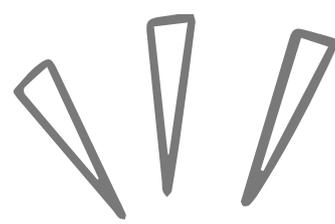


Topic



# Stress Management and Healthy Coping



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# Stress Management and Healthy Coping

## Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to understand what a stress response is, how stress affects the body and mind, and how to cope with stress in healthy ways.



## Topic Overview:

### What is Stress?

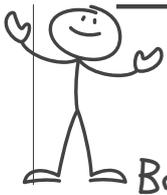
Stress is a normal reaction to the demands of life. It comes from both the good and the bad things that happen in your life. When your brain experiences a challenging situation, it releases a rush of hormones that send you into an automatic "fight, flight, or freeze" response. Students may identify stress as something that alters their natural balance or makes them feel overwhelmed.

### Types of Stress

Stress can be both positive and negative. Positive stress is stress that excites or motivates you (e.g. a sports game). Negative stress can overwhelm or upset you (e.g. a big test or a fight with a friend).

Stress can also be divided into internal or external. External stress is stress that is outside of your control. Examples can include tests, homework, switching schools, bullying, fighting with friends, and sports or performances. Internal stress is stress that is within your control. It can also include how you react to external stress. Examples include negative thinking, low self-esteem, procrastination, and feelings about external stressors.

# How Does Stress Impact Students?



Muscles hurt, headache, upset stomach, sweating

Body



Irritable, mood swings, anger, scared, feeling overwhelmed

Mood



Negative thoughts, difficulty paying attention, forgetfulness, poor judgment

Thoughts



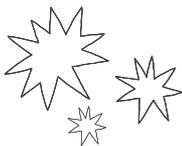
Restlessness, avoiding activities, trouble sleeping, procrastination

Behaviour

## Fight-Flight-Freeze Response

When your brain perceives a threat, your body releases a burst of hormones to fuel your fight-flight-freeze response.

Fight



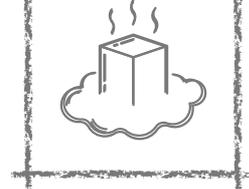
When you deal with the stressful situation head-on.

Flight



When you feel panicked and leave the situation.

Freeze



When stress takes over and you can't react at all.

When the body engages in the stress response, certain body mechanisms engage including increased heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, shallow chest breathing, and body temperature.

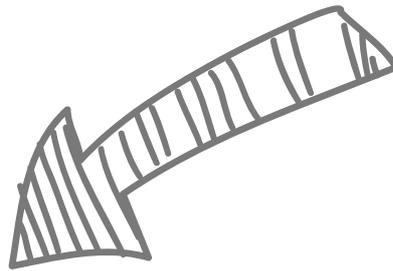
# Stress Management and Healthy Coping

There are a variety of ways to deal with stress and these can be often categorized into healthy or unhealthy coping strategies. Healthy coping helps reduce stress and relieve symptoms. Examples for students may include going for a walk, listening to music, spending time with a pet, talking with a friend or trusted adult, and taking calming breaths.

Unhealthy coping can avoid dealing with the stress, create more stress, or create unhealthy habits. Examples for students may include avoiding friends/family, not talking about feelings, unhealthy food, procrastinating, and venting.

## Activities:

- 1: What Is Stress?
- 2: Stress Experiment
- 3: Effects of Stress
- 4: Body Emotion Connection
- 5: Fight-Flight-Freeze Comics
- 6: Causes of Stress
- 7: Stress Test
- 8: Coping Strategies
- 9: Stress Management
- 10: Expressing Emotions
- 11: Track my Mood
- 12: Affirmations
- 13: Stress Bucket
- 14: Stress Structure
- 15: Progress Chart



# Activity 1: What is Stress?



**Time Requirement**  
15 - 30 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Pencils/white paper optional

## Activity Information

### THINK – PAIR – SHARE

Use this activity to assess where students' knowledge levels and attitudes around stress currently exist. Some misinformation or gaps in understanding may present themselves. This isn't the time to correct every assumption, but instead, note areas where students may need more support or knowledge.

### Student Instructions:

- **THINK** – Students first individually brainstorm ideas that come to mind when they think about stress.
- **PAIR** – They then get into partners or small groups and discuss what they have come up with.
- **SHARE** – Activity wraps up with a class discussion about what was brainstormed individually and as a group.



# Activity 2: Stress Experiment



**Time Requirement**  
30 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Open space, pylon, or  
other easy-to-grab items

## Activity Information

This interactive activity will simulate what stress feels like. Students can use this as an opportunity to discover what stress feels like for them and others.

### Discussion:

- What does stress feel like?
- What situations give you stress?

### Student Instructions:

Students will explore stress through a simulated experience. There are a variety of ways to do this. Choose from the following depending on what works best for your students and space.

- Students will start simulating stress by doing exercises that increase heart rate and breathing (e.g. jumping jacks or running in place)
- *Alternative option:* Play a game such as “pylon” to create more anticipation or stress
  - o Pylon instructions: Two participants stand at an equal distance from each other with a pylon (or another easy-to-grab item) in-between them
  - o Movements such as jumping jacks, hopping on one foot, touching toes, dance moves are called out and each participant does the movement
  - o When "pylon" is called, the first person to reach down and grab the pylon gets a 'point'

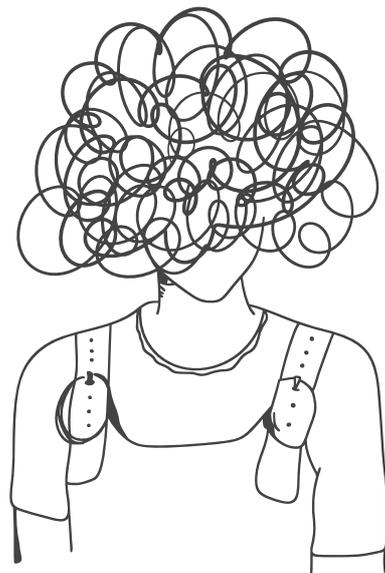
## Activity 2: Stress Experiment (cont.)

- o Once the physical component has begun, add extra challenges such as asking them questions while they are "stressed" and watch how their focus and concentration are impacted
- o Continue long enough for students to observe the effects on themselves or others

### Debrief:

Ask students any of the following:

- What happened when you were in a stressful situation?
  - o To your thoughts?
  - o To your emotions?
  - o To your behaviour?
  - o To your body?
- Did you feel like it was harder to focus on multiple things at one time?
- What would happen if you never got a "break" from your stress?



# Activity 3: Effects of Stress



**Time Requirement**  
30 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

## Activity Information

By exploring how stress impacts individuals, students will be more able to identify when they are experiencing stress. This allows students to more quickly act to deal with stress and build coping strategies.

### Student Instructions:

In this activity, students will brainstorm how stress impacts their thoughts, emotions, behaviour, and physical body.



# Activity 4: Body-Emotion Connection



**Time Requirement**  
30 - 45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, white paper

## Activity Information

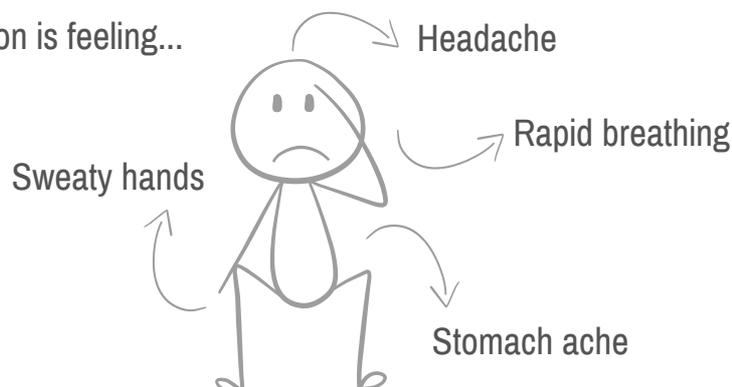
This activity allows students to understand the connection between the emotions we feel and the physical effect we notice in our bodies. Sometimes when we experience emotions, we can also have a strong reaction in our bodies. This is called the body-emotion connection. If we can recognize these signals in our body this can help us more easily identify the emotion we are feeling.

### Discussion:

- How do you know you are feeling a certain emotion?

Sometimes our bodies react before we even realize what is going on. If we identify the feeling in our bodies it can also help us identify the emotions we are feeling and better deal with the situation.

**Example:** A person is feeling...



A person might then guess that they are feeling stressed.

## Activity 4: Body-Emotion Connection (cont.)

### Student Instructions:

- Students should work in small groups
- Students will take turns picking an emotion. They will then draw (at the bottom of the student worksheet or a separate piece of white paper) or act out that emotion focusing on the physical symptoms the body may experience when that emotion is happening. The other students in the group will have to guess what the emotion is
- Remind students to think about signals from the body such as heart rate and sweaty palms
- For example, a student who picks the emotion “angry” might draw a stick figure with a flushed face, clenched hands, and a pounding heart

Students can use the example emotions and possible physical symptoms in the student worksheet as needed or come up with their own examples in their groups.



# Activity 5: Fight-Flight-Freeze Comics



**Time Requirement**  
45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
White paper, pencils, and  
colouring materials

## Activity Information

Students will explore various types of stress responses in this comic activity. Students can complete this individually or in groups.

## Student Instructions:

### Warm Up Activity:

- Ensure students understand the definition of fight-flight-freeze responses
- Give students various examples of the fight-flight-freeze reactions and have students identify what type of reaction it is
- This is a good time to clarify any questions or misunderstandings about what happens in each type of reaction

### Examples:

- You yell at someone when you get overwhelmed ➤ Fight
- You come across a bear when hiking and cannot move ➤ Freeze
- Ducking immediately when you realize a basketball is flying towards you ➤ Flight
- Starting your homework as soon as it gets assigned ➤ Fight
- Your mind goes blank when you have a test ➤ Freeze
- Someone jumps out at you during a haunted house and you turn and run ➤ Flight

See topic overview on page 9 for teacher background information

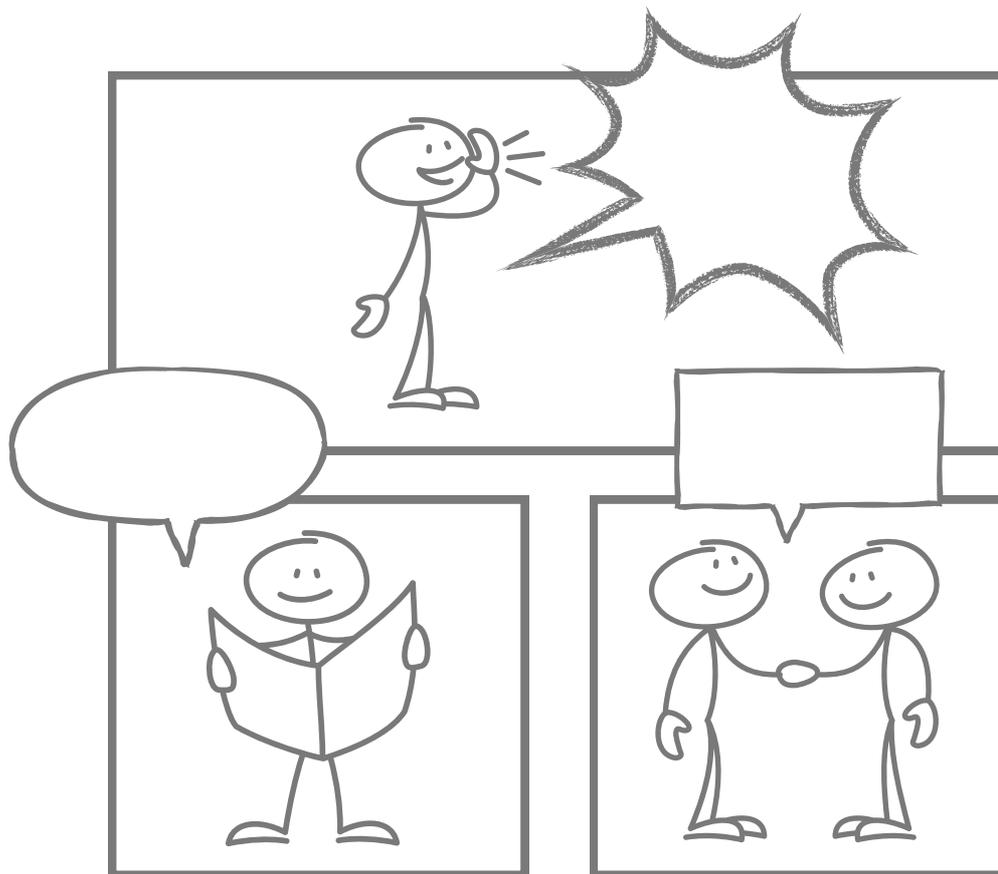
## Activity 5: Fight-Flight-Freeze Comics (cont.)

### Student Instructions:

#### Fight-Flight-Freeze Comic Activity

Through comics, students will describe a stressful situation that occurred to them.

- Describe the situation, the reaction, and what exactly happened
  - o Depending on the situation and the reaction that occurred, some students may choose to include how they could attempt to improve the situation or react differently



# Activity 6: Causes of Stress



**Time Requirement**  
30 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

## Activity Information

This activity will require students to identify the various stresses they experience and categorize this stress into what they can and cannot control (e.g. internal versus external stress).

## Student Instructions:

### Warm Up Activity:

Allow students to jot down some of the things that cause them stress in the list provided in the student worksheet.

### External vs. Internal Stress:

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 internal stressors.

- Give a few examples of each type of stressor
- Students will then take stressors from their list and place them into the template sorting them as external or internal stressors
- They will then take time to reflect on the next page



# Activity 7: Stress Test



**Time Requirement**  
30 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

## Activity Information

The stress test will allow students to identify where their current stress levels are.

## Student Instructions:

Have students fill out the stress test. Ask them to think about the last 2 - 3 weeks, rather than the year so far. Have students add up their numbers.

## Scores:

Under 20 – **Low Stress**

21 - 30 – **Medium Stress**

31 and up – **High Stress**

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.

Let students know that their stress scores will change 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.

# Activity 8: Coping Strategies



**Time Requirement**  
30 - 45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

## Activity Information

This activity is to introduce students to the variety of ways we can cope with stress and build the understanding that some may be healthier than others. For reference, some examples of coping strategies:

Healthy Coping Strategies	Unhealthy Coping Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exercise</li><li>• Talking about the problem</li><li>• Healthy eating</li><li>• Relaxation techniques</li><li>• Spending time with family and friends</li><li>• Video games (used responsibly)</li><li>• Good sleep</li><li>• Taking a break</li><li>• Music/books</li><li>• Ask for help</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procrastination</li><li>• Staying up too late</li><li>• Social withdrawal</li><li>• Overeating</li><li>• Drug or alcohol use</li><li>• Caffeine or energy drinks</li><li>• Physical violence or aggression</li><li>• Not talking about feelings or holding everything in</li></ul>

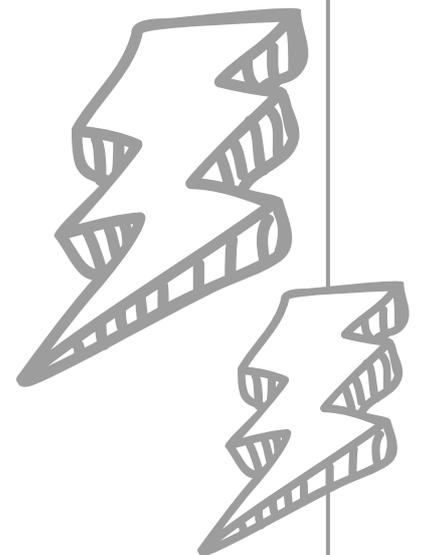
## Activity 8: Coping Strategies (cont.)

### Student Instructions:

#### The Right Tool For The Situation Activity:

- As a group, brainstorm as many coping strategies as students can think of. Create a master list somewhere students can view it. Ensure there is a variety of strategies on the list
- Help students categorize healthy versus unhealthy strategies ensuring they understand the difference. Explain how unhealthy coping can feel useful at the moment but in reality, it can increase stress further on
- Student worksheet: Once students understand the variety of coping strategies that they can use, they can identify the right tool for various stressful situations

It is important to remember that we need a variety of coping strategies as we experience many different types of stress.



# Activity 9: Stress Management Journaling



**Time Requirement**  
30 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Journal (optional), pencils, and white paper

## Activity Information

Journaling can provide students with reflective time to sort their thoughts and identify their feelings. It can be helpful to incorporate journaling regularly because stress management is something that should be practiced often. Journaling also helps students identify and manage their feelings independently.

## Student Instructions:

- Give students a journal prompt and time to reflect. You can open up opportunities to share at the end or keep student responses private
- Some students may find it hard to journal for a longer period. The more journaling is practiced, the better their endurance will be

## Journal Prompts:

- "I am grateful for..."
- Make a list of 5 things that make you happy. How can you use this list to make you feel better when you feel upset?
- The things that help me the most right now are
- Colour, symbol, image: Pick a colour, a symbol (think simply like an emoji), then an image that describes how you are feeling and why

## Activity 4: Stress Management Journaling (cont.)

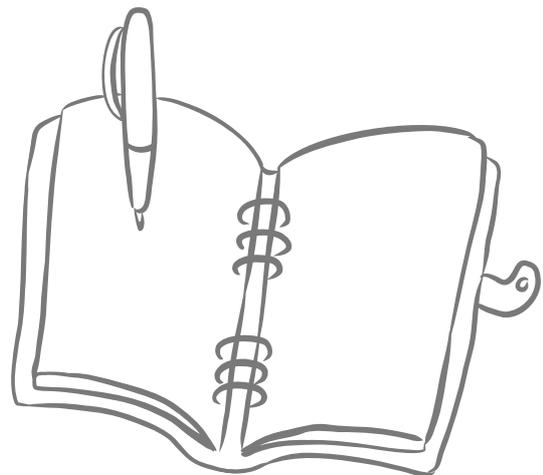
- Think about the day you had yesterday. Was it a good day or bad? How could you have changed the outlook of the day?
- Write down one word that you can focus on today to have the best possible day. Why did you choose this word?
- Think about the last problem you overcame. How did you solve that problem? Are you happy with the outcome?
- I feel most challenged by \_\_\_\_\_. I feel most supported by \_\_\_\_\_.
- Compass Points

North: I **N**eed to know \_\_\_\_\_

East: I am **E**xcited by \_\_\_\_\_

South: My **S**uggestions for dealing with stress are \_\_\_\_\_

West: I am **W**orried about \_\_\_\_\_



# Activity 10: Expressing Emotions



**Time Requirement**  
45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, coloured pencils, or markers

## Activity Information

Emotion charades are a great way to strengthen the understanding of emotions, as well as how to express and recognize emotions in yourself and others.

## Student Instructions:

### Warm Up Activity:

- Reference to the emotions list on the student worksheet and brainstorm more emotions with the students if needed
- Students should be in small groups of 2 - 3 students
- Remind students of the rules of charades (e.g. no talking, using actions and expressions only, partner guesses what you are acting)
- Each student will act out 3 different emotions for their partners to guess

### Debrief:

- What helped you understand the emotion your partner displayed?
- Was there anything challenging about this activity?
- What would you do if someone wasn't showing an obvious emotion, but you still thought they were upset? How would you know something was upsetting them?
- Why is it important to express what you are feeling?

## Activity 10: Expressing Emotions (cont.)



### Activity Information

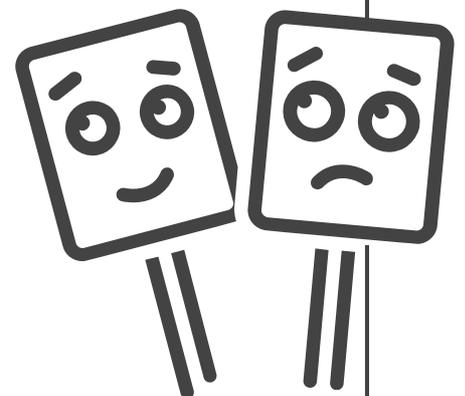
Students will identify various emotions they experience. Using colours and patterns, students will demonstrate how these emotions feel, giving them a better understanding of each emotion.

### Student Instructions:

- Students should pick 5 emotions that feel strong or relevant to them. They should brainstorm how they think about this emotion, what it feels like, and if they associate any colours or symbols with the emotion
- Students will have a wheel with 5 spots for their emotions. They should write one emotion in each spot, then think about how they would like to represent that emotion
- Students will use colours, images, patterns, or words to fill in each spot. Encourage students to think more abstractly and build a deeper connection to each emotion

### Debrief:

- Why is it important to identify and understand your emotions?
- How can you use this information to help you manage your stress?



# Activity II: Track My Mood



**Time Requirement**  
Best assigned as homework, or completed periodically over time



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

## Activity Information

This worksheet will allow students to record their moods throughout various times of the day. It can allow them to acknowledge emotions and recognize patterns in behaviour.

To be successful, students must understand the various ways stress or other emotions can represent themselves in their bodies (e.g. physically, behaviours, etc.)

## Student Instructions:

- At various points throughout your day, reflect on your current mood. If possible, try to identify why you are feeling that way
- Once you have completed this a couple of times, you may be able to recognize patterns

# Activity 12: Affirmations



**Time Requirement**  
30 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

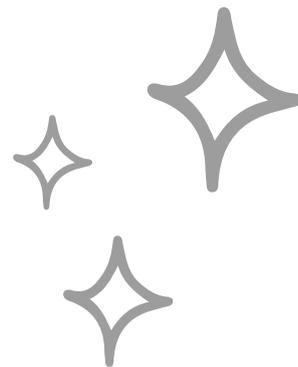
## Activity Information

Positive affirmations help build positive self-talk, boost self-esteem, and reduce anxiety. It is important to practice affirmations regularly to get the benefits.<sup>1</sup>

This worksheet allows students to practice using affirmations in a simple format.

## Student Instructions:

- Reflect on your strengths and positive attributes. It can be helpful to start with “I Am” statements, but affirmations can take any form
- In each spoke of the sun, identify an affirmation about yourself



<sup>1</sup>Mindtool. 2022. Using Affirmations to Harness Positive Energy. Retrieved from <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/affirmations.htm#:~:text=Affirmations%20are%20positive%20statements%20that,start%20to%20make%20positive%20changes.>

# Activity 13: Stress Bucket



**Time Requirement**  
30 - 45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Cups (some with and without holes)  
Access to water, bin for overflow

## Activity Information

This activity provides a visual representation of how coping strategies can impact stress levels.

## Stress Bucket Interactive Demonstration<sup>2</sup>

- A stress bucket represents the stress we carry with us. We all have different levels of stress in our buckets
- Fill a cup (e.g. stress bucket) with water. There are a variety of examples to demonstrate.
  - Step 1: Fill a cup with some water, representing a small stressor
  - Step 2: Fill the same cup with more water, representing a bigger challenge or stressor
  - Step 3: Fill a cup with holes with water. These holes represent healthy coping strategies
  - Step 4: Fill two cups of water at the same time. This represents how unhealthy coping strategies can feel as though they are helping at the moment but they don't reduce the impact of the stress overall
- After each step, pause for discussion
  - o What is happening and how does this represent stress?
  - o What are examples of healthy or unhealthy coping strategies that could be represented in this activity?

<sup>2</sup> The bucket analogy is based on the following resources: Carver, C.S., Scheier, M.F., & Weintraub, J.K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 267-283. Ross, S.E., Niebling, B.C., & Heckert, T.M. (1999). Sources of stress among college students. *College Student Journal*, 33, 312-317.

## Activity 13: Stress Bucket (cont.)



Take some time to debrief with students and share the Stress Bucket video to wrap up and confirm understanding.

Here are two videos demonstrating the same concept. Always preview videos before sharing with students.



Braive: Stress Bucket <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KYC5SsJjx8>



MindWell: Stress Bucket <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrfYcNFKi3A>

### Alternative Stress Bucket Activity

- Use the corresponding student worksheet if you would like an alternative to the interactive demonstration or would like an additional resource to expand student knowledge
- The student worksheet allows students to identify and reflect on their own stress bucket levels



# Activity 14: : Stress Structure



**Time Requirement**  
60 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pipe cleaners, dice, weights, and pencils

## Activity Information

This activity simulates the impact of stress on a person. Students will be able to understand the various impacts stress has on a person, as well as the benefits of using coping strategies to deal with stress.

Students should also understand the definition of resiliency, the ability to bounce back or overcome challenges faced. This activity can be a good way to deepen their understanding.

## Materials:

- Building materials such as pipe cleaners
- Small blocks or weights (to represent stress)
- Dice for each group
- Student worksheet for each group

*The goal of the activity is to use the pipe cleaners to build a structure that can stand on its own, even under the weight of stress. This structure represents someone who is dealing with stress.*

## Student Instructions:

- Students should work in small groups (around 4 per group)
- Each group will need 6 pipe cleaners, a dice, weights, and one set of cards
- Cards provided in the student worksheet should be cut out, mixed, and placed into two piles (coping strategy/develop resiliency cards and stress/remove coping strategy cards). Extra pipe cleaners will be also be needed throughout the activity
- Students should start by building a small structure with the 6 pipe cleaners

## Activity 14: Stress Structure (cont.)

- Students will roll the dice and pick cards based on whether the roll was odd/even. The cards will determine the situations that person is facing, and as a result, how you build your pipe cleaner structure
- There are 4 rounds. For each round, someone will roll the dice 3 times
- Assign each group a "roll master" to keep track of each roll on the student worksheet



a) **Even** (2, 4, or 6): Pick a coping strategy card

i. Add a pipe cleaner to strengthen the structure



ii. Within the coping strategy pile, there will be a few "develop



resiliency" cards. If students pick this card, instead of adding a pipe cleaner, they can rebuild their structure. This demonstrates they have overcome or bounced back from the challenges they have faced so far



b) **Odd** (1, 3, or 5): Pick a stress card

i. Add a weight to represent increased stress



ii. Within the stress pile, there will be a few "remove coping strategy"



cards. If students pick this card, they will add a weight to their structure. This demonstrates that the removal of a healthy coping strategy can increase stress

### Example:

A 6 is rolled. Since 6 is an even number, a student will pick up a coping strategy card. The card may say that a student talked to a teacher about the upcoming test to reduce their stress. Students will then add one pipe cleaner to their structure.

A 3 is rolled. Since 3 is an odd number, a student will pick up a stress card. The card may say that too much homework is causing feelings of stress. Students will then add a weight to their structure.

## Activity 14: Stress Structure (cont.)

### Extra Tip:

If students need extra support, have them all roll at the same time, and wait for groups to be organized (e.g. have added their supports or stress) before moving to the next step. If students are working well, they can move to the next step independently.

### Debrief:

- Have students share what happened to their structure and what types of roles and situations they experienced
- Highlight some of the groups that had more 'stressful' experiences (e.g. rolling the dice a negative number, adding more weight to their structure or removing a coping strategy), but still have intact structures. This can show how we can be resilient even in the face of challenges

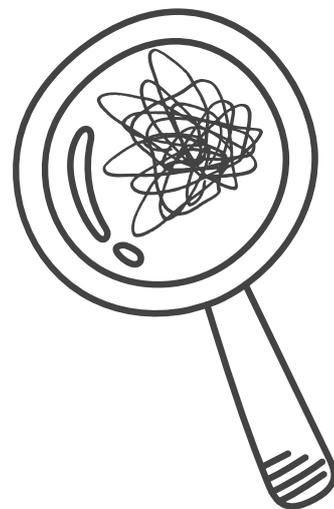
### Optional Video Resource:



Brains: Journey to Resilience <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrFYcNFKi3A>

Discuss as a group the following:

- How does this activity relate to resiliency?
- What did we learn from this activity?



# Activity 15: Progress Chart



**Time Requirement**  
Best done over time



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

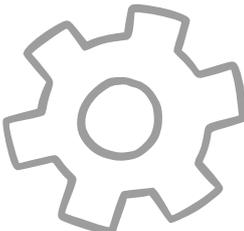
## Activity Information

This activity is a way for students to set goals around supporting their mental health and measure their progress across various categories including getting active, building connections, being mindful, expressing emotions, and giving back.

## Student Instructions:

- For each category, brainstorm ideas that are meaningful to you
- Each time a task is completed add a sticker or check mark





# kidSMART

Mental Health and Resiliency Worksheets  
for Grades 4 - 6 Students

Stress Management and  
Healthy Coping



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Calgary  
*Mental health for all*



## Activity 3: Effects of Stress

Stress can affect each of us in a variety of ways. When we are under stress, we often experience changes in thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and bodies.

### Instructions:

Brainstorm how stress impacts thinking, emotions, behaviour, or physical body. You can add how stress impacts you or how it might impact someone else.

Thoughts	Emotions	Behaviour	Body

# Activity 4: Body-Emotion Connection

## Instructions:

- Pick an emotion to draw or act out, focusing on the physical symptoms the body experiences when that emotion is happening. Others in your group will try to guess the emotion
- Remember to think about signals from the body such as heart rate and sweaty palms
- For example, someone who picks the emotion “angry” might draw a stick figure with a flushed face, clenched hands, and pounding heart
- Use the following emotions and possible symptoms as examples as needed

## Emotions:

Angry	 Happy	Sad	Scared	Calm	
Irritated	Optimistic	Upset	Confused	Content	
Frustrated	Joyful	Disappointed	Helpless	Relaxed	
Annoyed	Enthusiastic	Lonely	Anxious	Caring	
Jealous	Proud	Uncertain	Rejected	Amused	

Brainstorm with your group and add other emotions to your list!

# Activity 4: Body-Emotion Connection

Possible Physical Symptoms:

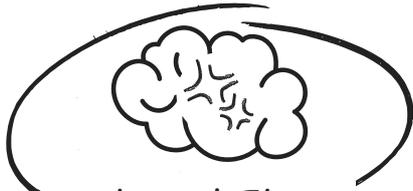
Heart Pounding	Sweaty Palms	Stomach Ache
Shoulders Slumped	Headache	Rapid Breathing
Can't Sit Still	Butterflies	Feeling Light
Flushed Face	Standing Tall	Calm Heart Rate

Brainstorm with your group and add other possible symptoms to your list!

Draw!

# Activity 6: Causes of Stress

We can experience stress due to a variety of reasons. Stress is different for everyone! The stress we experience can be caused by external or internal factors.



External Stress

Stress that is outside of our control.



Internal Stress

Stress that you can control.

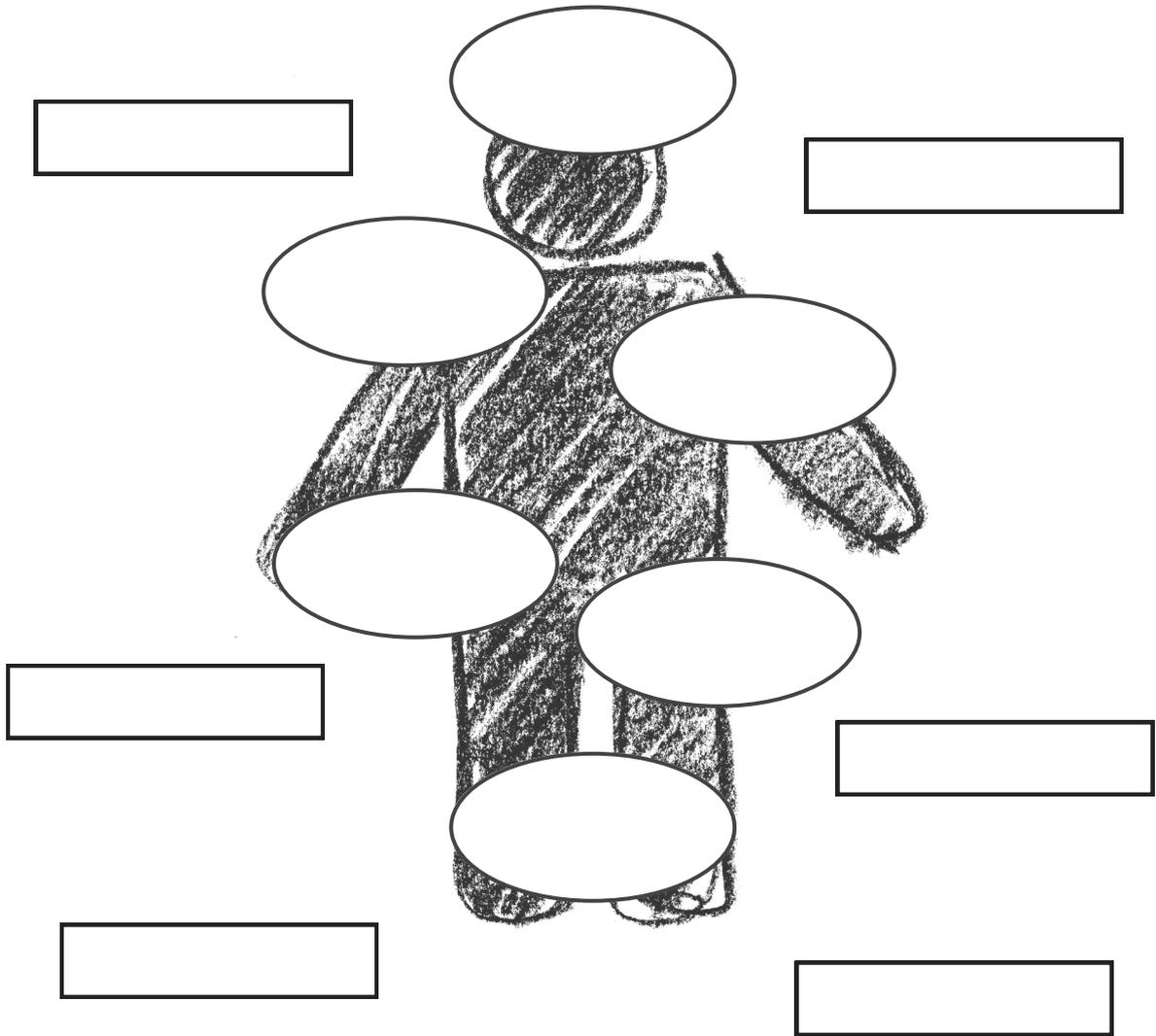
Identify some of the things that cause you stress.


# Activity 6: Causes of Stress (cont.)

Reflect on the things that cause you stress.

Do you have control over these things? If you do, they are considered **internal stressors**. Write examples of your internal stressors in the circles inside the person.

If you do not have control over these things, they are **external stressors**. Write examples of your external stressors in the boxes outside of the person.



## Activity 6: Causes of Stress (cont.)

Reflect:

How does knowing whether stress is internal or external change how we deal with our stress?

Note:

If we spend time focusing our attention on things we cannot control, this can cause us more stress or frustration. Focusing attention on what we can impact, and letting go of what we can't, can help reduce stress.

# Activity 7: Stress Test

Never or Seldom = 1   Sometimes = 2   Often = 3   Always = 4

I have problems falling asleep or staying asleep.	
I cannot seem to relax or sit still.	
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 often feel tired during the day.	
I worry about things going on in my life.	
I get stomach aches, headaches, or tight muscles.	
I avoid things or procrastinate when I am overwhelmed.	
I laugh or smile less than I used to.	
I feel sad or disappointed often.	
I like to be in control.	
I avoid things that I know are good for me or could help me feel less stressed.	
I have a habit of clenching my fists, cracking my knuckles, twirling my hair, or tapping my fingers.	

Under 20 – **Low Stress**   21 - 30 – **Medium Stress**   31 and up – **High Stress**

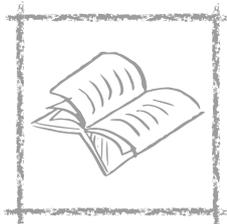
# Activity 8: Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are important to help reduce stress and keep healthy. There are a variety of coping strategies you can use but some may work for certain situations better than others.

For example: If you are feeling stressed about homework or an upcoming test you might:



Ask the teacher for help

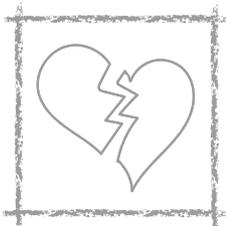


Make plans to study with a friend

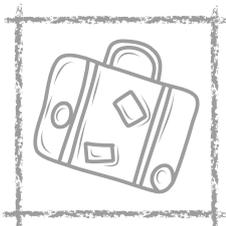


Take a study break and go for a walk

What coping strategies would you use for the following situations?



Disagreement with a friend or family member



Experiencing a new situation

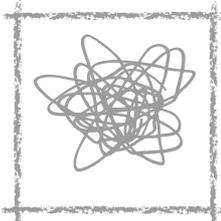
# Activity 8: Coping Strategies (cont.)



Too much going on



Trying out for a sports team



Add a stress you are currently experiencing or have experienced in the past



# Activity 10: Expressing Emotions

Emotions:

Angry	 Happy	Sad	Scared	Calm
Irritated	Optimistic	Upset	Confused	Content 
Frustrated	Joyful	Disappointed	Helpless	Relaxed
Annoyed	Enthusiastic	Lonely	Anxious 	Caring
Jealous 	Proud	Uncertain	Rejected 	Amused

Brainstorm with your group and add other emotions to your list!

Emotions are a way of expressing ourselves and sharing how we feel. It is important to recognize and embrace the emotions you feel.



## Activity 10: Expressing Emotions (cont.)

Pick 5 emotions and use colours, symbols, patterns, or words to represent each emotion. There is no right or wrong way to express an emotion, so get creative!



# Activity II: Track My Mood

It is important to understand the various ways stress and other emotions can be represented in your body. It is important to recognize the emotions you feel and understand the situations that cause these emotions. This can help deal with stressful situations more effectively.

Examples of emotions to choose from:



Happy



Sad



Angry



Excited



Worried



Other

Date & Time

Mood

What was I doing?

What was I thinking?

Date & Time	Mood	What was I doing?	What was I thinking?

What do I notice? If I wanted to, what could I have done to change my mood?

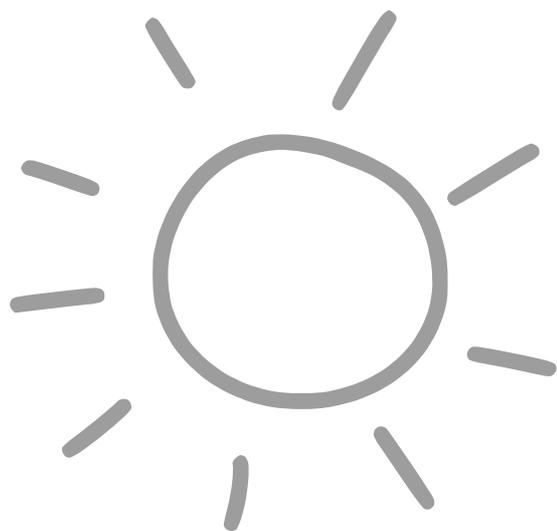
## Activity 12: Affirmations

Affirmations are short, positive statements about yourself.

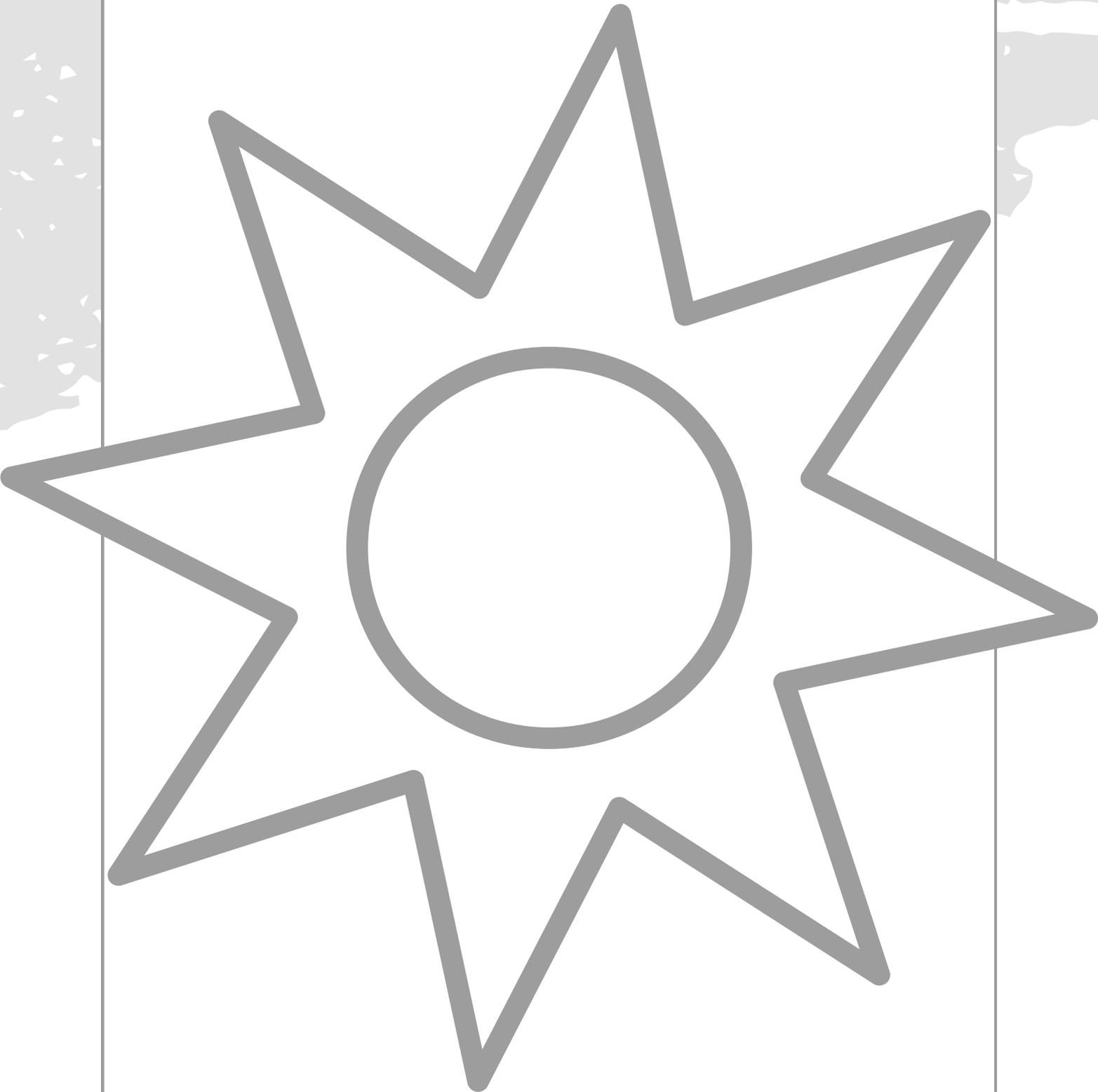
Focusing on these statements can build confidence and reduce negative thinking. Practice affirmations on a regular basis.

Reflect on your strengths and positive attributes. It can be helpful to start with an “I Am” statements, but affirmations can take any form.

On the next page, write your name in the middle of the sun and in each spoke of the sun, write an affirmation about yourself. Decorate the sun, using colours, patterns, and images that represent your strengths and personality.



# Activity 12: Affirmations (cont.)

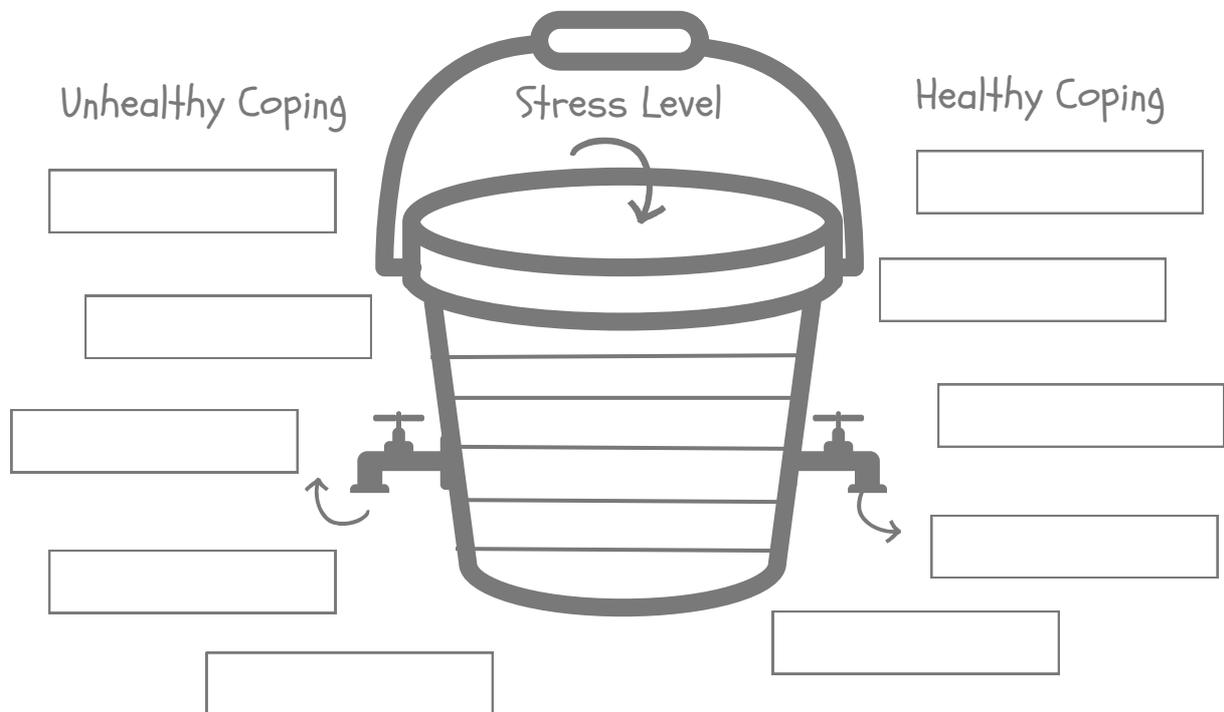


# Activity 13: Stress Bucket

The stress bucket represents the stress we carry with ourselves. The size of our bucket can vary from person-to-person and it can be different amounts of full at various points in our lives.

A healthy coping strategy is anything we can do to reduce the stress levels in our bucket. An unhealthy coping strategy can feel like it reduces our stress in our bucket, but eventually the stress is added back in.

Colour in your current stress level and label the boxes with your current healthy and unhealthy coping strategies. On the next page, take time to reflect on your stress.



## Activity 13: Stress Bucket (cont.)

Why are my stress levels where they are?

What are ways I put holes in my bucket (e.g. healthy coping with stress?)

How do I add water back into my bucket (e.g. unhealthy coping with stress?)

# Activity 14: Stress Structure

The goal of this activity is to build a structure that can handle the weight or stress that is added to it. This structure represents how individuals can react under the weight of stress depending on whether they have positive coping strategies or supports in place.

#1

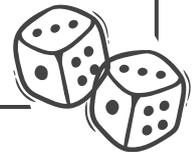
Build a structure out of the provided materials - pipe cleaners.

#2

Begin to roll dice to see what happens.  
Even roll – pick a coping strategy card.  
Odd roll – pick a stress card.

#3

Record what happens at each step and add to structure depending on the event.



## Roll Dice Instructions:

- Even (2, 4, or 6): Pick coping strategy card and add a pipe cleaner to strengthen the structure
- Odd (1, 3, or 5): Pick a stress card and add a weight to represent increased stress

	Roll #1	Roll #2	Roll #3
1			
2			
3			
4			

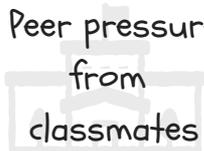
# Activity 14: Stress Structure (cont.)

## Stress Structure Cards

Coping Strategies			
Talk to a friend about what is going on	Go for a walk	Get a good sleep	Do a breathing exercise
Talk to parents about stress	Get organized to help manage everything that is going on	Find a new hobby	Ask for help on homework 
Spend time with your pet 	Listen to music	Get some fresh air	Journal
Do some physical activity	Drink water 	Take a technology break	Set realistic goals
 Rebuild!	 Rebuild!	 Rebuild!	 Rebuild!
Develop Resiliency Cards			

# Activity 14: Stress Structure (cont.)

## Stress Structure Cards

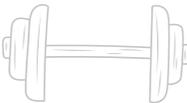
Stress			
Get into fight with friend	Too many demands between school and activities	Procrastinate 	Bullying
Too much homework	Moving 	Trying out for the soccer team	Pressure from parents to do well
Setting unrealistic expectations for yourself	Traffic making you late for school	Self-blame for not doing something right	Peer pressure from classmates 
Stay up too late 	Skipped after school activity	Cancel plans with friends	Distance yourself from family

Remove Coping Strategy Cards

# Activity 15: Progress Chart

Brainstorm ideas under each category that are meaningful to you.

Each time you accomplish a task, add a sticker or check under the category.

Get Active 	Connect 	Be Mindful 	Express Emotions 	Give Back 
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Go for a 20 minute walk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Make plans with a friend	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Try a yoga video	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Journal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do 3 random acts of kindness

# Activity 15: Progress Chart (cont.)

## Get Active

Physical activity is so important to our mental health and well-being.

- o Ideas: Go for a walk, swimming, play basketball, etc.



## Connect

Spend time with people you care about and connect with those around you.

- o Ideas: Call a family member or friend, join a club, etc.



## Be Mindful

Be mindful of the world around you as well as your thoughts and feelings.

- o Ideas: Breathing exercise, pausing for reflection, etc.



## Express Emotions

It's important to express your emotions and not bottle in your feelings.

- o Ideas: Journal, draw, paint, etc.



## Give Back

Spread kindness and gratitude or help someone else.

- o Ideas: Do three random acts of kindness, donate old clothes, etc.



# References

- 1 Mindtool. 2022. Using Affirmations to Harness Positive Energy. Retrieved from <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/affirmations.htm#:~:text=Affirmations%20are%20positive%20statements%20that,start%20to%20make%20positive%20changes>
- 2 The bucket analogy is based on the following resources: Carver, C.S., Scheier, M.F., & Weintraub, J.K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 267-283. Ross, S.E., Niebling, B.C., & Heckert, T.M. (1999). Sources of stress among college students. *College Student Journal*, 33, 312-317.

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