



# PERSONAL, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

## STRESS MANAGEMENT >

Session plan



**START  
SOMETHING**

# AT A GLANCE >

This session supports young people to understand how to spot signs of stress in themselves and others, while identifying different strategies for managing stressful situations. They will also have a chance to reflect on which techniques work best for them personally when managing stress in their own lives.



## CURRICULUM LINKS

- ✓ Health and wellbeing



## LLN OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ Adding new vocabulary to a list of new words on a Word Wall



## QUALIFICATION OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ Wellbeing - LO: Understand how to respond positively to stress

# LEARNING OUTCOMES >

- ✓ Identify signs of stress
- ✓ Understand different strategies for managing stress appropriately

# ACTIVITIES >

ACTIVITY	TIME	PAGE
<u>Stress-buster scenario challenge</u>	5-10 minutes	<u>03</u>
<u>Strategies for managing stress</u>	30-40 minutes	<u>05</u>
<u>Wrap up</u>	5-10 minutes	<u>07</u>



# STRESS-BUSTER SCENARIO CHALLENGE

In this activity, learners will explore real scenarios of people experiencing stress and identify ways to manage stress positively.



## TIME REQUIRED

5-10 minutes



## MATERIALS

- ✓ Pen
- ✓ Flipchart or whiteboard
- ✓ Internet and virtual whiteboard if delivering online



## WORKSHEET

- ✓ Activity 1: Stress-buster scenario challenge



## QUALIFICATION OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ State what is meant by stress
- ✓ Give [an] example(s) of possible cause(s) of stress

# ACTIVITY STEPS

1. Start the session by asking the learners what stress means. Encourage discussions in pairs and then learners should share their ideas with the rest of the group. Ensure they understand that stress is the feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with different pressures.

If your learners are working towards the qualification, they could write the definition of stress in their own words on the worksheet.

2. Encourage the group to name some different sources of stress. To help generate discussion, you could ask them what different situations in life could be stressful, e.g. exams, public speaking, etc. You could record their ideas on a mindmap/list on a whiteboard/flipchart.
3. Hand out the 'Stress-buster scenario challenge' worksheet. Explain that each scenario shows an example of someone feeling stressed. The scenarios also show how that person has acted because of the stressful situation.

### FOR EACH, THEY WILL NEED TO CONSIDER:

- ✓ Where would they rate them from 1-10 on the stress gauge? (1 being not stressed, 10 being very stressed)
- ✓ What are the possible consequences of their actions?
- ✓ Has the way they have acted helped, or possibly made the situation worse?
- ✓ How could they have acted differently or changed their outlook to make the situation into a more positive one?

4. Ask them to record their answers on the worksheet. This can be done individually, in pairs or small groups. Some possible responses have been included on the next page:



### PERSON A:

This person is feeling worried about their exams coming up, so they stay up late several nights in a row to study. In the mornings, they are so tired that they sometimes arrive at their classes late and find it harder to focus in lessons.

**Consequence:** By not getting the sleep they need and finding it hard to concentrate in class, they may miss out on learning important new things in their lesson or course. In turn, this could affect how they do in the exams.

**Suggested change:** Create flashcards or set a timer on their study time, breaking the revision down into manageable chunks. Make sure they do this at reasonable points in the day e.g. an hour before dinner, so that they give themselves time to wind down before bed and get a better night's sleep.

### PERSON B:

This person has had a falling out with one of their friends, so they decide to post something on social media to vent their anger. They know that the friend they have fallen out with might see it, but at this point they are just too angry to care.

**Consequence:** The friend could see the post and get upset which might make it difficult to patch things up. Posting negative content online spreads quickly, and could be damaging if a family member or even a future employer sees it.

**Suggested change:** Take some distance and time to calm down and think things through before acting, to stop themselves from doing anything rash that they will regret. When they feel comfortable enough to approach the friend, call them up or talk to them in a space that feels safe and open for both (the park, a café etc.). If reconciling differences isn't possible, agree to disagree and move on.

### PERSON C:

This person is worried about so many different problems going on in the world, but feels that it is important to keep up to date. Every morning, they spend at least an hour in bed looking through the news on their social media feeds. Sometimes it makes them late and when they turn up to their lessons, they feel stressed and worn out before the day has even started!

**Consequence:** Starting the day in a negative mood could affect how they perform at school and interact with their friends. A negative outlook can make other challenges in the day seem worse than they are, and harder to overcome.

**Suggested change:** They could try to have a phone-free morning, or at least one where they don't look at the news. There are even free apps that help to track and limit screen time. Decide on a specific time to catch up on the news, and try to focus on the positive stories too, including some of the great things people are doing to help with big current issues, e.g. green activists, campaigners for racial justice, LGBT rights etc.

4. If members of the group feel comfortable volunteering, ask a few people to share their scenarios and what they would have suggested. To encourage contributions, offer your own examples first. Ask the rest of the group to listen carefully and suggest any other ideas they would add.
5. Finish the activity by explaining that stress isn't necessarily a bad thing – it is a normal part of life – but it can have a serious negative impact if we aren't able to manage it effectively. If you are continuing onto the next activity, explain that this session is about learning some strategies to help make sure that stress doesn't take over. If working towards the qualification, encourage learners to record possible sources of stress on the worksheet, using what they have learnt from this activity.



# STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRESS >

Use this activity to help learners explore and reflect on the physical and emotional signs of stress.



## TIME REQUIRED

30-40 minutes



## MATERIALS

Depending on what you have access to you can use either:

- ✓ Flipchart paper or whiteboard or virtual whiteboard tool
- ✓ Google docs or similar online document, access to the internet



## WORKSHEET

- ✓ Activity 2: Strategies for managing stress



## QUALIFICATION OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ Physical and emotional signs of stress

# ACTIVITY STEPS >

1. Ask the group to think about the physical signs of stress. When they are in a stressful situation, what physical changes do they notice? They can draw these on their own human figure on the worksheet or create their own. Tell them to be as creative as they like – if doing the lesson online, they can even find other images to create a digital collage, e.g. pictures of water on the hands to show sweaty palms, butterflies in their stomach for nerves, a picture of their favourite brand of trainers over the chest to show their heart is racing.

### SOME EXAMPLES OF PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF STRESS ARE:

- ✓ Clenching fists
- ✓ Biting fingernails
- ✓ Heart racing
- ✓ Sweating
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Tense muscles
- ✓ Upset stomach

2. Ask each group to feedback on the physical symptoms they discussed and compile a list of physical signs of stress on the worksheet. Can they think of any other signs of stress that can't be seen, or aren't physical? Ask each young person to add some of the emotional or behavioural signs of stress to their drawings, perhaps in a different colour, or as speech bubbles and then as a list in the box on the worksheet. They should think about:
  - How you can tell when you're feeling stressed (aside from physical signs)
  - How someone who is stressed might behave



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START  
SOMETHING

### SOME EXAMPLES ARE:

- ✓ Feeling anxious about things in daily life
- ✓ Feeling a lack of energy
- ✓ Difficulty making decisions
- ✓ Difficulty keeping track of things
- ✓ Feeling on edge
- ✓ A change in eating habits
- ✓ Sleeping more than usual or difficulty getting to sleep
- ✓ Being more emotional
- ✓ Avoiding difficult situations
- ✓ Using alcohol or drugs to relieve or forget stress

3. Ask them to reflect on whether it will always be possible to tell if someone else is stressed. Use the 'Strategies for managing stress' worksheet which shows two images of people who have a fairly similar expression. Ask them if they can tell whether they are stressed or not. Tell them that Person A is extremely stressed and Person B is not stressed at all.
4. Individually, in pairs or small groups, ask them to make up a story for Person A and Person B as to why they are/are not stressed based only on what has happened that day. They could use the scenarios from the previous activity as inspiration, but encourage them to get creative with their own ideas.

### ASK THEM TO THINK ABOUT:

- ✓ What is the source of their stress?
  - ✓ How might this affect the way they are at work, at school, college or with their friends?
  - ✓ What issues might they face if others can't tell that they are stressed?
5. Once everyone has written their stories, ask them to put themselves into the shoes of a friend, teacher, family member or employer of the person in the story. You may even want to assign these different character roles to different groups. What would they do in that situation to help spot signs of that person being stressed, and how might they act to help them? For example, an employer might notice them missing a lot of deadlines, or that they are in the office later than usual, and therefore put in a meeting to ask them if everything is OK.
  6. Emphasise that in all these situations, whichever side you're coming from, empathy and communication are important ways to manage our own stress, look out for stress in others, and be as supportive as possible. What good things can come of doing this?

### FOR EXAMPLE:

- ✓ At work: happier, more productive teams
- ✓ At home: better relationships with their family
- ✓ At school: better grades and relationship with their teachers



# WRAP UP >



## TIME REQUIRED

5-10 minutes



## WORKSHEET

- ✓ Activity 3: Stress management strategies
- ✓ 'Finding help' handout



## QUALIFICATION OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ Strategies for reducing and managing stress

# ACTIVITY STEPS >

1. Explain that there are things we can do to manage stress in our daily lives.

Hand out the 'Stress management strategies' worksheet and read out each option on the list. Ask everyone to think about the strategies they think will work best for them.

## SOME EXAMPLES ARE:

- ✓ Talk to a parent, youth worker or teacher about your stress
- ✓ Talk to a friend
- ✓ Make a to do list to help feel more on top of things
- ✓ Go for a walk or run
- ✓ Exercise or play a sport you love
- ✓ Get an early night so you have a good night's sleep
- ✓ Have a healthy snack
- ✓ Get out – go to the cinema, a youth club, a friend's house – wherever you can have fun and connect
- ✓ List out all the things you are grateful for in your life
- ✓ Meditate, practise mindfulness exercises or do some yoga
- ✓ Download an app that tracks or limits screen time
- ✓ Have a screen-free day or set aside time when you don't go on social media

2. In the session, or privately, ask them to tick off the techniques they're going to use and think about an example of where they will be able to use them.

Remind them to reflect on the signs of stress that were talked about in the last activity to help with this e.g. make a to-do list when feeling overwhelmed with work, go for a walk when feeling nervous or angry about something etc. Get them to write these down in the worksheet as 'pledges' for how they will manage their stress.



### EXTENSION / MINDFUL BREATHING ACTIVITY:

You may want to finish the session with a mindfulness or stilling exercise. For example, you could take everyone through the following steps:

1. The group can stand or sit for this activity.
2. Ask them to put both hands on their stomach and close their eyes.
3. Guide them in taking three deep breaths, to see if they can feel their hands being moved, counting '1, 2, 3' for each breath in and each breath out, pausing at the end of each exhale.
4. Encourage them to think about how the breath feels, asking these questions in their mind such as:
  - Can they feel the air filling their lungs?
  - Can they feel the air moving in through their nose?
  - Does the air feel a little colder on the way in and warmer on the way out?
5. Do this for a few minutes, then ask everyone to slowly open their eyes. They should feel calmer and more centred. Encourage them to use this technique whenever they're feeling stressed, or simply when they feel like it to get themselves into a calm, positive headspace.

### OTHER HELP:

Explain that the tips you've gone through should help the young people to feel a bit more in control of their stress and focus on other, more positive things in their lives. However, if they find that they are stressed more than usual, or want to talk to a professional about it, there are many organisations that can help. If appropriate, give each young person the 'Finding help' handout to take away.

