing numbers must stop writing and give the pencil to the person who just rolled a six, who will now start writing numbers on their own paper.
* All the players except the one writing take turns rolling the die until another person rolls a six.
* As players roll sixes, they begin writing where they left off.
* The game continues until someone reaches 100.
  + Reflection to Come on, Six:
    - When the activity first began, what was the level of excitement in your group? How did the excitement level change as people got closer to 100?
    - How can we compare this activity to stress in our lives?
    - How did your body respond to the stress of having to roll a six?

Activity 3: Managing Stress

* Can we manage our body’s response to a stressful situation?
  + Regulation - managing our emotions in situations. When we regulate, typically we are lowering the intensity of our emotions.
* How can we regulate our emotions in a stressful situation?
  + Possible answers: Deep breathing, positive self-talk, thinking about the positive outcome, shifting your attention to a different outcome, slowing down, and finding a supporting environment or others who are supportive.
* We can organize these strategies into three categories
  + **Quick charge** – Limited time and resources available.
  + **Plug it in** – Short time frame of less than 30 minutes and some resources available.
  + **Battery health** – Activities to keep my mind and body healthy.
* Try one strategy as you play Come on, Six again. Afterward, debrief.

Closure:

* What is stress?
* How does stress affect you and your health?
* What could you do if you are feeling stressed, experience a stressful situation, or have anxious feelings?
* What should you do if those feelings won’t go away even if the stressor is no longer present?
* What is one thing you can take from today to help you manage stress?

Attachment 5.1: Feelings Index

A screenshot of a computer game

Description automatically generated



Attachment 5.2: What Is Stress?

How would you define stress?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stress** |  |

Give an example of two stressors.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |

What is the difference between stress and anxious feelings?

List at least two ways stress can influence how you think and act.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |

Describe a way you can manage, reduce, or regulate stress in a positive and healthy way.

List a resource that could support ME health if you’re feeling stressed. Describe how it could help you.

Attachment 5.3: Managing Stress

*Task 1:* *Directions – In the question below, list a feeling when you encounter a stressor. Then list at least two stressors that prompt a strong stress response or try to move you downstairs.*

When I am “stressed,” I feel …

What causes me to feel “stressed?”

My strategies to think and act in healthy ways when I experience strong feelings when I am stressed.

Who can be a resource to help manage my stress?

*Task 2:* *My Stress Management and Recharge Plan.*

*Directions – List activities and strategies to prevent or manage your feelings when you are stressed.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **QUICK CHARGE**  Limited time and resources available. | A screen shot of a phone  Description automatically generated | *Strategies and Activities* |
| **PLUG-IT-IN**  Time frame of less than 30 minutes and some resources available. | A yellow square with a white background  Description automatically generated | *Strategies and Activities* |
| **BATTERY HEALTH**  Activities to keep my mind and body healthy. | A green rectangular sign with black border  Description automatically generated | *Strategies and Activities* |