

Managing the Strain of Stress

K-STATE
Research and Extension
Family and Consumer Sciences

Leader's Guide

2024 Annual Lesson Series



Lesson Objectives

Participants will:

- » Learn the different types of stress and how it can affect the body.
- » Learn the physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms of stress.
- » Be able to identify how stress personally affects you (your personal signs/symptoms).
- » Learn different tools and techniques for managing personal stress.

Intended Audience

Anyone with an interest in general stress management, who wants to understand the symptoms, signs, and effects of general stress on a person as well as tools for dealing with and managing one's personal stress.

Preparation

Before the lesson, prepare by taking these steps:

- » Read the Managing the Strain of Stress Fact Sheet (MF3624) and the Managing the Strain of Stress Leader's Guide.

- » Make copies of the Managing the Strain of Stress, Fact Sheet and Evaluation (found at the end of the Managing the Strain of Stress, Leader's Guide).
- » Determine which of the stress management activities you will practice with the group during the lesson and which ones you will give an overview of, because you will not have time to do all of them.
- » Familiarize yourself with the suggested resources and determine which ones you will share with your audience.
- » Since time is limited, determine which discussions you will entertain as a group, but be mindful of the needs of your audience and be flexible to switch to a discussion that resonates with the group you are leading at the time.
- » Familiarize yourself with your local mental health resources to be able to refer members of your audience if needed. If using the PowerPoint, you will want to add this information to slide #31 "Local Mental Health Resources."

- » If you are using the PowerPoint, you will want to edit slide #32 to include your information.
- » Also, if you are using the PowerPoint, some notes have been included for you to use if needed.

Discussions and Activities

As the facilitator, you may choose which activities and discussions to use when delivering this program. Certain groups of people may benefit more from a particular activity. Take time to get to know your audience either prior to the program or at the start of the program.

Given time limitations, it is suggested that you share the list of activities and discussions with your audience. By sharing these materials, they may engage in the discussion and activities at home or in the workplace. Know that the session may take more time than expected due to participants lingering after the lesson to discuss their individual experiences. It is important to remember that you are not a mental health professional. Though listening and providing mutual support to participants as they share their experiences is important, be careful not to offer a lay-person's diagnosis or treatment options. If necessary, be prepared to refer the person to local reputable and professional mental health resources. If the person is having a mental health crisis, have the 988 national mental health crisis number available. The line is answered 24/7 by trained counselors.

Stress Activities

Mindfulness activity: Calming Eye Spy

When an individual is feeling anxious or stressed, this exercise allows them to shift their focus. The purpose of "shifting the focus" is to interrupt unpleasant thoughts by focusing on breathing and regaining control. To practice this activity, try to name five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.

Deep breathing (or belly breathing) activity

1. Sit comfortably and relax your shoulders.
2. Put one hand on your stomach and one on your chest.

3. Breathe slowly and deeply through your nose so that the hand on your stomach rises, not the one on your chest.
4. Purse your lips gently, as if you were going to whistle.
5. Now breathe out slowly through your pursed lips while at the same time you gently contract your abdominal muscles.
6. Let the air flow out slowly, *do not* force it out.
7. It should take you twice as long to exhale as it does to inhale.

Kid-Friendly Activities

Wiggle and Freeze

When a child is stressed, encouraging them to move their body can help them transform their anxiety into positive energy through movement and guided relaxation. An adult will need to instruct this activity by having the children dance, wiggle, or simply move their bodies. After the designated amount of time has passed, the adult will yell "freeze." The children will then describe how their bodies are feeling. If needed, the adult can ask prompting questions, such as "How does your heart feel?" or "How does your mind feel?". This activity can be repeated two to three times and followed with a cool down stretch.

Emotional Freedom Technique or Tapping

This kid-friendly stress-reducing technique involves using your fingers to tap specific spots on your body while naming your stressor(s) out loud. Using light pressure, tap specific points on your head (the middle of the forehead, tops of the ears, tip of the nose, middle of the chin, and temples), seven to ten times while discussing a topic of their choice. Having the child focus on both the tapping and the conversation allows them to process the event or feelings without pressure.

Resiliency Building Activities

Volunteering or Mentoring

Kindness is a powerful resiliency-building tool. You can practice kindness by showing gratitude to others, mentoring, or volunteering. When you serve as a mentor or volunteer, you are putting others

before yourself and sharing your time, knowledge, and kindness with others. This increases your capacity for empathy and helps build resiliency.

Three Good Things Activity

To practice this resiliency-building activity, reflect on three good things that happened during your day or week. To reflect, describe how you felt when the positive event occurred, and explain why the event was a positive thing. You can do this activity alone or with another individual. To increase your capacity for resiliency-building, it is recommended that you do this activity frequently.

Practicing Gratitude

Gratitude Journaling

On a sheet of paper, write down three to five things you are grateful for. Be specific, give details, and avoid repeats.

Gratitude Jar

On slips of paper, write down three things you are grateful for throughout the day. After writing each one, place them in a jar. These slips of paper will come in handy when you need a quick pick-me-up. Just take a few notes out of the jar to remind yourself about who and what is good in your life.

Written Letter

Write a handwritten letter to a person you are grateful to have in your life. Be detailed and highlight the qualities about the person, as well as how they have impacted your life for the better. Try to deliver the note in person if possible.

Text to Connect

Text two people that you know in the morning, before 10 a.m. Be intentional about who you message, and determine who needs you at that moment.

Silver Lining Activity

A silver lining is something positive or joyful found in an otherwise negative situation. To engage in the “silver lining” activity, think of a situation in which you felt stressed. Once you have identified one, try to think of a positive thing that occurred during or because of the situation.

Sampling of Mediterranean Style Recipe

If time and circumstances allow, consider preparing an example of a nutritious whole food recipe from <https://medinsteadofmeds.com/category/recipes/> for sampling.

Discussion

At the end of the lesson, allow participants to discuss their personal takeaway from the lesson and which new tools they plan on trying to implement in their daily lives when they are stressed.

Mention that the best tool someone can have is the one they will use and the one they will know how to use. It is important to practice these new skills frequently, so they will be ready when you need them.

Make the tool a part of their daily routine just like they would any other healthy habit like taking their prescribed medicines and vitamins or even their routine of daily hygiene.

Resources

Stress and the Family System, Fact Sheet ksre-learn.com/MF3486

Everyday Mindfulness, Fact Sheet ksre-learn.com/MF3424

Eustress and Distress: Neither Good nor Bad, but Rather the Same? <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/bies.201900238>

Meditation: A simple, fast way to reduce stress <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/meditation/in-depth/meditation/art-20045858>

What is self care? <https://www.selfcarefederation.org/what-is-self-care>

Resilience <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience>

Kansas Mental Health Center Directory <https://acmhck.org/about-us/cmhc-directory>

MED instead of Meds: Recipes <https://medinsteadofmeds.com/category/recipes/>

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline <https://988lifeline.org>

What Are the Differences Between PTS and PTSD? <https://www.brainline.org/article/what-are-differences-between-pts-and-ptsd>

Selye H. *The Stress of Life*. New York: McGraw-Hill; 1956

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Evaluation

Managing the Strain of Stress

Please take a moment to respond to the questions below.

Date and location of presentation: _____

My county of residence: _____

Gender: Female Male Non-binary Other Prefer not to answer

Ethnicity: American Indian/Native American Bi-racial White Asian
 Hispanic or Latino Black/African American Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 Other Prefer not to respond

Age: 5-17 years 18-29 years 30-59 years 60+ years Prefer not to answer

1. As a result of this program I gained understanding of the impact stress has on the body.

Not At All		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

2. As a result of this program I gained confidence in identifying the signs and symptoms of stress (physical, emotional, behavioral).

Not At All		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

3. As a result of this program I gained useful strategies and tools for managing my stress

Not At All		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

4. What is one tool that you learned during this program that you plan to implement into your personal life to help you manage stress?

5. Please share any additional comments or suggestions.

Thank you for your time! Leaders, please return surveys to your local extension office or Family and Consumer Sciences agent.