



Exploring Leadership

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP: STRESS MANAGEMENT

You're working on homework when BAM! Stress hits. It affects everyone, but teen stress is often overlooked. This lesson will help you understand stress and give you strategies to manage it. Whether it's a fight with a sibling, studying for a test, or balancing a busy schedule, stress comes in many forms. How we handle it makes all the difference. Regular practice of stress-relief techniques can help you stay in control before it becomes overwhelming.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

Discuss as a group: What are some common triggers or stressors that cause stress in your life? How do you usually deal with them, and what could you do to reduce that stress?

Stress can stem from both positive and negative experiences, such as before a test or after a disagreement. Though it can feel overwhelming, stress also motivates you by releasing hormones that help you face challenges. Practicing stress management techniques regularly helps you stay calm and focused, even in tough situations.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Gain a deeper understanding of stress.
- Learn effective strategies to manage and reduce stress.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Large poster paper for each group
- Markers and Pencils
- Copies of the Stress Management handout (Appendix A)

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

This three-part activity will help you learn how to relax and manage stress. We'll start with a breathing exercise and then work in groups to explore stressors and ways to handle them.

Part 1: Relaxation Through Focused Breathing

- Sit still and exhale all the air from your lungs. Breathe in slowly through your nose for a count of four. Hold that breath for seven seconds. Exhale through your mouth for eight seconds.
- Repeat four times, focusing your thoughts only on your breathing.
- After finishing, take a moment to think about how you usually deal with stress in your life.

Part 2: Group Poster: Identifying Triggers and Solutions for Stress

- Divide into groups of 2-3 people.
- Give each group a poster, pencils, and markers.
- On the poster, create two sections: "Stressors" and "Management Strategies."
- Have each group list as many stressors as they can think of, and then list a potential strategy to manage each one.
- Once finished, each group will share their poster with the rest of the group.

Part 3: Stress Management Handout

- Distribute Appendix A to everyone. Then, as a group, go through the information together, discussing each point and how it applies to your lives.

FACILITATION TIPS:

- This lesson and activity should take 10-15 minutes.
- Encourage participants to share their ideas.
- Remind them that everyone experiences stress, and managing it is key to personal growth.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What common stressors did you notice on the posters? Why do you think these stressors are common among teens?
- How did the "Management Strategies" differ between groups? What might explain these differences?
- Which was easier to identify—stressors or strategies? Why?
- Were there any new strategies you'd like to try?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- How can practicing stress management regularly help you in the future? What would happen if you only practiced it when things get really tough?
- What's one stressor in your life that you could tackle by using a new strategy you learned today?
- How can stress management techniques help you stay focused on your goals or improve your schoolwork or relationships?



CONCLUSION:

Stress isn't always bad. Your body has a natural response, called the fight-or-flight response, which helps you react to stress. It releases hormones that increase your breathing, heart rate, and metabolism, making your muscles ready for action, your vision sharper, and your focus stronger. Good stress can help you perform better in key moments, like hitting a home run, avoiding an accident, or delivering a great performance in a play. But practicing stress-relief activities regularly is the key to mastering how to manage stress. With time, you'll be able to stay calm and perform at your best, even in high-pressure situations.

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REFERENCES

- Teen Help: What is Teen Stress: <https://www.teenhelp.com/stress-anxiety/what-is-teen-stress/>



APPENDIX A:

Stress Management Tips

- Take care of your body and mind:
 - Sleep for at least 10 hours a night.
 - Eat healthily foods and exercise regularly.
 - Limit caffeine intake.
 - Avoid drugs, tobacco, and alcohol.
 - Find personal ways to relax, like hiking, crafting, or playing games.
 - Talk to family or friends about how you're feeling when you are stressed.
 - Practice relaxation breathing to calm your mind.
 - Listen to calming music.
 - Write in your journal to reflect and release stress.
 - Pray or read something inspirational.
 - Meditate to clear your mind.
 - Do something kind for someone else—it helps reduce your own stress.
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- **Reflection Questions:**

- How can you apply what you've learned to manage stress in your own life?
- As a leader, how can you support others in managing stress?

- **Questions to Guide Self-Reflection:**

- How often do you practice stress relief activities?
 - What new ways of managing stress did you learn today?
 - Did you find that others have similar stressors or worries?
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Quotes for Inspiration:

- "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