

Causes of Stress

What causes stress? While there are many answers, most stressors are related to one (or more) of these four categories:

T **THREAT to SELF-ESTEEM/EGO**
Something that may be damaging to how you see yourself or how others see you

O **OUT of NOWHERE**
Something you had no way of knowing would happen

N **NEW or DIFFERENT**
Something you have not experienced before

S **SENSE of CONTROL**
Something you have little or no control over

Once you know what is causing your stress, you can figure out strategies to manage it effectively!

My Stress Triggers

The things or situations that stress us out are called *triggers*.
What triggers your stress?



Strategies for when you are "Streeetched"

Make sleep and eating healthy a priority

Getting adequate amounts of sleep and eating healthy can drastically reduce feelings of irritability, anxiety and depression.

Exercise

Physical exercise enhances the brain's ability to release endorphins that combat stress.

Talk to someone you trust and ask for help when needed

Sometimes problem solving can be tough when we are stressed. Talking to someone can help unload the stress we have built up inside and allow us the space to calm down.

Take time to belly breathe

Mindful deep breathing helps your body relax.

It also helps to increase blood flow to the brain, making your thoughts clearer and more defined.

Take a mind vacation or other mindfulness exercise

Close your eyes and imagine you are in your favorite place that makes you feel safe, comfortable and happy. What is around you? What do you see, feel, smell, hear? How warm or cold is it? Think about why this place makes you happy and imagine you are there for a few minutes. This can help distract you from your stressor and calm your body down.

Do a random act of kindness

It feels great to do something kind for someone and know that you made a difference for them. It can also help distract you from your stressor!

Focus on things you can control (not on what you can't)

When things are out of our control or take our sense of control away, it can make us feel stressed and helpless. First, it is important to determine whether we can control any part of the situation. Then, we must accept and cope with the things we cannot change, and focus on things we can!

Say no to things you cannot fit in

Over scheduling can create one of the biggest stressors as you are expected to pay attention in school for hours, then excel in extracurricular activities, and complete homework. Saying no to things you cannot fit in is a great way to reduce stress.

Schedule some "me time" every day

Even if it is only 10-15 minutes, take time to "unplug" from everything and do something you really enjoy (sometimes that means do nothing at all)

Schedule time to actively play

Fun is stress's kryptonite! Having fun also re-energizes and motivates us to keep going. Go outside to play some basketball, or play a board game with a sibling or parent.

Listen to Music

What kind of music helps you chill out? What songs would you put on a playlist to help you reduce your stress level?

Prepare in advance for the next day

A stressful morning can lead to a more stressful day. Doing as much as you can to prepare the night before (lay out clothes, pack lunches and backpacks, etc.) will help make mornings smoother and less hectic.

Create a before and after school routine and "to do" list

Writing down things that need to be done (i.e. using your planner!) allows you to clear your thoughts and make priorities. Crossing completed things off your list feels very rewarding and encourages you to keep going. Creating a routine ensures that you prioritize your time and consistently take care of what you need to, so that you do not need to stress about it.

<u>Strategy</u>	This helped me feel less stressed 😊	This did <u>not</u> help me feel less stressed ☹️
Make sleep and eating healthy a priority		
Exercise		
Take time to belly breathe		
Take a mind vacation or other mindfulness exercise		
Do a random act of kindness		
Focus on things you can control (not on what you can't)		
Say no to things you cannot fit in		
Schedule some "me time" every day		
Schedule time to actively play		
Listen to music		
Prepare in advance for the next day		
Create a before and after school routine and "to do" list		

SIMPLE EXERCISES

**Jumping
Jacks**

**Run
in Place**

Sit Ups

**Walk
in Place**

**Twist and
Touch
Your Toes**

Push Ups

Stretches

**Yoga
Poses**

**Jump
Rope**

Deep Belly Breathing

STAR BREATHING

Start at any "breathe in" side, hold your breath at the point, then breathe out. Keep going until you've gone around the whole star.



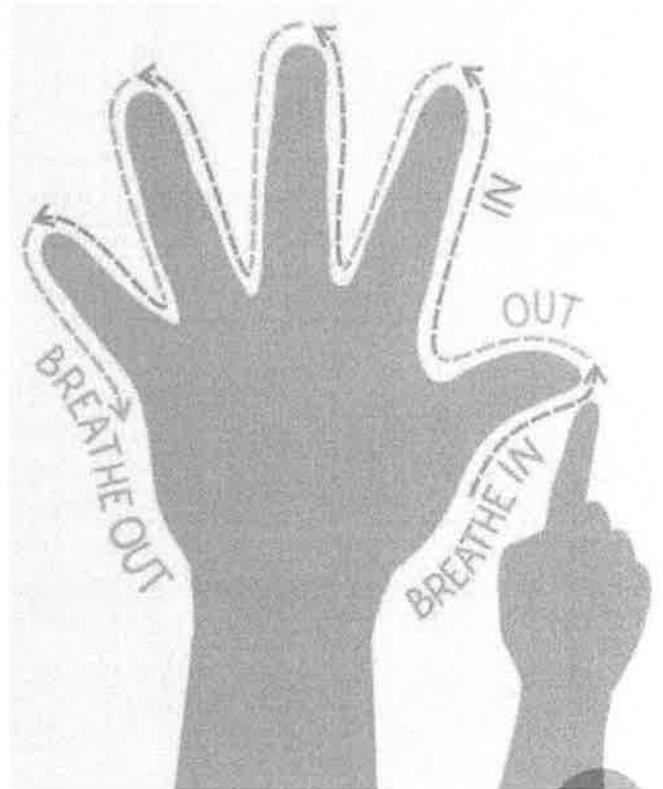
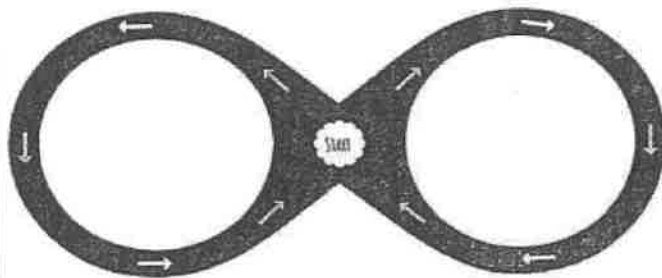
TRIANGLE BREATHING

Start at the bottom left of the triangle. Follow the sides around the whole triangle to complete one deep breath.



LAZY 8 BREATHING

Start with an 8 on its side. Starting in the middle, go up to the left and trace the left part of the 8 with your finger while you breathe in. When you get to the middle of the 8 again, breathe out while you trace the right part of the 8 with your finger.



Take a Mind Vacation

Imagine your favorite place!



1. Close your eyes and imagine that you are in a place that makes you feel safe, comfortable and happy.
2. What is around you?
3. What's under your feet?
4. What do you smell?
5. What do you hear?
6. How warm or cool is it?
7. Think about why this place makes you happy, and imagine you are there for a few minutes!

Mindfulness Cards

Turn on your favorite music. As you listen, pick just one instrument and focus on it throughout the whole song.

Slowly tighten and release each of your muscles from your head down to your toes.

Look around the room and see if you can find an item of every color of the rainbow.

Reflect on the week so far. Think of at least 3 things (big or small) that are going well.

MAKE SOMETHING AND GIVE IT AWAY

Get creative and make something you can give away to others. It's up to you! Give your creation away for free and see how people respond!

CARDS FOR KIDS IN THE HOSPITAL

Make get well cards for kids in local hospitals. Gather up your materials and your creative ideas to make something thoughtful for kids just like you.

DONATE TO CHARITY

There are probably at least a few things in your house right now that may be too small for you, or you no longer want to play with. Donating some items is a wonderful way to help others.

DONATE BOOKS TO YOUR LIBRARY

Libraries are often looking for books for library sales or to add to their collections. Take a peek at your shelves and see what books you can donate for others to use.

POPCORN AND A MOVIE

People often enjoy popcorn with their movie. Take an un-popped bag of popcorn to a friend, neighbor or family member for them to enjoy.

THANK YOU NOTES

Write or draw thank you notes to the mailman, the UPS delivery person or custodian at your school. Be kind and show them that you appreciate them. It will make their day brighter!

BURY TREASURE AT THE PARK

Some parks have sand pits in them, and often kids will bring toys and dig through the sand. Wouldn't it be fun to have them find a new toy or surprise to play with?

BAKE A TREAT AND SHARE

It can be fun to bake a treat, and it's even more fun to share it. Your neighbors or friends will be so surprised and feel great that you thought about them!

Circles of Control



Things I CAN'T Control

Other people's attitudes

Other people's actions

Things I CAN Control

The weather

My attitude

Past events and mistakes

Positive/negative self talk

How I treat others

My family

My decisions

Asking for help My actions/behavior

Other people's opinions

My level of effort

Forgiving others

Assignments/Due dates

Being prepared

Taking care of myself

My goals

My classmates

The friends I choose

Being honest

People forgiving me

Sickness

My teachers

Apologies from others

Others doing the right/wrong thing

Skin color

Circles of Control



Things I CAN'T Control

Things I CAN Control

The Ultimate De-Stress Playlist

What kind of music helps you chill out? What songs would you put on a playlist to help you reduce your stress level?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

Healthy Routines

Developing routines and sticking to them can help you reduce and manage stress. Write down some healthy habits you want to include in your routine each morning and evening. Think about scheduling time for self-care, hygiene, and relaxation.

Morning

-
-
-
-
-
-

Evening

-
-
-
-
-
-