

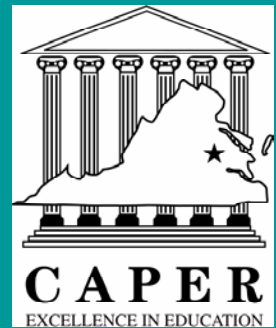
How Do Students Manage Stress?



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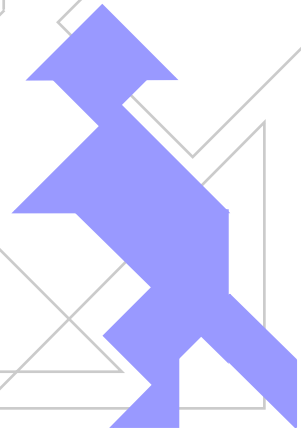
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Objectives

- ◆ To find ways to manage your stress in school and out of school
- ◆ To determine just how stressed you are
- ◆ To learn techniques for lowering your stress level

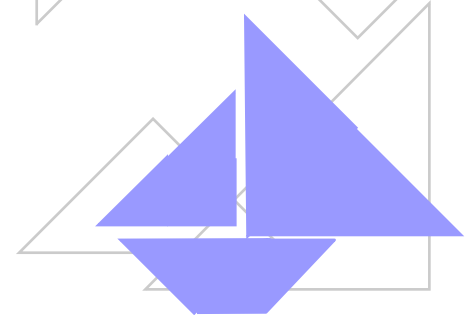


Stress Facts

- ◆ Stress contributes to 50% of all illnesses in the U. S.
- ◆ 75 to 90 percent of all visits to the doctor are for stress-related conditions
- ◆ Stress is linked to the six leading causes of death—heart disease and strokes, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide
- ◆ Teenagers are under more stress than at any other time of life due to physical and emotional changes and social and academic pressures.

What is this Thing Called Stress?

- ◆ Stress is not the incident but your reaction to the incident
- ◆ Stress is a very natural reaction to these types of events
 - It can be physical or mental
 - It is a natural involuntary reaction
 - It is part of what is known as “Fight or Flight” reaction
 - Stress can be a hard thing to talk about
 - Stress can be positive or negative



Does this sound like anyone you know?

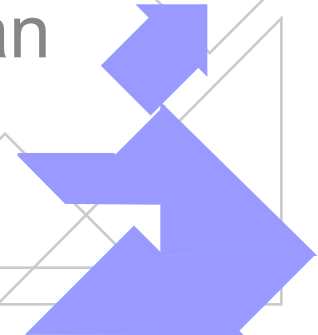
- ◆ 17 year old Marissa is juggling many roles. She has a demanding part-time job, plays two varsity sports, is studying for the SAT's, and is trying to decide where to go to college and how to pay for it. She also has a term paper and an Internet project due this week, needs to find a date and a dress for the prom, and is afraid that her best friend is mad at her. While Marissa used to feel confident and excited by life's challenges, she as recently been feeling overwhelmed, out of control and "stressed out." Marissa's story is typical of the daily pressures you and your friends might be facing.

“This doesn’t apply to me--I’m not stressed.”

- ◆ Everyone has stress. A little stress keeps you alert and on your toes. Stress is like the tension on a guitar string. Turn it too tight and the string snaps; too loose and it won’t play.
- ◆ If handled well, stress strengthens us.
- ◆ If handled poorly, stress can have serious negative consequences.

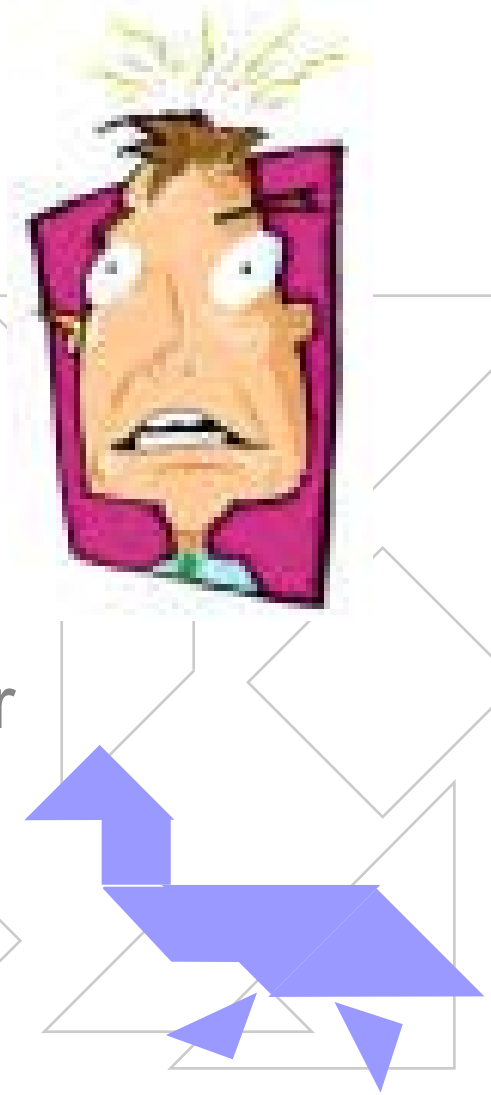
How do people respond to stress?

- ◆ When most people perceive or anticipate a challenging situation such as a major test or a job interview, this results in a “stress response.”
- ◆ Your stress response might include:
 - Facing the challenging and demanding situation
 - Avoiding the situation
 - Following with an automatic reaction
- ◆ Your response to stress is real; it is not an “attitude” or a “personal problem”



Responses to Stress has Physical Symptoms

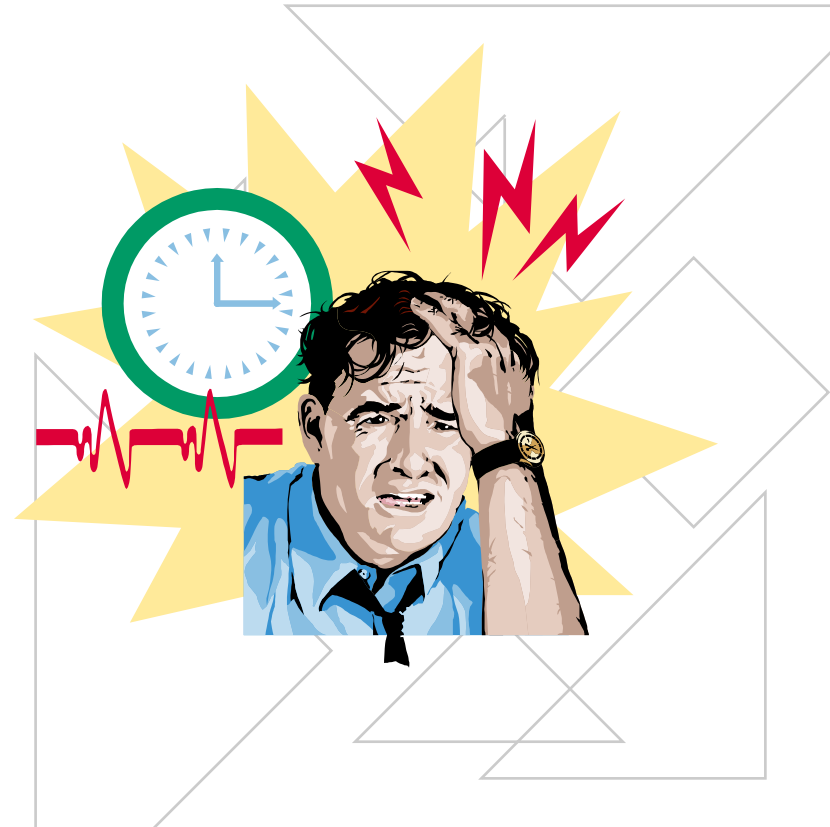
- ◆ Heart rate goes up
- ◆ Blood pressure goes up
- ◆ Breathing rate goes up
- ◆ Oxygen consumption up
- ◆ Muscles become tense
- ◆ Blood thickens
- ◆ Blood flow stays mainly around your vital organs and major muscles to prepare you for “fight or flight”



Chronic Stress and the Body

◆ **Chronic stress is a killer!** Prolonged stress levels can lead to many physical problems such as:

- ❑ High Blood Pressure
- ❑ Heart Attacks
- ❑ Headaches
- ❑ Ulcers
- ❑ Neck and Back Pain
- ❑ Arthritis
- ❑ Insomnia
- ❑ More Frequent Colds
- ❑ Weight Loss/Gain



Signs of Teenage “Stress Overload”

- ◆ Increased physical illness (headaches, stomach aches, muscle pains, chronic fatigue)
- ◆ Shutting down and withdrawal from people and activities
- ◆ Increased anger or irritability—lashing out at others
- ◆ Increased tearfulness and feelings of hopelessness
- ◆ Difficulty sleeping and eating
- ◆ Difficulty concentrating

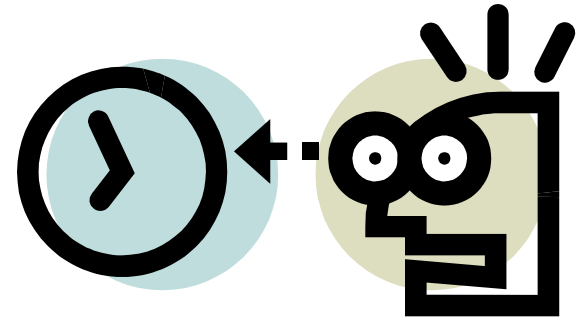


Stress Awareness

- ◆ Becoming aware of stress is a two-step process:
 - STEP ONE: Identify your stressors
 - STEP TWO: Realize how your body feels under stress



Recognize the Stressors



- ◆ **Short-Term Stress** (Caused by anything that temporarily throws you off balance such as locking your keys in the car, taking the SATs, an overloaded schedule, or having to make a speech)
- ◆ **Long-Term Stress** (Leads to constant, unrelenting pressure caused by major changes in your life such as a major illness, a divorce, the loss of a loved one, fear of failure, or any event that may leave you feeling lost or helpless)



Identify Your Sources of Stress . . . At School

2. Identify Your Sources of Stress (At School)

- ❑ Being pressured to fit in with peer groups and measure up to others
- ❑ Taking on too many activities at one time
- ❑ Being pressured to make good grades
- ❑ Making career and college decisions
- ❑ Teachers expecting too much
- ❑ Having to make speeches or give oral reports
- ❑ Feeling like you have to compete—do better than your friends
- ❑ Having a depressed friend or losing a friend



Identify Your Sources of Stress . . . At School

2. Identify Your Sources of Stress (Con't)

- ❑ Having conflicts with other students
- ❑ People saying “dumb” or “hurtful” things
- ❑ Lack of common interests with others
- ❑ Teachers who embarrass you in front of other students
- ❑ Being late with reports or being late for school/other events—poor time management
- ❑ Being pressured to do things that you know are not ethical
- ❑ Not being able to communicate with teachers and/or other students—being “misunderstood”





Identify Your Sources of Stress . . . at Home

- ❑ Parents expecting me to be perfect and to “out do” previous achievements
- ❑ Parents expecting me to have perfect friends or not “liking” my friends
- ❑ Parents pressuring me to do outstanding work at school and to excel in extracurricular activities
- ❑ Brothers and sisters getting on my nerves
- ❑ Tension or fighting among family members
- ❑ Parents “not understanding me”



Three Keys to Managing Stress

1. Recognize your Reaction to Stress

- ❑ **Stress Affects your Body** (sweating, stomach in knots, headaches, upset stomach, tight muscles, rapid heartbeat)
- ❑ **Stress Affects Your Mind** (worrying, feeling anxious or impatient, not being able to focus, having a sense of doom)
- ❑ **Stress Affects Your Actions** (yelling, crying, becoming withdrawn, eating too much or too little, or seeking relief through drinking, smoking or drug use which creates new problems)

Change Your Response

3. Change your response to stress.

Changing your response to stress is your most powerful tool for combating stress.

Even when you can't avoid stressors, you have control over the way you respond.

There are many methods for changing your response. With practice, you can find one or more that will work for you.

Have Realistic Expectations

- ◆ Life is full of unexpected events. When it comes to events that cause you stress, ask yourself:
 - What are my expectations?
 - How likely is it that my expectations, good or bad, will be met?
 - If they aren't met, do I have to respond by feeling badly? How can I work with other outcomes?

Understand What You Can Do

- ◆ Even when you can't change a stressful situation, you can control your response.

For example, you can't control traffic, but you can control whether a traffic jam makes you angry. To get better at managing stress, try these tips:

- **Put the stressor in perspective.** Will being late for a date really cause a breakup with the other person or will getting angry get you there any faster?
- **Be flexible and look for answers.** If you are going to be late, try calling to let people know you are on the way.
- **Plan ahead for next time.** If being late is a worry, plan to leave a few minutes earlier.

Finding Solutions

◆ Turn Mountains into Molehills

A common cause of stress is feeling as if you have to solve all your problems at once. Setting small goals and breaking tasks into smaller manageable chunks

◆ Stay on the Path

Learning to manage stress takes time. There will be stumbling blocks along the way. And on some days you will handle stress better than others. Keep in mind that some stress is natural—like the night before a big exam. Remind yourself that when the event is over, the stress will be gone. By keeping focused on your goals, you can stay on the path to a less stressful life.

Stress Management Skills for Teens

- ◆ Taking deep breaths accompanied by thoughts of being in control (“I can handle this”)
- ◆ Progressive muscle relaxation (repeatedly tensing and relaxing large muscles of the body)
- ◆ Setting small goals and breaking tasks into smaller manageable chunks
- ◆ Exercising and eating regular meals, and avoiding excessive caffeine
- ◆ Focusing on things you can control and letting go of things you cannot control
- ◆ Rehearsing and practicing feared situations (e.g., practicing public speaking or asking someone out on a date)
- ◆ Talking about problems with others, including parents, friends, and trusted professionals
- ◆ Lowering unrealistic expectations
- ◆ Scheduling breaks and enjoyable activities, such as music, art, sports, socializing
- ◆ Accepting yourself as you are and identifying unique strengths and building on them, but realizing no one is perfect!





Working on a Positive Lifestyle

- ◆ Set Limits (so you will feel more in control)
- ◆ Establish Priorities
- ◆ Learn to Accept Support (from family, friends, or professionals you can trust)
- ◆ Calm Your Body and Mind (Sit comfortably; turn off the cell phone and TV; clear your mind. Focus on a peaceful thought, image, or word. Try to hold that thought for 5 minutes. Breathe deeply and relax.)

Working on a Positive Lifestyle

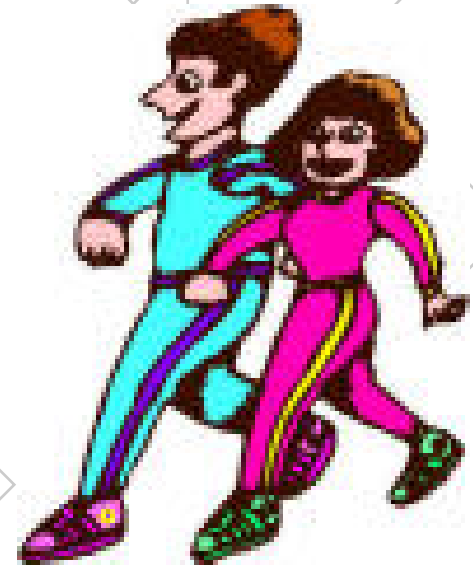
◆ Relieve Stress by Stretching and Breathing

- Stretching (Neck, Shoulder and Arm Stretch)
- Deep Breathing (Inhale slowly and deeply and hold for 3 seconds)
- Exhale (Breathe out slowly through your mouth)

◆ Aerobic Exercise is a **great** way to reduce stress.

◆ Drink lots of water.

◆ Stress reduction techniques can be started TODAY!



Working on a Positive Lifestyle

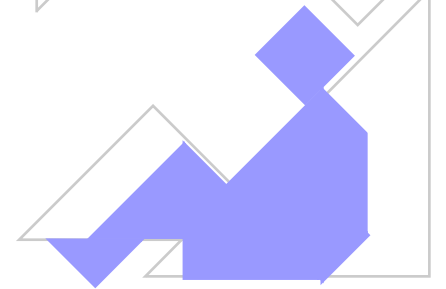
◆ Take Care of Yourself

- Get enough rest
- Treat yourself (Allow time for fun and special activities that make you feel good)
- Make time for a healthy diet
- Get active



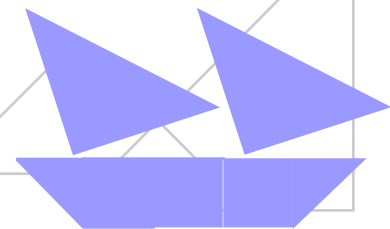
JUST HOW STRESSED ARE YOU?

- Complete the “JUST HOW STRESSED ARE YOU” Worksheet
- This is not a test so be honest with yourself so as to get a true indicator of your current stress level. There are no right or wrong answers.
- Your answers will be confidential. We will not collect your worksheets.



SCORING GUIDE

- ◆ For Questions # 1-5, score 10 points for each “ALMOST NEVER” answer and 5 points for each “SOMETIMES” answer
- ◆ For Questions # 6-10, score 10 points for each “MOST OF THE TIME” answer and 5 points for each “SOMETIMES” answer.
- ◆ For the two Bonus Questions, subtract 5 points for each one that you were able to complete with all three filled in.



SCORING GUIDE

- ◆ **If your score was above 30 points:**

Stress is a big deal in your life. Start thinking of how to make changes now to help prevent serious health consequences.

- ◆ **If your score was between 20-30 points:**

Stress is definitely a presence in your life, and it's possible that any major life change or trauma could easily move you into the above category.

- ◆ **If your score was below 20 points:**

Stress may be a factor in your life, but your score indicates you have developed some positive coping mechanisms to handle it.

