

Exploring Leadership

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP: STRESS MANAGEMENT

You are sitting there calmly working on homework when BAM! It hits you – stress! Pretty much everyone from babies up to seniors experience different levels of stress throughout their lives. But teen stress is an often-overlooked type of stress, and this activity will help you understand more about stress and give you some tools to handle stress in a positive way.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- What triggers or stressors can make us feel stressed?
- What can be done to alleviate stress in our lives?

Stress can come up from any life experience whether it is positive or negative, from a fight with your little brother, getting your driver license, or having a party. There are many ways a teen can experience stress.

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

The Breathing to Relax technique is especially good for teenagers who suffer from stress as it helps to calm the body and quiet the mind. Ask participants to:

- Sit still and exhale all of the air out of their lungs.
- Then, count to four out loud as they breathe in through their nose.
- Hold that breath for seven seconds, and then breathe out through the mouth for eight seconds.
- Repeat this four times. When practicing this technique, try to focus your thoughts just on your breathing.

After completing this short exercise, have the youth think about activities that they do to cope with everyday stress. Follow up with vision board activity (See Appendix A).

FACILITATION TIPS:

- Encourage participants to discuss their ideas with others.
- Ask what are they doing that works and what doesn't?
- Be ready to facilitate a discussion about this.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Understand more about stress.
- Learn tools to handle and cope with stress in a positive way.
- Learn to use a vision board skill.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 Poster Paper or Foam Board for each participant
- Markers and Pencils
- Magazines and scissors



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Ask for volunteers to share their Vision Board. Ask the below open ended questions to your group to engage in a discussion about their vision boards.

- What on this vision board represents your values?
- What on this vision board is motivational to you?
- How will this vision board help you set your priorities?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

Teenagers, like adults, may experience stress and can benefit from practicing stress management skills. Most teens experience more stress when they perceive a situation as dangerous, difficult, or painful and they do not have the resources to cope.

However, consistent regular practice of stress relief activities before they become challenging, is the key to mastering your sense of calm in any situation. See Appendix B for some preventative measures to avoid stress overload.



CONCLUSION:

Stress is not in itself a bad thing all of the time. Did you know that your body has a natural response mechanism to help you deal with stress? It's called the fight or flight response. Your body reacts to the stress triggers, or stressors, by powering up some specific hormones and the nervous system. The hormones increase your breathing, heart rate, and metabolism.

Your muscles then are taut and ready for action, and your vision even improves. Sweat glands chug into overdrive. Good stress can help you hit that home run, slam on the brakes to avoid an accident, or remember all your lines in the school play.

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REFERENCES

<https://www.teenhelp.com/stress-anxiety/what-is-teen-stress/>



APPENDIX A:

The purpose of a vision board is to set clear intentions and goals for what you want in your life. It can be achieved by curating a collage of images to remind you WHY you do what you do every day, as well as words that spark your motivation and remind you of your values, goals, or dreams. The vision board should be placed in a prominent area of where you live.

Display/Read these quotes:

"I have heard there are troubles of more than one kind. Some come from ahead and some come from behind. But I've bought a big bat. I'm all ready you see. Now my troubles are going to have troubles with me!"

-Dr. Seuss

"Don't think your way out of stress, breathe your way out of stress."

-Andrew Huberman

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REFERENCES

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/202103/what-is-vision-board-and-why-make-one>



APPENDIX B:

Nourish your body and mind by consistently doing the following:

- Sleep regularly for at least 10 hours a night.
- Eat properly and exercise daily.
- Cut the caffeine.
- Always avoid drugs, tobacco, and alcohol.
- Find your own personal and safe way to unwind (hiking, exercising, eating a favorite healthy treat, doing a craft, playing games, working on a puzzle, etc.)
- Talk to family or friends.
- Relaxation breathing.
- Listen to relaxing music.
- Write in your journal.
- Pray or read inspirational words.
- Meditate.
- Do something for someone else.
- How can you apply what you have learned here to your stressful moments?
- As a leader how can you help others?

Questions to ask yourself to help manage stress:

- How often do you need to practice stress relief activities?
- Did you learn any new stress relievers from the other participants?
- Did you find that you have similar worries and stressors as others?

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