



BUSTING STRESS: STRESS
MANAGEMENT LESSON PLANS

GRADES 7 - 12



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Calgary
Mental health for all





Hello Schools!

We are so happy your school is using these online learning opportunities from **YouthSMART** - CMHA Calgary's Youth Mental Health Initiative! These lessons are designed to generate student awareness of mental health topics, and increase their skills and confidence to foster their own wellness and resiliency.

By accessing this information, we ask that you communicate back to YouthSMART about how you are using these lessons. Check out our online platforms for more information!

YouthSMART.ca	info@cmha.calgary.ab.ca	cmha.calgary.ab.ca
@CMHACalgary	@CMHACalgary	CMHA Calgary Region
#SMARTSchoolsYYC		

About these Activities

These lessons are focused on distance or independent learning opportunities for students in grades 7-12. Created as a result of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, these 15-30 minute lessons, which were previously only delivered face-to-face by CMHA Calgary educators, have been re-designed to be delivered online by teachers or caregivers. These flexible, quick lessons can be adapted to a variety of classroom or virtual learning platforms.

What is Canadian Mental Health Association – Calgary Region?

Canadian Mental Health Association - Calgary Region (CMHA Calgary) builds awareness and provides education and support for individuals and families living with mental health or substance use concerns, or a loss by suicide. CMHA Calgary works closely with other community organizations to bridge gaps in the mental health care system and facilitates access to important services and resources.

What is YouthSMART?

CMHA Calgary's YouthSMART (**Youth** Supporting **M**ental Health **and** **R**esiliency **T**ogether) integrates collaborative, youth-led mental health learning opportunities in local junior and senior high schools. YouthSMART knows that students are incredibly influential amongst their peers, within their schools, families, and communities. As such, YouthSMART values youth as peer contributors, actively involved in the programing and opportunities that directly impact their wellness, and works with SMART School Leaders to transform the culture of their school surrounding mental health. For more information about CMHA Calgary's YouthSMART, check out: YouthSMART.ca



Stress Management and Healthy Coping

Learning Objectives

Attainment of a healthy mind and body begins with understanding how to balance the demands of life. Understanding stress is foundational in maintaining personal health. These activities provide an overview of what the stress response is, and how stress affects the body and mind. Students will demonstrate an awareness of their own levels of stress, develop an awareness of their unique stressors, and how to cope with stress in healthy ways.

Activities:

Activity 1: Stress Test

Activity 2: Fight, Flight, or Freeze

Activity 3: Effects of Stress

Activity 4: Causes of Stress

Activity 5: Coping with Stress

Optional Activity: Stress Bingo

*All Activities are designed to be 15-30 minutes in length, but may be extended for deeper discussion.

Materials

Activity 1: Printout or Web Picture - Stress Test

Activity 2: Students require paper - Fight, Flight, or Freeze

Activity 3: Printout or Web Picture - Effects of Stress

Activity 4: Printout or Web Picture - Causes of Stress

Activity 5: Printout or Web Picture - Coping with Stress

Optional Activity: Printout or Web Picture - Stress Bingo



Activity 1: Stress Test

1. Instruct students to complete the Stress Test either as a print out, or on a separate sheet of paper by choosing a number between 1 and 4 to indicate how often they encounter each experience. Ask them to think about the past 2-3 weeks, rather than the entire year so far.
2. Have students add up the numbers on the Stress Test, then show the following scoring:
Under 20 — Low Stress 21 to 30 — Medium Stress 31 and up — High Stress
3. Let students know that stress is a normal reaction to the demands of life; when your brain perceives a threat, your body releases a burst of hormones to fuel your fight/flight/freeze response; and when the threat is gone, your body returns to normal.
4. Let students know that their stress score will change often, depending on life circumstances. Encourage them to continue taking the test in the future to assess their scores at different times, and notice how it fluctuates.

Discussion Questions

Question: What is the first thing that pops in your head when you hear the word "stress"?

Answer: Various responses, all answers are valid.

Question: We all talk about stress, but what is it? How would you define it?

Answer: Stress comes from both the good and the bad things that happen to us, and it is a normal reaction to the demands in our lives. When our brains perceive a situation to be threatening, our bodies release a sudden rush of hormones that send us into an automatic "fight, flight or freeze" instinct. This biological event is called the "stress response."

Question: What are the different types of stress responses?

Answer: Fight, flight, or freeze. The "fight" response does not mean physical violence. It means your body prepares to take action against the demand. The "flight" response prepares the individual to escape from the situation to maintain their safety. While this response might be helpful if the demand was an angry dog chasing you, it is not as helpful if you need to write a test. The "freeze" response is what happens when our bodies and minds are overwhelmed and do not react. Think of a time you have been watching a scary movie or a friend had jumped out from behind a wall to scare you. If you froze or felt like you could not move, or you couldn't talk or make a sound your body was trying to maintain your wellness by shutting down.

Question: What happens inside our body when we go into "Fight, Flight, or Freeze"?

Answer: In all three of the responses, the body will release a burst of both adrenaline and cortisol. Adrenaline will increase the heart rate and blood pressure, expands the air passages in our lungs, enlarge the pupils in our eyes, redistribute blood to our muscles, and slows down our metabolism. Cortisol will increase glucose in the bloodstream, slows our functions that do not aid in keeping us safe, and taxes our immune system responses.

Activity 2: Fight, Flight, or Freeze

Ask students to demonstrate their understanding of the Stress Response or Fight, Flight or Freeze by drawing a picture, a comic strip, or writing a short story or brief essay that outlines their own personal response (or expected response) to a stressful situation. Teachers can assign the situation, such as public speaking, encountering a bear camping, or students can select their own.

Activity 3: Effects of Stress

1. Let students know that when we are under stress, we typically experience changes in four different areas, our feelings, our body, our thoughts, and our behaviours.
2. Instruct students to complete the Effects of Stress sheet, either as a print out, or on a separate sheet of paper.
3. Talk about the experiences of stress that come up commonly.
4. Instruct students to explore YouthSMART.ca for more information about Eustress and Distress

Discussion Questions

Question: What is eustress?

Answer: Eustress or “positive stress” is the kind of stress that helps motivate us to work hard to accomplish tasks, makes us feel excited, and feel good about life. Eustress is all about sufficiently challenging ourselves without expending all our resources.

Question: How can eustress help us?

Answer: Motivates and energizes; adds moments of excitement; helps us to accomplish tasks.

Question: What is distress?

Answer: Distress or “negative stress” is the stress we typically think of that makes us feel overwhelmed when we do not have the ability to cope with the demand being placed upon us.



Activity 4: Types of Stressors

1. Explain to students that when we are dealing with negative stress, or distress, it tends to come from two different sources, our external stressors, and our internal stressors.
2. Have students explore YouthSMART.ca to find explanations of external and internal stressors then discuss. Highlight that external stressors are the events or situations that cause stress, but are out of our control. Internal stressors are the things we do to ourselves, or the choices we make that lead to or increase stress.
3. Instruct students to complete the Causes of Stress sheet, either as a printout, or on a separate sheet of paper.
4. Talk about the stressors that are most commonly identified.

Discussion Questions

Question: Why is identifying your stressors important?

Answer: If you are able to identify your own stressors, it's easier to find ways to handle stress in a healthy way.

Activity 5: Healthy Coping

1. Inform students that there are healthy and unhealthy ways of dealing with stress. The healthy ways help to reduce stress and relieve symptoms. Unhealthy ways of dealing with stress actually mask the symptoms and causes of stress, may introduce new stressors and may increase the effects of stress in the future.
2. Have students complete the Healthy Coping sheet as a print out, or on a separate sheet of paper.
3. Discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of coping.

Discussion Points

Examples students might bring up:

Focus Time: Closely focus on tasks in a goal-oriented way, taking on challenges that make deep connections in the brain. For example, learn how to take photos, or repair a bicycle.

Play Time: Allow yourself to be spontaneous, creative and playful! Enjoying these experiences helps make new connections in the brain – not to mention it's fun! You could organize a snowball fight, try your hand at painting, or sing your heart out to your favourite artist.

Connecting Time: When we connect with other people or take time to connect with nature we richly activate the brain's relational circuitry. You could call your mom, or ask a friend to chat over lunch. It's incredible what authentic connection can do for us!

Physical Time: Healthy body, healthy mind. Moving our bodies enriches our brain in many ways. This doesn't mean you must spend hours at a gym. Take on a new sport, take your dog for a run, or go for a hike! Not only is it healthy, it can also be a great way to have some fun!

Alone Time: Sometimes it's healthy to just be alone. When we quietly reflect internally, focusing on sensations, images, feelings and thoughts, it helps to better integrate the brain.

Down Time: When we don't focus on anything, and let our mind wander or simply relax, it helps our brain recharge. This could mean going on a walk, or laying on the couch and just being.

Sleep Time: Good sleep is key in our mental wellness. When we give the brain the rest it needs, it can consolidate learning and recover from the experiences of the day.

Stress Test

Never or Seldom = 1

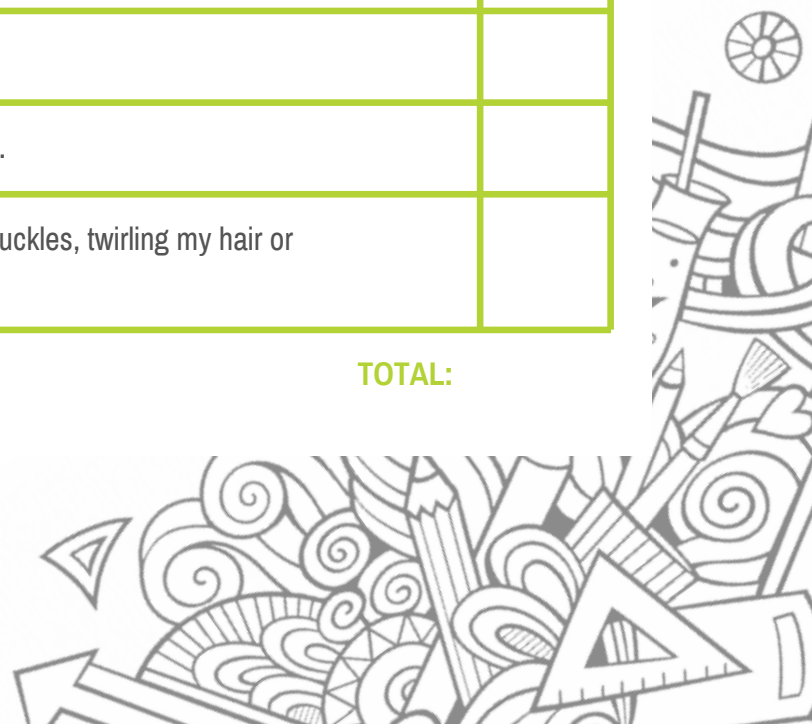
Sometimes = 2

Often = 3

Always = 4

I have problems falling asleep or staying asleep.	
I am uptight and cannot seem to relax.	
I get angry if things do not go my way.	
I have difficulty concentrating.	
I have a hard time finding fun things to do.	
I feel tired during the day.	
I worry a lot about things going on in my life.	
I have had health problems because I work too hard.	
I use alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine or drugs to cope with stress.	
I laugh or smile less than I used to.	
I feel sad or disappointed often.	
I like to be in control.	
I don't have enough time for all the things in my life.	
I have a habit of clenching my fists, cracking my knuckles, twirling my hair or tapping my fingers.	

TOTAL:



Effects of Stress

When we are under stress, we typically experience changes in four different areas, our feelings, our body, our thoughts, and our behaviours. **Below, write how stress impacts you in each area:**

When I am stressed, I feel (emotions) ...

When I am stressed, my body...

When I am stressed, I think about...

When I am stressed, I notice more or less (behaviours)...

Causes of Stress

When we deal with negative stress, or distress, it tends to come from two different sources, our **external stressors**, and our **internal stressors**.

External stressors are the events or situations that cause stress, but are out of our control. **My most common external stressors are...**

Internal stressors are the things we do to ourselves, or the choices we make that lead to or increase stress. **My most common internal stressors are...**

Healthy Coping

What are healthy ways to deal with stress? Think about what you are already doing, or could be doing that would help in each of the following areas.

Write as many as you can think of!

Environmental – Living in and supporting a clean and safe environment

Occupational – Satisfaction with career or academic work, feeling safe and secure in the job or school environment, financial security

Emotional – Positive feelings, optimistic view on life, ability to express and process emotions

Intellectual – Stimulated with activities, growing knowledge and abilities, learning new skills

Physical – Physical health and activities


Social – Positive connection and relationships with family, friends, community; supporting others and asking for help when needed

Spiritual – Connection to one's meaning and purpose

Optional Activity: Stress BINGO

During the week, try these stress management tips. They can help you to take a break, keep organized, and stay healthy!

B I N G O

Wanted to procrastinate, but did something important instead	Asked for help with a problem	Tried deep breathing and/or meditation	Slept for 7-9 hours	Exercised for 30 minutes three times in one week
Chose a healthy snack	Wrote in a journal	Spent 1 hour learning something new	Said a positive affirmation to myself	Said "no" to an optional request so I could have time for myself.
Did something creative	Went on to YouthSMART.ca		Did my favourite hobby	Started with the hardest task first
Made a schedule and stuck to it	Brainstormed ways to solve a problem	Spent 30 minutes or more relaxing	Watched my favourite TV/Netflix show	Stretched or did yoga
Read a book for 30 minutes or more	Talked to someone about something that was bothering me	Did a task as soon as it was assigned	Made a list of things I needed to do	Had a good laugh