



Unit : 8 *Coping with Stress*

Activity 1 : Handling Stress (Role Plays)

Theme: Stress is a common phenomenon in our daily life. There are different causes of stress. In this activity students learn to cope with it.

Time Required: 1 period

Materials Needed: Role play situations handout, white board and marker pens

Mode: In groups of five students

Life Skills to be enhanced: Coping with Stress, Self Awareness, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking and Effective Communication

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- identify different situations that cause them stress;
- use appropriate ways of coping with stress.

Getting Started:

Ask students about their understanding of the word 'stress'.

Process:

- Direct students to identify some common situations in which they feel stressed.
- Make a list of the situations on the white board.
- Divide the students into groups.
- Assign one situation to each group, which may be selected either from the ones identified by the students or the ones in the handout.
- Instruct each group to prepare a role play of about five minutes based on the situation assigned to them.
- Allow them ten minutes.
- Each role play is to be followed by a small discussion within the group.
- At the end of the session, the whole class discusses appropriate ways of handling stress.
- Sum up the activity with the help of key messages.





Key Messages

Simple ways to reduce stress and be in charge:

1. Focus on strengths - the positive components of self and life.
2. Learn how to relax - long walks, exercise, yoga, deep breathing, meditation, listening to music, writing a diary, playing with a pet, etc.
3. Manage your time - so that you have all the time to do what you want to do.
4. Anticipate stressful time and prepare accordingly - for an examination or a presentation.
5. Help your body handle stress - If it is not within your power to change the event, change your attitude!
6. Talk to somebody who is close to you and can understand you.
7. Have confidence in your own abilities.
8. Recognise your stress signals.
9. Develop supportive techniques - eat right food, exercise and sleep well.
10. Use Life Skills.
11. If it is not within your power to change the event, change your attitude.
12. Share your feelings/problems with parents/teacher/trustworthy friends.
13. Repeat health enhancing phrases to yourself whenever you feel stressed - e.g. 'Smile', *'I am calm and relaxed'*, *'do not take it too seriously'*, *'tomorrow is another day'*.
14. Spend time on your favourite hobby.
15. Watch a comedy film.
17. Have fun! Laugh more. It is hard to be stressed when you are laughing.
18. Have a good sense of what is right and what is wrong.
19. Count your blessings and SMILE. Things are never as bad as they seem.





Handout - Role Play Situations

Situation 1:

A bully is trying to get his classmate, Arjun to help him to cheat in an examination. Arjun doesn't want to but doesn't know how to deal with the situation. He reacts by stuttering, fiddling with his clothes, and avoids looking at the bully.

Situation 2:

Sahil is twelve years old studying in class VIII. He has spent most of his time playing, chatting and going out with his friends throughout the year. He never listens to his parents. He is now under a lot of stress as the final examinations are very close and he is not prepared for them.

Situation 3:

Aayshi is eleven years old studying in class VIII. She is dark and short. She also uses glasses. Her friends always make fun of her dark complexion. They tease her and say that she is not good looking. They often call her 'Chashmu'. Due to this, her performance has also started deteriorating. All this is causing her a lot of stress.

Situation 4:

Riya is thirteen years old studying in class VIII. She is a good orator and often participates in school programs. Last week she had a quarrel with her friend Ridhi as she was selected to participate in a school function and Riya was not. Ridhi is one of her close friends. She stopped talking to Riya and even persuaded some of her other classmates not to talk to her. This has made Riya very stressed. She is not even able to now concentrate on her studies and often cries at home. She does not share her feelings with her parents or anyone else.



Suggested Further Activities:

Encourage students to do the following :

1. Write a poem expressing your feelings when you are stressed.
2. Make a time table of all your activities for a week. Divide your time into different activities like studies, play activities, watching television etc. and prioritize.





Activity 2 : Coping with Stress (Case Studies)

Theme: People have their own stress coping strategies. This activity helps students to gain skills to deal with stressful conditions by using the case study method.

Time Required: 1 period

Materials Needed: Papers, pen, printed copies of the case study, white board and marker pens

Mode: In groups of five students

Life Skills to be enhanced: Coping with Stress, Self Awareness, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Decision Making and Effective Communication

Objective: Students will be able to learn about stress and ways of coping with it.

Getting Started: An ice breaking activity.

Process:

- Share the objectives of the session to students.
- Divide the class into groups.
- Distribute copies of the case study to each group.
- Instruct them to analyze the situation among their members. Allow fifteen minutes.
- A volunteer from each group presents the group's views on how to deal with the case in the situation provided to them.
- Conclude the session by highlighting key messages.

Key Messages

1. Help your body to handle stress - if it is not within your power to change the situation, change your attitude!
2. Be creative and look at alternate and easy ways of doing things.
3. One should have positive attitude for good health.
4. Accept things that cannot be changed.
5. Possessing a good sense of humour and being able to laugh at oneself is a desirable skill.
6. One should work towards achievements in fields that one is good at.





Worksheet : Case Studies

Case Study 1

Shreya lives in Delhi. She is thirteen years old studying in class VIII. She is overweight and wants to be as thin as the models she sees on the television and in magazines. She is constantly fighting a battle with herself over what she calls her 'lousy figure'. She is thinking about it all the time and can hardly concentrate on her studies or any other activity. All this is causing her a lot of stress.

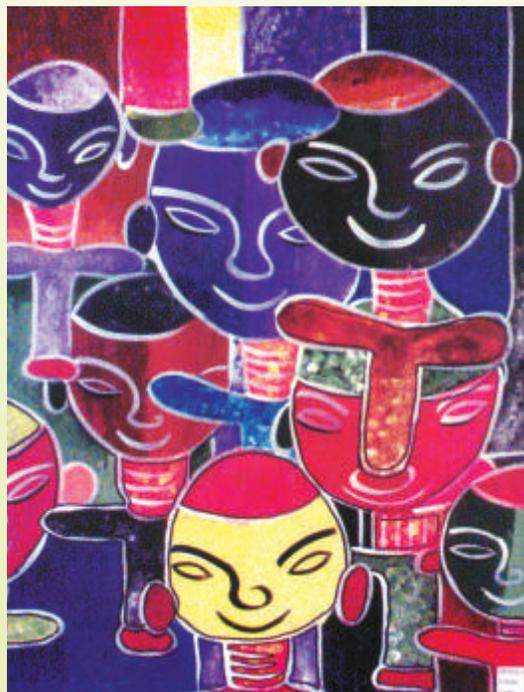
Case Study 2

Saurabh is thirteen years old studying in class VIII. Last week he had a quarrel with his friend, Virat over class notes. Virat stopped talking to Saurabh and even persuaded some of his other classmates not to talk to him. This has made Saurabh very sad and depressed and he is not able to concentrate on his studies. He often cries at home but does not share his feelings with parents or anyone else. He is under lot of stress.

Suggested Further Activities:

Encourage students to do the following:

1. Write a story in which one of the characters expresses your feelings of stress.
2. Organize group discussions on stress coping skills.
3. Write in your notebook/diary whenever you feel stressed. Write about your feelings when stressed and also how to handle such situations.



Courtesy: Swati (VII-A) Salwan Public School





Activity 3 : Stress Game

Theme: Any situation, even a game can cause stress. The situation can become competitive and result in a race! How can you cope positively in such situations?

Time Required: 1 period

Materials Needed: Copies of worksheets with Mathematics facts, answer key, papers, pens, white board and marker pens

Mode: In groups of five students

Life Skills to be enhanced: Coping with Stress, Self Awareness and Critical Thinking

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- understand how stress escalates;
- learn to cope with stress.

Getting Started: An ice breaking activity.

Process:

- Start the session by discussing with students how stress escalates and then help them focus on how to control it by using this “*game*”.
- Instruct students to form groups.
- Give each group a worksheet with fifteen mixed arithmetic problems.
- Instruct them not to turn sheets over until the facilitator orders so and the first team with correct answers wins.
- Instruct them to get up and put the paper on the front desk or the proposed area for their group once they have finished the worksheet.
- One member can check answers with an answer key.
- Instruct them to put their name on the worksheet when they submit them.
- Before they begin, remind them that their group is depending on them. Tell them that it is Mathematics and that Mathematics seems to make people tense.
- Give them only five minutes and then collect the worksheets, whether they have finished or not.
- The facilitator need not to check the answers since the objective is to demonstrate stress. The stress goes up after the first team submits its paper. Keep giving time reports to increase stress.



- At the end of the game, the whole class discusses how stress escalates and how to control it.
- Sum up the activity with the help of key messages.

Key Messages

1. If your methods of coping with stress aren't contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it is time to find healthier ones.
2. There are many healthy ways to manage and cope with stress, but they all require change of attitude. You can either change the situation or change your reaction.
3. When deciding which option to choose, it is helpful to think of the **four As**: avoid, alter, adapt, or accept (**A**void the stressor; **A**lter the stressor; **A**dapt to the stressor; **A**ccept the stressor).
4. Since everyone has a unique response to stress, there is no “*one size fits all*” solution to managing it.
5. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different techniques and strategies.
6. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control.

“Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths.”

-Etty Hillesum





Worksheet : Arithmetic Test

Directions: In the following simple arithmetic problems, a plus (+) sign means to multiply; a minus (-) sign means to divide; a multiplication (x) sign means to subtract and a divide (/) sign means to add. Complete the problems following these directions.

1) $8 + 4 = \dots\dots\dots$

2) $12/3 = \dots\dots\dots$

3) $12 - 4 = \dots\dots\dots$

4) $9 + 4 = \dots\dots\dots$

5) $12/5 = \dots\dots\dots$

6) $7 \times 6 = \dots\dots\dots$

7) $14 - 2 = \dots\dots\dots$

8) $5/2 = \dots\dots\dots$

9) $17 \times 2 = \dots\dots\dots$

10) $4 + 5 = \dots\dots\dots$

11) $7 \times 2 = \dots\dots\dots$

12) $16 - 8 = \dots\dots\dots$

13) $13 \times 3 = \dots\dots\dots$

14) $40/5 = \dots\dots\dots$

15) $2 + 17 = \dots\dots\dots$

16) $20 - 10 = \dots\dots\dots$

17) $2 \times 1 = \dots\dots\dots$

18) $10 - 2 = \dots\dots\dots$

19) $8 + 2 = \dots\dots\dots$

20) $9/3 = \dots\dots\dots$

Answer Key

1) 32

2) 15

3) 3

4) 36

5) 17

6) 1

7) 7

8) 7

9) 15

10) 20

11) 5

12) 2

13) 10

14) 45

15) 34

16) 2

17) 1

18) 5

19) 16

20) 12

Suggested Further Activities:

Instruct students to do the following:

1. Write in your Life Skills journal about what is bothering you or causing stress and explore why it is an issue and what you might try to better cope with it.
2. Practise deep breathing exercises to relax your body and reduce stress.
3. Make a time table of all your activities for a week. Divide your time into different activities like studies, play activities, watching television etc. and then prioritize.





Activity 4 : How Stress affects my Life!

Theme: Since everyone has a unique response to stress, there is no “one size fits all” solution to manage it. No single method works for everyone or in every situation. This activity is designed to recognize common causes of stress, how it affects us and to learn about ways to control it.

Time Required: 1 period

Materials Needed: Copies of worksheet, pen, white board and marker pens

Mode: Pair work

Life Skills to be enhanced: Coping with Stress, Self Awareness and Critical Thinking

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- identify common causes of stress and its effects;
- enhance their skills for coping with stress.

Getting Started: A warm up activity.

Process:

- Share the objectives of the session with students.
- Divide the class into pairs.
- Distribute a copy of the worksheet to each pair.
- Allow them twenty minutes to complete the worksheet.
- At the end of the exercise, involve the whole class in a discussion on the common causes of stress, how stress affects their body and ways of dealing with it.
- Sum up the activity with the help of key messages.

Key Messages

1. Stress is a common phenomenon in one's day to day life.
2. Causes of stress are common generally for everyone.
3. Some **common causes of stress** in children are:
 - Physical and emotional changes
 - Bullying
 - Name calling





- Not getting what they want
 - Body image
 - Academic difficulties
 - Parents interfering too much
 - Getting scolded by parents for not studying
 - Parents not allowing children to play after school
 - Peer pressure
 - Family problems
 - Asking parents for money
4. Be aware of the important signs and symptoms of stress.
 5. Ongoing and/or unresolved stress can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, irritability, poor concentration, aggression, physical illness, fatigue, sleep disturbance and poor coping skills such as tobacco, drug and/or alcohol use.
 6. Learn to:
 - Identify the source of stress.
 - Analyze how stress affects life.
 - Find ways to control stress.
 - Focus on strengths - the positive components of self and life.





Worksheet

1. Three common situations in which I feel stressed are

2. When I am stressed, my thoughts are

3. When I am stressed, my feelings are

4. Stress affects my health in the following ways

5. When I am stressed, what I normally do to make myself feel better

Suggested Further Activity:

Organize a group discussion on the importance of stress management for young people.





Activity 5 : Therapeutic Writing

Theme: Expressing feelings is one of the best ways to alleviate stress and confront problems. But not everyone is comfortable talking to someone else. One way to express feelings in a completely private way is to write about them. It is called **Therapeutic Writing**, and it can take numerous forms. This activity provides an opportunity to make students participate in **Therapeutic Writing** activity.

Time Required: 1 period

Materials Needed: A notebook or diary, pen, white board, marker pens and worksheet

Mode: Individual

Life Skills to be enhanced: Coping with Stress and Self Awareness

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- identify the regular stressors in their life;
- use **Therapeutic Writing** as a stress reduction technique.

Getting Started: A warm up activity.

Process:

- Begin the session by asking students how many of them feel stressed.
- Compile a list of the situations that they find stressful. Ask them what effects stress can have on the body. (Answers may include: stress affects concentration, leaves them prone to accidents, wears down the immune system, raises blood pressure, affects blood sugar levels, and leads to weight gain.)
- Ask about ways students cope with stress and compile a list.
- Explain what **Therapeutic Writing** is.
- Instruct students to choose a notebook or Life Skills journal. They should feel free to decorate their journals and express themselves.
- Encourage them to write in their journals at least three times during the next week.
- Explain that the focus of this assignment is not to write grammatically correct compositions, but to write honestly about their thoughts and feelings.
- To get students started, lead a brief writing exercise during class. A good way to begin is by using a writing prompt. Allow students fifteen minutes to write a response to this opening phrase: When I think about what I have to do today, I feel... . This can be entry number 1 in their journals.
- Instruct students to add at least three more over the course of the next week.



- At the end of the week, review the students' journal writing experience. Did they find it helpful and useful? Do they think they will continue writing as a way of coping with problems and stress?
- End the journal writing exercise by assigning one more entry. Have students use stress-coping strategies and write about whether they think about how the strategies work for them.
- Sum up the activity with the help of key messages.

Key Messages

1. Stress is not always negative.
2. **Therapeutic Writing** is writing in any form to express emotions and work through problems or questions.
3. **Therapeutic Writing** can help you express your feelings and bring relief from problems and stress.
4. Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one.
5. Stress can be positive if you view it as a challenge. A stressed out person needs to acquire the right attitude towards stress.
6. Certain amount of stress is necessary in day to day life. For example, a student who has to present his report in front of a packed classroom may feel stressed. He may experience stage fear. But his stress can lead him to take the challenge. He will prepare thoroughly for his presentation and this could lead to positive results at the end. On the other hand, inadequate stress could be damaging as it makes you feel depressed and miserable.
7. Positive thinking and stress are interrelated.
8. Being optimistic can reduce half of your worries.
9. Having a negative point of view regarding every task you do is the first step of the ladder called stress.
10. Do not make your failures affect you, instead try again. De-stress a little and take some time off. You can always do it better next time.





Worksheet (After a Week)

1. How do you find the experience of keeping a stress journal/diary? Write a few lines.

2. What did you discover about yourself and the way you cope with stress?

3. How do you think you can further improve your skills for managing stress?

4. Would you like to write a journal every time you feel stressed? Give reasons of how it will help you.

5. Describe briefly how expressing your thoughts and feelings through writing can help you in better coping with problems and stress in your everyday life.

Suggested Further Activities:

Encourage students to do the following:

1. Share your experiences in the class at the end of the week.
2. Write a poem expressing your feelings.
3. Write a story in which one of the characters expresses your feelings.





Activity 6 : The Relaxation Response

Theme: The '*relaxation response*' is a useful physical relaxation technique that can help students reduce muscle tension and stress through physical relaxation. This activity is included to help students reduce their stress. It will particularly help them to handle nerves prior to an important performance, and calm down when they are highly stressed.

Time Required: 1 period

Material Needed: Copies of worksheet

Mode: Individual

Life Skills to be enhanced: Coping with Stress and Self Awareness

Objective: Students will be able to acquire competency in the technique of 'relaxation response' as an easy stress reduction activity.

Getting Started: Warm up : Take count of your heart beat and note it.

Process:

- Introduce the concept that relaxation is a good way to reduce stress and the students do an activity that will help them reduce muscle tension and stress through physical relaxation.
- Instruct students to sit or lie down on their backs, depending on the space available.
- Demonstrate/model each step for students in preparation for their participation.
- Then **read and model** the following instructions to your students twice for each direction:
 - Sit quietly and comfortably.
 - Close your eyes.
 - Start by relaxing the muscles of your feet and work up your body relaxing muscles.
 - Focus your attention on your breathing.
 - Breathe in deeply and then let your breath out. Count your breaths, and say the number of the breath as you let it out (this gives you something to do with your mind, helping you to avoid distraction).
 - Do this for ten or fifteen minutes.
- Ask students how different their bodies feel after the exercise. Are they more relaxed/calm? Do they feel lighter/tired?





- Sum up the session by emphasizing the role of relaxation techniques especially for young people.

Key Messages

1. The 'relaxation response' technique has a very real effect on reducing stress and controlling the fight-or-flight response on your body.
2. This technique is particularly helpful for handling nerves prior to an important performance, and for calming down when you are highly stressed.
3. Its direct effects include deep relaxation, slowed heartbeat and breathing, reduced oxygen consumption and increased skin resistance.

Worksheet

1. Describe how you felt during this activity.

2. How important it is for you to learn to be able to cope with stress?

3. Apart from the relaxation response technique, which are the other ways by which you can cope with stressful situations?

4. Describe how this activity would help you to deal with stress better?

Suggested Further Activities:

1. Encourage students to practise this technique several times with the class until they achieve a comfortable competence with it.
2. Demonstrate this activity during assembly.
3. Have students teach this technique to their friends and family members.

