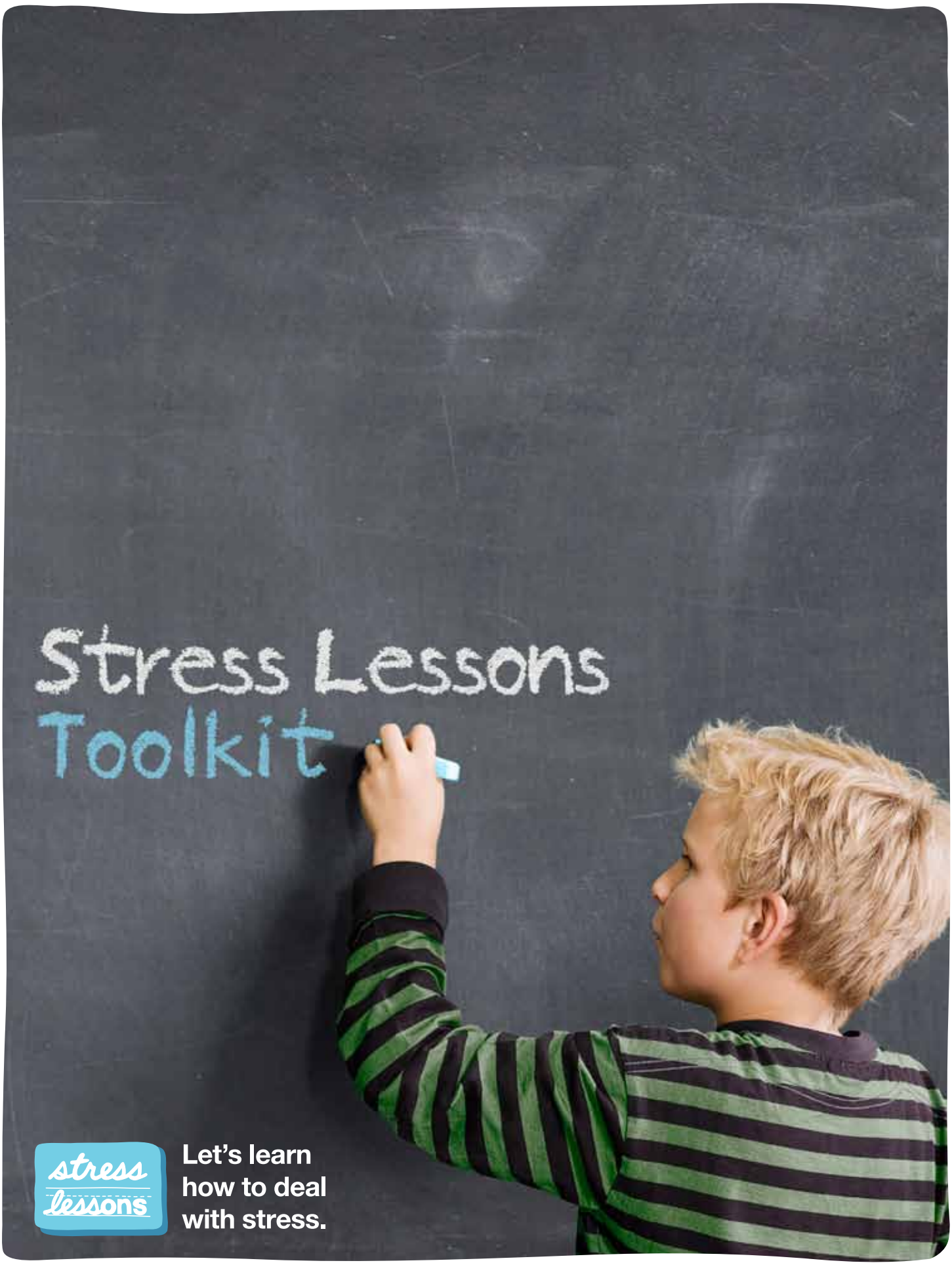

Stress Lessons
Toolkit
stress lessons
Let's learn how to deal with stress.

"There's a wonderful and powerful window of time developmentally – between ages 10 and 12, before the teenage years – where teachers and parents can make a lifelong difference in helping children grow up to be emotionally healthy and well. It's an opportunity to help children learn problem solving, stress management skills and become more self-aware – and this is a gift that can help them today and for the rest of their lives."

Robin C. Alter, Ph.D., Child Psychologist, author of Anxiety and the Gift of Imagination, panelist, York University Affiliate Professor, OPA, CPA, APA Member, CPF Trustee.

Lessons + Activities >

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Teacher's Guide

"There's a wonderful and powerful window of time developmentally – between ages 10 and 12, before the teenage years – where teachers and parents can make a lifelong difference in helping children grow up to be emotionally healthy and well.

It's an opportunity to help children learn problem solving, stress management skills and become more self-aware – and this is a gift that can help them today and for the rest of their lives." – *Robin C. Alter, Ph.D., Child Psychologist, author of Anxiety and the Gift of Imagination, panelist, York University Affiliate Professor, OPA, CPA, APA Member, CPF Trustee.*

Even the most nurturing school and home environment includes a range of stressors that can both challenge and motivate students and staff. While stress is a necessary part of development and learning, it's clear that Canadian families now face more stress than ever before.

Stress among children is estimated to have increased 45% over the past 30 years. The good news is that building emotional health and resiliency can help students concentrate, learn, interact more successfully and deal with other stressors they may face in their home life.

Welcome to Stress Lessons

Stress Lessons is a free classroom resource — suitable for grades 4 to 6 — created by the Psychology Foundation of Canada in partnership with Pfizer Canada.

The Psychology Foundation of Canada is a charitable organization that's dedicated to helping Canadian families live emotionally-healthy, balanced lives, by providing awareness, expert validated education tools and promoting psychological-based learning and insight.

Stress Lessons is part of Pfizer Canada's More than Medication wellness initiative that provides free, made-in-Canada health and well-being tools, information and inspiration. Learn more at www.morethanmedication.ca

Stress Lessons Advisory Panel

This resource has been developed with the help of the following experts:

Dr. Robin Alter
An experienced child and family psychologist with over 30 years experience who specializes in childhood anxiety and stress. Dr. Alter's first book: *Anxiety and the Gift of Imagination* is now available.

The Psychology Foundation of Canada thanks Dr. Alter for generously donating her ideas and suggestions on classroom activities for this initiative.

Eli Bay
Eli Bay has been helping Canadians relieve and manage stress for over 30 years, as the founder and president of The Relaxation Response Institute in Toronto.

Marietta Bloch
Marietta is the Director of Education Services at Let's Talk Science, a national charitable organization dedicated to improving science literacy through leadership, innovative learning programs, research and advocacy. She was a founding co-chair of the Science & Technology Awareness Network.

Judy Hills
Executive Director of The Psychology Foundation of Canada, Judy, a former teacher, also sits on the Board of Autism Speaks Canada and served on the Advisory Board for the CIHR Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction.

Dr. Bill Hogarth
Dr. Hogarth is the president of Education, Research and Development Institute (ERDI) Canada – and a former director of the York Region District School Board.

Charlotte Holtan
A retired educator Charlotte was instrumental in the founding of Victoria's non-profit Community Options for Children and Families Society.

Heidi Lenet
Montreal Phys. Ed teacher, Heidi Lenet, is dedicated to keeping kids active and inspiring them to make healthier choices.

Patrick Niiya
For more than a decade, Patrick has been inspiring grade six Montreal-area students with his energetic and innovative teaching style.

Catherine Willinsky
A program consultant with the Psychology Foundation of Canada, Catherine works in mental health promotion in schools and has worked extensively with the Foundation's Kids Have Stress Too! program.

With special thanks to:

Dr. David Posen	Family Physician, Stress Management and Lifestyle Counsellor
Denise Marek	Stress/Anxiety Expert
Yvonne Clarke	Family Therapy and Counsellor, McGill University Health Centre
Dr. Tracy Vaillancourt	PhD, Relationship & youth Stressors, Teen bullying and victimization
Kathy Jurgens	Canadian Mental Health Association
Angela Shim	Nutritionist, Vitality Coach

About Stress Lessons

Stress Lessons is built on an experiential, hands-on learning approach. Its aim is help educators create teachable moments to introduce stress management strategies and build emotional resiliency.

Stress Lessons will provide you with teaching strategies to enable learning. It can be a good classroom management tool. The lessons can become part of the continuous learning cycle and incorporated into interactions year round. For ideas on how to link to curriculum go to the "Links to the Curriculum" section.

Created in response to demand from Canadian teachers and other education professionals, Stress Lessons has been developed in collaboration with a range of experts including educators, counsellors, stress experts and psychologists.

The goals of the Stress Lessons include:

- Providing educators with a free, psychologically-sound, Canadian classroom resource that's relevant to emotional health curriculum requirements
- Helping teachers create an emotionally-healthy classroom environment by providing a series of activities that promote learning, discussion and self-awareness
- Supporting teachers in fostering coping, stress management and problem solving skills

Stress and the school setting

School can be a stressful place for students and educators alike. The cumulative demands and expectations to achieve academically, socially and in extra-curricular activities, can sometimes be overwhelming.

What's in Stress Lessons?

The resource features 7 skill-based Lessons containing:

- Teacher's Guide
- Talking Points
- Activity Sheet
- Certificate of Completion
- *some lessons also feature brief videos, and supporting posters

The program also features:

- "Behind the Lesson" background information relevant to each module
- Links to additional background information
- A Guide for parents and a letter of introduction to the program to send home.

The Stress Lessons Lessons are:

- Lesson #1: What Is Stress?
- Lesson #2: Stressed Or Not Stressed?
- Lesson #3: Deep Breathing
- Lesson #4: Hooked By Stress!
- Lesson #5: Worries and Fears
- Lesson #6: Puzzle Solvers
- Lesson #7: Express Yourself To Bust Stress!

Stress Lessons can be downloaded online at www.psychologyfoundation.org or morethanmedication.ca

Free printed kits can be ordered online at morethanmedication.ca or by calling the Pfizer Stress Lessons call center at 1-855-LESSON9

Links to your curriculum

The content found in this program is relevant to emotional health curriculum requirements. It can also be applied and compliment your existing curriculum. For example, use stress as a theme or subject area for a month and incorporate Stress Lessons into other learning areas, for instance Social Studies, Reading or Math.

Curriculum Connections (by Module)

Module	What part of the Curriculum does it relate to?
1. What is Stress?	• Health & Physical Education – Living Skills, Wellness Education – emotional, social, development of personal and interpersonal skills • Critical & creative thinking • Healthful living • Oral Communication • Mathematics – data management & probability • The Arts – visual arts, drama
2. Stressed or Not Stressed?	• Living Skills – personal skills • Critical & creative thinking • Analyzing & solving problems, making decisions • Healthy Living – Wellness education • Social Studies • Language & Writing
3. Deep Breathing	• Health & Physical Education • Living Skills • Personal skills – personal management • Movement competencies • Active Living • Language – oral communication and writing

(continue on next page)

Module	What part of the Curriculum does it relate to?
4. Hooked by Stress!	• Living Skills – Interpersonal skills, critical and creative thinking • Healthy Living – wellness education • Language – oral and writing • Visual arts, drama • Creativity and ability to express ideas
5. Worries & Fears	• Living Skills – wellness • Self awareness • Adaptive management & coping skills • Analyze & solve problems • Make connections to health & well-being • How choices & behaviours affect both themselves & others • Oral communication- listening skills • Generate, gather and organize ideas
6. Puzzle solvers	• Health & Physical Education – Living skills • Critical & creative thinking • Self-awareness and self-monitoring – take personal responsibility for actions • Adaptive, management & coping skills • Communicate effectively • Analyze & solve problems – apply knowledge & make reasonable decisions • Understand how choices affect themselves and others • Oral communication, reading & writing- gather and organize ideas
7. Express Yourself to Bust Stress!	• Creative thinking • Personal & interpersonal skills • Living skills • Making decisions • Understanding how their choices affect themselves & others • Visual arts • Communication – oral, writing, art

When you need to consider extra help

Some students may show their stress by crying or whining, withdrawing, or acting out for a brief period before settling down to do their school work.

Sometimes, children find it easier to talk to other adults rather than their parents. Professional help may be needed to help get them get back to normal more quickly, and to prevent or reduce the harmful effects of prolonged stress reactions.

Ask for help if:

- the child's upset feelings and behaviour seem to be getting worse
- the signs of extreme stress last for longer than about one month
- worries prevent the child from getting on with normal, everyday life

Manage your own stress

Sometimes educators are so concerned about their students, they overlook their own stressors.

Here are strategies you can use to keep stress from becoming too overwhelming and unhealthy.

How stressed are you?

Want to know how stressed you are? Take our quick quiz. Answer each of the following statements with 'yes' or 'no'.

- I feel nervous or anxious a lot.
- I am a shallow breather.
- I suffer from depression and/or fatigue.
- I have chronic tension in parts of my body (raised shoulders, etc).

If you answered 'yes' to three or more, stress management techniques might be beneficial to you.

Here are 10 tips to help you reduce stress by breathing more healthfully.

1. Consciously monitor your breathing
2. Don't hold your breath
3. Centre yourself by taking deep inhalations and exhalations
4. Touch the palate with your tongue to quiet your mind
5. Breathe in through your nose
6. Breathe down into your back and imagine it expanding out
7. Breathe right down into your tummy
8. Let your tummy be soft when you breathe in
9. To relax, breathe in for 4, hold for 3, breathe out for 7. Repeat
10. Sign up for regular mind/body classes such as yoga and Tai Chi

Like what you just read?

There's more at **morethanmedication.ca**



Stress Lesson 1
What is Stress?

Lesson overview

This Stress Lesson provides an introduction to the topic of stress. The lesson is anchored by a brief, highly engaging video that explains what stress is, why we need it, why too much is harmful – and how stress can impact our emotional and physical health when we don't manage it properly.

The goal of the lesson is to help children learn at an early age, that it's important to recognize and manage stress proactively.

Lesson includes:

- **Video (4 separate sections):**
  - What is stress?
  - Why do we need stress?
  - How does stress affect us?
  - How to prevent stress to be healthy?
  - How do we control and manage stress in our lives?
- **Activity Sheets:** highlights the major points of the video, and provides students with an opportunity to reflect on what they've learned.
- **Take-home activity:** My most surprising stress discoveries

Behind the Lesson:

Experts estimate that as many as 75 to 95 percent of trips to the physician are stress-related – and increasingly, health experts are discovering the link between stress management and life long wellness.

Some psychologists believe that today's children are faced with more stress than the children of previous generations, and have fewer social supports available. The following statistics demonstrate the impact of stress on students between the ages of 8-12:

- Stress among children is estimated to have increased 45% over the past 30 years.
- A survey done by the American Psychology Association indicates that 30% of tweens get headaches at least once a week, but only 13% of parents report being aware of their children having headaches.
- In the same survey, 39% report difficulty sleeping, but only 13% of parents report awareness of children's sleep problems and
- 27% reported eating too much or too little due to stress. Only 8% of parents reported being aware of this behaviour[1].

Some stressors in a student's life may take the form of "daily hassles" that are typically short-lived. Examples include having to adjust to a new classroom schedule, meeting new people or feeling pressure to do well on a test. Some students may show their stress by crying or whining, withdrawing, or acting out for a brief period before settling down to do their school work.

Other stressors may be more serious or last longer, such as having problems getting along with other students, being hungry or tired, feeling uncomfortable performing in front of others, or having an overly busy schedule (school plus too many extracurricular activities).

A student may respond by

- complaining about a sore stomach,
- being aggressive or lashing out at other children,
- seeming confused or easily distracted,
- performing poorly or progressively worse in their school work, or
- other behaviours that do not necessarily reflect the student's true nature or abilities, such as withdrawing and not participating in classroom activities

Stress is a normal part of everyday life. Limited amounts of stress can have a positive influence on motivation and creativity, but excessive stress has an overwhelming and debilitating effect.

Too much stress can have a dramatic effect on learning and social development. Excessive stress interferes with executive functions such as attention, memory, organization, and integration.

Stress-related problems may affect students' performance in school, and many stressors are related directly to the school environment. In order to support student's learning, teachers can address topics of stress and coping through the curriculum as well as daily classroom management practices.

Lesson plan suggestions:

- Use the discussion guide below to introduce the topic of stress before showing the video to your class.
- You can follow up after watching the video with a group discussion using the prompts below.
- The Activity Sheets can be used in class or given as take-home activities, depending on the amount of time you have available.

Discussion Guide / Talking points:

Review:

Stress is a normal part of life and essential to a young student's learning and development. But too much stress for too long can be harmful or "toxic." One of the critical ingredients that makes stress tolerable rather than toxic is the presence of supportive adults that help children learn to cope with and recover from difficult experiences.

- Has everyone heard the term – stress?
- What does it mean to you? (List ideas on a chalkboard)
- Let's think about our bodies for a minute – has anyone ever had a headache that they think might have been caused by stress? (If they're comfortable doing so, ask students to raise their hands or stand up if they have experienced these symptoms)
  - or felt like there's a brick in your stomach, as if you've done something wrong or something bad is going to happen?
  - or butterfly feelings in your stomach if you're excited?
  - felt tense, fidgety and like you need to use the toilet a lot?
  - felt nervous and worried for a long time?
  - felt pressured, hassled, and hurried?
  - felt irritable and moody?
  - had allergic reactions, such as a rash or asthma?
  - had trouble sleeping?
  - felt sad or depressed
  - felt like you're turning red or feel flushed?
- Those are just a few ways that stress can affect your body as well as your emotions.
- Stress is actually pretty complex. Let's watch this short video to learn a little bit more.

After the video:

- In the video, we learned that a little stress is necessary to help us function. Just like a violin or guitar string needs to have the right amount of stress or tension to make music, we need some stress in our lives to get us moving and motivate us to be our best.
- Too much stress, though, can be dangerous for your physical, mental and emotional health, especially if we feel like it's out of our control or we don't feel like we can deal with it.
- But if we stretch the string too much, it will break. We're kind of like that guitar string: we need just the right amount of stress to perform well and feel good, but too much stress can make us snap!

- Now that we know how much of a big deal stress can be for your health, let's take a few minutes and complete the activity sheets. The activity sheets ask you to look at some of the things that stress you out, and think of ways we can do something about it.

Teachable moment:

Ask students to guess how many trips to the doctor's office have something to do with the stress people are feeling? Experts believe it's about 8 out of 10. That's eighty percent. Let's figure out how many people that would be in our class. Have students work out what a proportionate number of the total class size, and ask 80% of students to stand so that they can get a sense of the magnitude of the impact of stress on health.

Additional Reading and Links:

[1] American Psychological Association,
Stress in America Report, 2009.
http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/national-report.pdf

Effects of stress throughout the lifespan on the brain, behaviour and cognition
Sonia J. Lupien, Bruce S. McEwen, Megan R. Gunnar and Christine Heim
www.nature.com/reviews/neuro, Volume 10, June 2009
http://psych.umb.edu/faculty/kaldy/courses/psy641/pdfs/Lupien_et_al.pdf

Impact of stress on learning.
Butlin, T. De Montfort University 2007
http://www.dmu.ac.uk/Images/impact_stress_tcm6-15825.pdf

Stress affects learning and memory.
Nauert, R., Grohol, J.M. March 12, 2008
http://psychcentral.com/news/2008/03/12/stress-affects-learning-and-memory/2031.html

The Struggle to Juggle: Stress Management Strategies for You and Your Family.
The Psychology Foundation of Canada.
http://www.desjardinslifeinsurance.com/en/life-events/Documents/Thestruggletojuggle.pdf

Kids Have Stress Too! – Ideas, Tips and Strategies for Parents of Preschoolers Booklet
http://www.psychologyfoundation.org/pdf/KHST_Booklet_for_Parents.pdf

How did you use this Lesson?

Share your Experiences.

We'd love to hear how you used this Stress Lesson in your classroom. Share your feedback at morethanmedication.ca/StressLessons

Stress Lesson 1: Activity #1

What is Stress?

What stresses you out?

Draw a violin or guitar and write about what kinds of stressful situations start to make your string snap!

Stress Lesson 1: Activity #2

What is Stress?

How does stress affect your body?

Find the common signs of stress in the word find below.

- Sore stomach
- Butterflies in stomach
- Headache
- Can't concentrate
- Forgetfulness
- Trouble sleeping

B	A	S	G	P	B	H	S	H	I	O	P	V	Z	X	R	V	V	R	S
S	U	L	R	S	E	H	A	B	S	U	H	Y	B	E	V	Q	A	O	G
R	G	T	R	O	U	B	L	E	S	L	E	E	P	I	N	G	C	J	K
O	S	B	T	R	A	F	Q	P	G	X	A	J	U	F	F	T	Q	X	U
U	H	W	G	E	U	B	W	A	G	Q	D	G	U	V	W	S	I	G	T
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N	L	E	F	H	P	F	X	Q	V	W	I	V	F	T	L	V	U	G	H
Q	H	A	U	I	C	M	U	S	Z	U	A	J	A	P	O	Q	W	S	X
S	R	Q	A	Z	S	T	A	X	J	R	Q	F	H	Z	L	M	H	E	V
W	C	L	X	J	C	A	N	T	C	O	N	C	E	N	T	R	A	T	E
U	M	R	J	I	O	O	D	I	U	A	C	U	J	R	J	S	H	C	C
C	W	O	U	W	F	X	U	J	J	Q	D	F	I	W	X	D	G	S	H

Stress Lesson 1: Activity #3

What is Stress?

What can I do about my stress?

You may not always be able to control your physical reactions to stress, but you can decide how you will cope with your stress. What kind of stress-relieving activities help you stay in-tune? Check those that work for you and add your own:

- ☐ Deep breathing
- ☐ Playing sports
- ☐ Talking to a friend
- ☐ Listening to music
- ☐ Writing or drawing
- ☐ Watching a funny video
- ☐ Playing with my dog/cat/pet
- ☐ Staying on top of my schoolwork/homework
- ☐ Talking to a trusted adult
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Draw your favourite stress-relieving activity

Stress Lesson 1: Take-home Activity

What is Stress?

Take-home activity: My most surprising stress discoveries:

What are the three most interesting facts you learned about stress today?

1

2

3

How will that help you or change the way you deal with stress?



Stress Lesson 2

Stressed or Not Stressed?

Lesson overview

This Stress Lesson explores the experience of "stress" with students in a safe, engaging and inclusive way. The goal of the lesson is to have students reflect on the kinds of situations and events that trigger their stress response, and to begin to think of ways they can cope.

Lesson includes:

- **Images "Stressed or Not Stressed?"**
  Images: a series of images and examples that reflect common, stressful situations. Students will be asked to think about whether or not they think the people in the photos would find the different situations stressful.
- **Activity Sheet:** reinforces group discussion with individual learning by asking students to rank their personal stressors using a "Stress Scale." The Activity Sheet also asks students to give suggestions about how someone might be able to prevent or manage each potentially stressful situation.

Behind the Lesson:

- In a group, some children may not feel safe discussing their own personal stressors – or if they do share more personal stories, they may regret doing so afterwards.
- By encouraging your students to react to the examples/ images provided rather than asking them directly about what they find stressful, they will feel more comfortable discussing the topic of stress – and will be more engaged and curious about the topic area.
- A group discussion can be reassuring for children to know that their peers also can relate to why someone might find certain events to be stressful.

Lesson plan suggestions:

- Use the points below to help students recall content from Lesson 1 and introduce the activity. After a brief review and discussion, you can use the slide show images and pause for discussion.
- The Activity sheet provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their own stressors and begin to think through coping strategies.

Variations:

- The Activity Sheet can be handed out at the beginning to allow students to follow along; or shared after the group discussion; as a reinforcing follow-up independent study exercise.
- You can ask students to raise their hands to indicate if the situation portrayed in each image makes them think the people involved are "Stressed or Not Stressed?", OR distribute the Activity sheets and ask students to make this assessment on their Activity Sheet.
- The Activity Sheet can also be assigned as a more personal class Journal assignment.
- Print the images and break the class into groups to discuss and rank what they feel might be the Top 5 stressful situations for the people involved.

- Ask the class to brainstorm other stressful topics and find images to match.

Discussion Guide / Talking points:

Review:

- Stress can be anything that threatens us, challenges us, scares us, worries us or thrills us.
- Stress can be real or imagined, healthy or unhealthy.
- What stresses people out is different from one person to the next.
- Some stress in our lives is necessary to feel alert and energized and helps us to perform better.

Ask students:

- Has anyone here been stressed out? What does it feel like? (write down their answers on the board and reflect on differences and similarities in their responses).
- Not everyone gets stressed out by the same things. It's important to know what stresses you out, so that you can figure out a plan to help manage those feelings.
- Here's your assignment for the next few minutes. I'm going to show you some pictures. Your job is to decide how you think the people in the pictures are feeling: Stressed or Not Stressed.
- Rank your responses to create a list of what you think might be the Top 5 most stressful situations for most people.

Teachable moment:

You can incorporate math notions in the ranking concept.

As you go through the images; engage kids in discussing what kinds of things could help someone feel less stressed in this situation.

Example: Stressor – Too Much Homework

Ask students: What could help?

– Starting right away when you get home from school.

– Asking for help; homework study group; other suggestions?

Additional Reading and Links:

Student Stress Starts Early. DeNoon, D. WebMD. 2004.
http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=51821

Helping Children Handle Stress. American Academy of Pediatrics HealthyChildren.org – December 2010
http://www.healthychildren.org/english/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/pages/Helping-Children-Handle-Stress.aspx

What do children worry about?:
A fact sheet for Teachers and Parents.
National Association of Health Education Centers
http://www.nahec.org/KidsPoll/what_kids_worry_about/KidsPoll_Worries_Teacher_Handout.pdf

Understanding Stress – Signs, Symptoms, Causes, and Effects. Smith M, M.A., Segal R, M.A., and Segal J, Ph.D. Helpguide.org June 2011.
http://helpguide.org/mental/stress_signs.htm

Childhood Stress. Nemours Center for Children's Health Media Nemours Foundation
http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/stress.html

Stress and young children. AtHealth.com.
http://www.athealth.com/Consumer/disorders/childstress.html

How did you use this Lesson?

Share your Experiences.

We'd love to hear how you used this Stress Lesson in your classroom. Share your feedback at morethanmedication.ca/StressLessons

Stress Lesson 2: Activity #1

Stressed or Not Stressed?

Stressed or Not Stressed?

Not everyone gets stressed out by the same things. It is important to think about what makes you feel stressed, so you can come up with a plan to help you feel more comfortable and better able to deal with every day stressful situations. Look at the pictures below and rank each one on a Stress Scale of how stressed you think the peple in the pictures might be. 10 is Very Stressed – and 1 is Just a Little Stressed. As you think about the people in the pictures, also think about how you might feel yourself if you faced this situation.



Too much homework

Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Exams and tests

Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Fighting with parents / family

Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Late for school!

Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Being bullied

Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(continue on next page)



Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Parents fighting with each other



Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

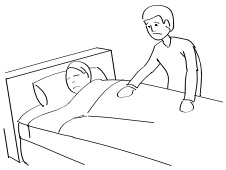
Being yelled at



Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Being left out



Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Illness (in their own lives or their friends / family)



Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

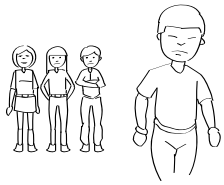
Too many activities / demands



Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not being able to sleep



Just a little — Very stressed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Having a falling out with friends

Stress Lesson 2: Activity #2

Stressed or Not Stressed?

Stress Busting

- Think of the last time something that made you feel bad, nervous, or worried. What did you do? What made you feel better?
- When something happens that makes you feel bad, nervous, or worried, what do you usually do that helps you the most?
- What do you do that doesn't help much, but you do it anyway?

Now think about the three things that stress you out the most, and write them down in the spaces below.

Once you've written down what stresses you, think about and write down what you could do to feel better and lower your Stress Scale when you're in this situation!

#1 Stress

My Stress busting strategy / plan:

#2 Stress

My Stress busting strategy / plan:

#3 Stress

My Stress busting strategy / plan:

Stress Lesson 3

Deep Breathing



Lesson overview

This Stress Lesson provides an introduction to simple, effective deep breathing relaxation strategies that students can use to help them tune into their own feelings, and learn to manage their stress.

The goal of the lesson is to help students begin to identify when they start feeling stressed – and demonstrate practical ways of taking action to restore a more relaxed, balanced, positive state.

Lesson includes:

- **Video DVD /Audio CD – Deep Breathing:** Stress expert Eli Bay introduces easy, effective Deep Breathing Activities. It features student testimonials. This short video is chaptered as follows:
  - Introduction
  - Relaxation Recess – When You Have 15-20 Minutes
  - Nine to Feel Fine – When You Have 5-10 Minutes
  - Visualize Success to De-Stress – Before Tests. When You Have 5-10 Minutes
  - When You Have 30 Minutes or More
- **Activity Sheet - Learning to Relax:** Provides a review of the breathing exercises outlined in the video and a chance for students to reflect on their favourite relaxation exercises.

Behind the Lesson:

- Learning to counteract the stress response by using effective relaxation strategies is a valuable skill that students can learn and practice throughout their lives. Controlled, deep breathing helps the brain slow down the stress response, produces calming effects and increases focus.
- When students are stressed, they can't learn. Educators have long known that the optimal mind/body state for a student is one of "relaxed alertness". Research has shown that a 10-minute, daily stress management intervention delivered in the classroom can decrease feelings of anxiety and improve a student's ability to relax and learn.[1]
- When deep breathing is practiced frequently with students, they learn that it's a tool they can use anytime, anywhere to quickly change a stress response to a relaxation response.

Lesson plan suggestions:

- Video is chaptered to allow for flexibility
- This full lesson works best in a larger room – or open area – where children can spread out, even lie down, and have their own space.
- Introduce the video – explain to students that the brief video you are about to watch is designed to help them learn simple deep breathing techniques that will teach them how to relax anytime, anywhere. The video is self-

explanatory and takes children through a series of Deep Breathing exercises.

- Use the discussion guide below to lead a conversation about students' response to the breathing exercises.
- Ask students to complete the Activity Sheet: Learning to Relax, either individually or in small groups.

Teacher's Tip

Do the 5 min stress buster with your class before a test or after they come back from recess to calm them down and get them focused. It can help you create an optimal environment.

The more frequently you practice Deep Breathing with your students, the more likely it is that they will learn to use it on their own. This skill requires practice over time. Help them adopt a healthy habit!

Discussion Guide / Talking points:

- Ask students what they thought about the deep breathing exercise.
- Did they notice any differences between the way they normally breathe and their breathing during the exercise?
- Do they notice any differences between their breathing when they're doing other kinds of activities, like playing sports, watching TV, when they're nervous, excited, etc.?
- Help students evaluate effectiveness of their coping strategies by asking them if they feel better (e.g., less bad, nervous, or worried) after they use them. Reinforcing the benefits of regularly practicing positive coping strategies, like deep breathing, and journaling, helps students make the connection and helps them take action to manage their stress and feel better.

Fun facts:

- Oxygen is your body's #1 food
- 70% of the body's wastes are processed through breathing
- Deep breathing can lower your blood pressure

Additional Reading and Links:

[1] Schneider, M.E. "Daily stress management can work in classroom setting". Clinical Psychiatry News. Nov 2006.

Stress Management: Breathing Exercises for Relaxation. WebMD.ca http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-management-breathing-exercises-for-relaxation

Association for Mindfulness in Education: http://www.mindfuleducation.org/

Mindfulness Training for Elementary School Students: The Attention Academy. Napoli, M. Journal of Applied School Psychology, 2005 http://www.mindfuleducation.org/attention%20academy.pdf

The Neuroscience of Attention, Emotion, & Meditation: Implications for Education http://www.mindfuleducation.org/AttnEmotMeditatetalk.pdf

Brief Guidelines for teaching relaxation techniques, guided imagery and other mind/ body awareness tools in public schools. Kidsrelaxation.com 2010 http://kidsrelaxation.com/2010/08/22/brief-guidelines-for-teaching-relaxation-techniques-guided-imagery-and-other-mindbody-awareness-tools-in-public-schools/

Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder Relaxation Techniques for the Classroom http://asdresources.wordpress.com/strategies/relaxation-techniques-for-the-classroom/

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Training script http://www.yourfamilyclinic.com/pro/trelax.htm

In the Classroom, a New Focus on Quieting the Mind. New York Times, June 16, 2007 http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/16/us/16mindful.html?ex=1183608000&en=3d87faf9c47eb9f2&ei=5070

Mindfulness in the Classroom-Getting to Know Yourself in School. Kabat-Zin, J. http://mindfuleducation.org/Mindfulnessintheclassroom-JKZ.pdf

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for School-Age Children. Saltzman, A., Goldin, P. Stanford University http://www.mindfuleducation.org/mbsrforchildren.pdf http://www.mindfulschools.org/

How did you use this Lesson?

Share your Experiences.

We'd love to hear how you used this Stress Lesson in your classroom. Share your feedback at morethanmedication.ca/StressLessons

Stress Lesson 3: Activity #1

Deep Breathing

Deep Breathing (e.g. Nine to Feel Fine)

Deep Breathing is an easy, fast way to help reduce your stress, calm your body and improve your mood.

Think back to the "Stressed or Not Stressed?" activity.

How do you think using deep breathing can help you deal with the three big stressors you listed?

#1 Stress — How I might use it in my real life:

#2 Stress — How I might use it in my real life:

#3 Stress — How I might use it in my real life:

What are some other ways you can help yourself feel better when you're stressed?

Think back to or imagine a pleasant situation like a family vacation or a happy experience.



Stress Lesson 4

Hooked by Stress!

Lesson overview

This Stress Lesson is designed to help students recognize that stressful situations can trigger certain behavioural reactions. By making students more aware of their non-thinking, automatic reactions to stress and the link with their behaviour, you can help them build the emotional awareness that will enable them to feel more positive and in-control.

The goal of the lesson is to help students understand that they have power over their thoughts – and that choosing not to react may help change their feelings and behaviour.

Lesson includes:

- **Hooked by Stress! Cartoon DVD:** Uses a fishing analogy: one fish "takes the bait" and is "caught" by stress away, while the more thoughtful fish chooses to avoid the hook and swims away.
- **Activity Sheet – Making Choices:** helps students explore and think about how they might react without thinking of stressful triggers – and how it would be possible to choose another option like the "smart fish."
- **Activity Sheet: Hooked by Stress Comic Strip**

Behind the Lesson:

- A student's perception of a situation or stressor and their own personal coping skills to deal with it, ultimately determine the level of stress they will experience. If they perceive the event or stressor as beyond their ability to cope with, they will experience higher levels of stress. However, if a student thinks they can cope with the situation adequately, their stress level remains manageable.
- The analogy of the "smart fish" who doesn't get hooked vs. the other fish who gets hooked by reacting without thinking is an effective way of helping students make the connection between their perception of a situation and their reaction to it. It helps students realize their own role in making choices, and the impact their decisions can have on themselves and others.
- Students who can recognize, identify and talk about their emotions are less likely to reach the point where they act out their strong emotions with disruptive behaviors and are able to develop in healthy ways and to build good relationships with parents, peers and teachers.
- Using an art-based activity can make it easier for children to "draw" or "make" their feelings, rather than talking about them.

Lesson plan suggestions:

- Use the DVD cartoon as a conversation starter to engage the class.
- Ask the class to brainstorm other stress "hooks" or triggers that might provoke a non-thinking, negative reaction – and then a smart fish alternative reaction. (example: your brother hits or pokes you, someone makes fun of you, your teacher asks you to do something you don't feel like doing, you get in trouble at home, etc.)

- Hand out the Activity Sheet and ask students to create their own Hooked by Stress comic strip.

Variations:

- The Activity Sheet can also be assigned as part of ongoing class Journaling or art projects.

Discussion Guide / Talking points:

Before watching video:

- Now we're going to talk a bit about our "Stress Triggers", the things that get us stressed before we even know it. Let's say someone says something that bugs you, and you snapped back without really thinking? Has that ever happened to you?
- How many people who've snapped back felt kind of bad about how they responded? Did some of you wish you had reacted differently?
- It can be hard not to get hooked into reacting in a negative way sometimes.
- But we all have choices and we can all choose to react in a different way – if we know how and have a plan.
- Now, I'm going to play you a very short cartoon about two fish. Watch carefully and think about which fish you'd rather be.

After watching video:

- How would everyone describe the fish that got hooked?
- What about the fish that just swims along – why didn't that fish react to the hook?
- The smart fish paused for a second and decided not to react.
- Do you think that kind of attitude could help you when someone says something that bugs you and might hook you into reacting in a stressed or negative way?
- So which fish would you rather be? The fish on the hook– or the smart fish that chooses its reactions carefully?

Teachable moment:

You can influence students' understanding and knowledge of emotions by discussing emotions during everyday interactions. Building understanding of emotion-related words can happen by intentionally teaching children to label both negative and positive emotions, and by helping them understand the causes of emotion.

Additional Reading and Links:

Feelings Count: Emotions and Learning. Darling-Hammond, L. ,Orcutt, S., Strobel, K., Kirsch, E., Lit, I., Martin, D. Stanford University School of Education. http://www.learner.org/courses/learningclassroom/support/05_emotions_learning.pdf

Helping Children Cope with Stress. Center for Effective Parenting. Zolten, K., Long, N. Department of Pediatrics, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, 1997. http://www.parenting-ed.org/handout3/Specific Concerns and Problems/kid stress.htm

Feelings. Partnership for Children http://www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/resources/activities/activities---feelings.html

How did you use this Lesson?

Share your Experiences.

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Stress Lesson 4: Activity #1

Hooked by Stress!

Making choices

Let's look at the story of the two fish. They were both swimming along and spotted something that caught their attention. The choice they made about how to react to what they saw made a big difference in their lives; one ended up being someone's dinner, and the other swam away and went about its business.

If you "take the bait" or react without thinking, you may end up feeling trapped or caught, like the fish on the hook.

If you take a closer look at what may look like something you need to grab on to, you may see that it doesn't look so good after all. By taking that few seconds to breathe and think it through, you can avoid reacting in a way that will end up making you feel trapped or lead to more stress.

Think about something that happened in your life recently that made you feel really stressed.

- How did you react?

- If you could, would you change anything about the way you reacted?

Remember:

You have control over how you think about and react to things in your life. Take a deep breath!

Stress Lesson 4: Activity #2

Hooked by Stress!

Hooked by Stress Comic Strip:

Create your own comic strip version that shows a situation that might make you react in a stressed-out or negative way, or without thinking, like the fish who took the bait.

And then, change the ending to show how your “smart fish” self could handle the same situation.

1	2
3	4
5 (How did you react?)	6 (How would the “smart fish” react?)



Stress Lesson 5
Worries & Fears

Lesson overview

This Stress Lesson is designed to help students begin to think about their worries and fears in a realistic, productive way that will ultimately, help them reduce and manage stress effectively.

The goal of the lesson is to help students learn how to identify and articulate their fears, so that they become better able to manage personal stressors – and can even create a plan to deal with them.

Lesson includes:

- **Creating a "Worry" Box / Envelope:** A creative activity for students to decorate and personalize a box or envelope where they can store the worries they will write down as part of the accompanying Activity Sheet. The "Worry Box" acts as a safe place for students to put their worries while they think them through and come up with a plan of action to deal with them.
- **Activity Sheet - Worries and Fears:** Developed to help students begin to name and label their worries to place into their "Worry Box."

Variation:

You can also call the activity Creating a "Safe" box or Thought Box.

What you'll need:

Enough boxes or large envelopes for each student to have one to decorate. Ask students to bring in a box from home.

Paint, glue, magazines, scissors, glitter and any other art supplies you have on hand.

Behind the Lesson:

- Adults and children alike experience some worry, anxiety, nervousness, apprehension, dread, fear or distress, especially when we're faced with new or challenging events or situations.
- Worrying is a common phenomenon in normal children in this age group. All students have anxious thoughts, but some learn to manage them better than others at an earlier age.
- The ability to identify or name a worry, and have a place to "put the worry away" can be very effective in helping children process stressful thoughts.
- Children do not always recognize whether the fear or worry they are experiencing is something they have control over – or not.

Facts about students and worrying:

- The most frequent worry in children involves their parents, grades and peers.
- The most intense worries of children are about war, money and disasters.
- One in four children worry that they do not spend enough time with their parents primarily because parents are too busy working.

- Children's worries can sometimes be associated with anxiety. Between 5 and 10 children in every 100 children have anxiety problems.

Fun Facts:

What do other kids your age worry about most? According to a survey of grade 4 and 8 students, these are common worries for kids:

- Grades, school, and homework
- Future
- Friends
- Health of loved ones
- Bullying
- Being laughed at

Lesson plan suggestions:

- Hand out the Activity Sheet and invite the class to create a Worry Box – or decorate an envelope – as part of an art or independent study project.
- Once the class has completed the creation of their Worry Boxes, the teacher can invite students to ID three worries or fears that they've been thinking about – and place into the Worry Box.
- The Activity Sheet can also be assigned as part of class Journaling projects.

Variation:

- If you prefer to keep the exercise more anonymous, you can have the students write down their worries and put them into a numbered envelope that you keep. Only you will know which numbered envelope corresponds to each student. It's a great way of getting feedback from your students and gaining a general sense of the types of stressors experienced by your students, while keeping their anonymity among their peers. You can get them to make and decorate the worry box at home. They can later insert their worries into it.

Discussion Guide / Talking points:

- Today, we're going to talk about Fears and Worries. Both adults and children have fears, and it's totally normal to worry sometimes. Everyone's worries are a little bit different, but there are some common things that many of us worry about, like something bad happening to us or someone in our family, failing a test or being late for school or work, arguing with friends or family, and war and natural disasters. Sometimes we don't even know what exactly it is that we're worrying about, we just know we have a bad feeling.
- In this lesson we're going to look at ways we can manage Fears and Worries so they don't drag our thoughts and mood down.
- So your first assignment is to create a Worry Box. A Worry Box is a place where you can store your fears and worries safely until you are ready to tackle them.
- Even if you have fears and worries. You don't have to carry them around with you all the time. This can be like taking a little vacation, or a rest, from the things that get you down.
- And, in our next Lesson, we'll look at how to deal with Fears and Worries when you're ready to face them. How to make a plan to manage them.
- For now, get creative and begin work on your Worry Box – and then when you've completed that, fill out your Activity Sheet questions and place them in the box.

Teacher's Tip:

Help your students "process" their concerns by asking "What" "When" "Where" "Are" and "Is" questions about what they're worrying about. Asking "why" questions can make some students reluctant to share, as they may feel that their worry isn't something they should be worried about.

Additional Reading and Links:

Anxiety and the Gift of Imagination. Alter, R.
http://www.docrobin.com/20.php
Book to be published Fall / Winter 2011

Raise Your Kids Without Raising Your Voice.
Parenting Advice Website Radcliffe, S.C.
http://www.parenting-advice.net/kids.html

What do kids really worry about? ParentsCanada.com.
http://www.parentscanada.com/well-being/articles.aspx?listingid=391

Anxiety, Fears and Phobias. Kidshealth.org
http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/anxiety.html

The Worrying Trap. Delong, T.J.
HarvardBusinessReview.org. May 2011
http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2011/05/the_worrying_trap.html

How did you use this Lesson?

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Stress Lesson 5: Activity #1

Worries & Fears

Worries and Fears

Fears and worries can drag you down – but the good news is that you can manage fears and worries with a little bit of focus.

Sometimes, you will know exactly what you're worried about. Other times, you might not know what's bothering you.

So take a few minutes to complete the questions below about two of your fears or worries. By identifying and talking about your worries, you'll be able to think through what you can do to help you feel less worried and start feeling better. You'll also learn how to deal with similar problems that might come up in the future. There is almost always something you can do to help you feel less worried.



1

2

Once you've identified your Fears and Worries – you're ready to put them into your Worry Box for safekeeping.

The Worry Box is a private, safe place to "park" your fears and worries until you are ready to talk about them and work through them with a trusted adult. If it's hard for you to talk about fears and worries – you can even share your box and the information inside, to get the conversation started.

(continue on next page)

Stress Lesson 5: Activity #1

Worries & Fears

Fear / Worry #1

What am I concerned about?

What's the worst thing that could happen?

What's the best?

Is there anything I can do about this problem?

Who can I ask for help – or talk to – about this fear or worry?

(continue on next page)

Stress Lesson 5: Activity #1

Worries & Fears

Fear / Worry #2

What am I concerned about?

What's the worst thing that could happen?

What's the best?

Is there anything I can do about this problem?

Who can I ask for help – or talk to – about this fear or worry?



Stress Lesson 6
Puzzle Solvers

Lesson overview

This Stress Lesson is designed to help students learn problem solving skills. Learning to problem solve helps students gain emotional control. It helps them know they have the ability to make choices that can affect positive outcomes.

Encouraging problem-solving in the classroom creates many benefits: students become more responsible and less authority-dependent; teachers have more time to teach; and everyone enjoys a more cooperative classroom environment.

The goal of this lesson is to teach students to think critically about different kinds of problems – and, most important, to break problems down into smaller steps and opportunities that can be managed proactively.

Lesson includes:

Activity Sheet–The Puzzle Planner: helps guide students through different strategies and ways to manage and think about their problems.

Behind the Lesson:

- Problem solving is an important skill for mental health because problems that don't go away can take a toll on our well being. Left unsolved, a small problem can become a big problem. Problem solving can have a number of benefits including: better functioning at school, higher self esteem and higher life satisfaction.
- Through effective discipline, children can learn to make positive choices, learn problem solving skills, and learn values of respect and responsibility.
- When you model healthy coping strategies, children learn by example. Figure out what the problem is and make it manageable. If we teach kids to identify people who frustrate them, places where stress usually rises and things that provoke the intensity of the stress, they can learn when and how to avoid these stressors.
- Students tend to learn coping patterns by observing how friends and classmates deal with difficult situations.

Lesson plan suggestions:

- This lesson can be assigned as an independent classroom assignment as a follow-up to the Lesson #5: Worries and Fears.
- Ask students to choose a fear or worry from their box and use the Activity Sheet: Puzzle Planner to work through it.
- Alternatively, this lesson can be worked into a classroom theme by asking students to break into groups and brainstorm problems that are relevant to them — or to choose a topic that relates to a theme the class is studying (environment, healthy living, etc.)
- In small groups or teams, students can work through the Puzzle Planner – and if time permits, can present their ideas back to the class.

Variation:

- Books are another great way of exploring the issue of stressors, coping strategies and problem solving. If you're reading a book together as a class, you can focus on the way one of the characters in the story handles the problems they face. The class discussion will help students identify stressors and coping strategies, but can also teach students how to evaluate the effectiveness of their own approach to problem solving. This approach can also be used as part of a book report assignment.

Discussion Guide / Talking points:

- Today, we're going to talk about being good Problem Solvers. Before we start thinking about how to solve problems, though, it would be helpful for us to think of what the word "problem" means to us.
- Ask students to define the word "problem". Remind them that a problem is really "a puzzle to be solved."
- Sometimes when you have a problem or a concern – it can feel overwhelming, like you don't even know where or how to start trying to solve it. Sometimes you need help from other people.
- It can help to think about the problem from different angles and break it down. Then, you can think through it and make a plan.
- Let's think of some examples of problems that come up for students:

Classroom Example:

You could ask: "Imagine you have a spelling test tomorrow, but when you get home from school, you realize you have forgotten to bring your spelling book."

Ask students; How would it make you feel?

Students might say: "My day would be ruined. I would feel like a loser for forgetting my book, and I would worry that my parents would be mad at me. I would not know how I would be able to study"

Ask the group to generate alternative ways of perceiving the problem (e.g., "It's not that big of a deal. Everybody forgets things. It was an honest mistake. I'm sure I can find a way to study").

Then ask the group to brainstorm steps they might take to solve the problem – what creative ways can they think of to tackle the problem? (e.g., call a friend to see if they can study with them, go in early to school the next morning, etc.)

- I'm going to hand out an Activity Sheet that is a Problem Solving Planner – it helps take you through the steps that might help you break down the problem and solve it.
- Let's read through it together and then I'd like you / the teams to work on a problem to see if it helps you create some solutions.

Teacher Tip:

Try to model problem solving as you go through your day in the classroom, speaking aloud as you deal with an issue and take steps to resolve it.

- Here are some questions you can use to guide the discussion if analyzing characters in a book being read in class:
  - What is the problem that xxx is dealing with?
  - Has anything like that ever happened to you?
  - How did the problem make xxx feel?
  - Have you ever felt that way before?
  - Did xxx have any choice or control over this problem?
  - What did xxx do to feel better or to change this problem?
  - Could this response be harmful or dangerous to xxx or to someone else?
  - How well did the solution that xxx tried work out?
  - What other things might xxx have tried to solve the problem?
  - How do you think xxx would act if they were (cut in front of in line; pushed by someone else; left out of a game…)?

Additional Reading and Links:

Promoting Problem Solving Skills in Elementary Mathematics
http://teachingtoday.glencoe.com/howtoarticles/promoting-problem-solving-skills-in-elementary-mathematics,

Creative Problem Solving in the Classroom: A Teacher's Guide to Using CPS Effectively in Any Classroom.
McIntosh, J., Meacham, A.W. Profrock Press, Waco, Texas, 1991.

How To Become an Effective Problem Solver.
www.About.com
http://specialed.about.com/od/teacherstrategies/ht/problemsolving.htm

Cooperative Problem-Solving in the Classroom. Tudge, J. Caruso, D. ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education Urbana IL, 1989.
http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9213/cooperative.htm

How You Can Help Children Solve Problems. Scholastic Resources for Teachers.
http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=12045

Why Teach Problem Solving? New Zealand Maths.
http://nzmaths.co.nz/why-teach-problem-solving?parent_node=

Coping Skills for Kids. Brain Works Project
http://www.copingskills4kids.net/Coping_Skills___Tools.html - Learning_to_Cope_by_Observing_Others

How did you use this Lesson?

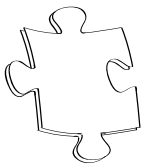
Share your Experiences.

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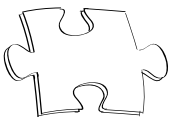
Stress Lesson 6: Activity #1

Puzzle Solvers

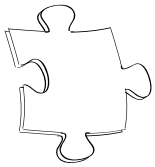
Puzzle Planner



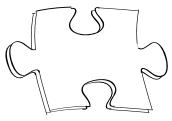
What problem do I want to work on?



How does the problem make me feel?



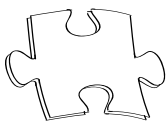
What do I have control over about the problem?



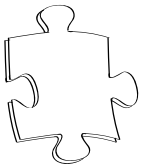
What don't I have control over about the problem?



What's the worst thing that could happen?



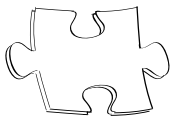
What's the best?



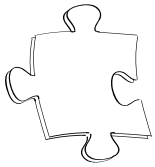
What do I think will REALLY happen?

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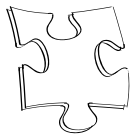
Puzzle Planner (cont'd)



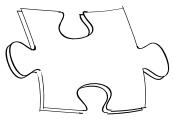
What are some ways I can try to solve the problem?



Which solution do I want to try?



Who can I ask for help – or talk to – about this problem?



How did it work out?

My Plan:

What are three things that I can do immediately to help me learn more about – or start to – solve this problem?

1

2

3

Remember:

You don't have to solve every problem on your own. Sometimes you need help.
And if you do, talking about your feelings can be the first step twoard getting it.



Stress Lesson 7

Express Yourself to Bust Stress!

Lesson overview

This Stress Lesson is a fun way to review and reinforce previous lessons — and is designed to help students explore creative self-expression as an effective "stress buster."

The goal of this lesson is to encourage students to connect the key learnings from Stress Lessons # 1- # 6 to think critically about the kinds of stress relievers that work for them, and to try new ones.

Lesson includes:

- **Activity Sheet – Stress Busters:** Helps students to think about, explore and plan ways of tackling their stress through creative self-expression.

Behind the Lesson:

- Evidence shows that the creative process of art therapy helps people release emotions, uncovers anger, reduce feelings of guilt, facilitates impulse control, increases self-awareness and insight
- Art, music, movement, writing and drama are all safe, concrete ways to encourage children this age to express inner emotions and feelings.

Lesson plan suggestions:

This lesson can take on different forms of creative expression. It's up to you to choose the one you prefer for your class. Here are some ideas to inspire you.

- Express it through writing
  - This lesson can be integrated into an independent journaling project;
  - The lesson can also be used as a team-based, interactive learning module by asking students to create an "Expression Wall" that highlights stressful situations they feel and their suggestions / ideas for ways of managing each stressor. The Expression Wall can feature artwork, poems, stories and more. Alternately, the Expression Wall can be positioned as a place for students to anonymously share their stressors. Students will release some stress by writing down their problems, and they will learn what their classmates find stressful. An expression wall may be particularly helpful during stressful times of the school year (e.g., before the holidays or before an important test).
- Express it through art
  - Build a mural with your students and have each student make their own square with quilts or paint
- Express it by getting your students to create a script for a play or video
- Express it through music by creating a song or dance

Discussion Guide / Talking points:

- Expressive art means to discover feelings about ourselves and to express them through visual art, movement, sound, writing, or drama.

- Self expression allows people to distinguish themselves from others, to reflect their own needs and beliefs and validate their own self concepts.
- We all have different and personal ways of expressing ourselves, and self-expression comes more easily for some than it does for others.
- If you think you're not good at expressing yourself, you may start to feel frustrated and stressed. That's normal and it's important to remember that you don't have to be a great singer, dancer, artist, or writer for it to make you feel good when you're doing it.
- For many people, self expression through the arts can be a helpful way to release stress and feelings privately without worrying about what anyone else thinks.
- Using creativity and self-expression has a long history, and you'll already know some famous people who have used self-expression to cope with the difficulties they were facing.
- Think about Anne Frank, who wrote what became a famous diary while she was in hiding for two years with her family during the Nazi occupation of Holland during the Second World War. She wasn't allowed to go outside, and had to hide in a few small rooms and try not to make any noise. Anne Frank started writing in her diary on her 13th birthday, and it became her best friend. She wrote in her diary "The nicest part is being able to write down all my thoughts and feelings; otherwise I'd absolutely suffocate."
- Or Beethoven, one of the most famous and influential composers of all time, whose work many of you are probably familiar with. He became profoundly deaf during his life, but continued to produce great works, which he himself could not hear. Some of his biographers have said that while he was very depressed about losing his hearing, that his art and self-expression through music was what gave his life meaning and kept him going.
- Can you think of an athlete, rapper, singer, musician and/or author who communicates about stressful situations through their art?

Additional Reading and Links:

Managing stress: principles and strategies for health and wellbeing. Seaward, B. Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning. 2006
http://books.google.com/books?id=I9B4dG4XJ8AC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false

Building Resiliency to Childhood Trauma Through Arts-based Learning.
Smilan, C., Childhood Education, 2009
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3614/is_200901/ai_n39229519/

Art For health's sake: art can provide healing for the total being. Walker, L. Art Business News. December 2005
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0HMU/is_12_32/ai_n15998931/

Why is Play Important? Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development, Creative Development. Isenberg, J.P., Jalongo, M.R, 2006
http://www.education.com/reference/article/importance-play--social-emotional/

How did you use this Lesson?

Share your Experiences.

We'd love to hear how you used this Stress Lesson in your classroom. Share your feedback at morethanmedication.ca/StressLessons

Stress Lesson 7: Activity #1

Express Yourself to Bust Stress!

Stress Busting

Today, your mission is to be your own personal Stress Buster.

On the left side of the sheet, write down some of the things that stress you out.

On the right of the sheet share your best idea on how to Bust that Stress!

#1 Stressful Situation	Stress Buster

#2 Stressful Situation	Stress Buster

#3 Stressful Situation	Stress Buster

Parent's Guide



"There's a wonderful and powerful window of time developmentally – between ages 10 and 12, before the teenage years – where parents and teachers can make a lifelong difference in helping children grow up to be emotionally healthy and well.

It's an opportunity to help children learn problem solving, stress management skills and become more self-aware – and this is a gift that can help them today and for the rest of their lives." – *Robin C. Alter, Ph.D., Child Psychologist, author of Anxiety and the Gift of Imagination, panelist, OPA, CPA, APA Member, CPF Trustee.*

Experts say stress can be contagious.

While some stress is normal and can even be useful, today's families now face more stress than ever before.

If children can learn to respond to stress in a healthy and constructive way early on, they will be more resilient and better able to cope with whatever life sends their way. Parents and caregivers are often in the best position to teach their children life-long stress management skills, and there are many strategies that can help.

In fact, successfully managing stressful situations or events enhances a child's ability to cope today and in the future.

Whether your child is feeling stress from a normal everyday stressor or from something out of the ordinary, you can help him or her cope with stress reactions by showing them effective stress management techniques.

Introducing Stress Lessons

Stress Lessons is a free resource for Canadian educators and families to help grade 4, 5 and 6 students learn how to manage stress today, and for the rest of their lives. The research-based program was developed in collaboration with a range of Canadian experts including educators, parents, counselors, stress experts and psychologists.

What will you find in this Parent Guide:

- Who developed this program?
- What is stress?
- How to recognize it in your children
- What you can do at home to help your children deal with stress
- When is stress too much?
- Stress can be contagious – dealing with your own stress
- Stress Lessons in the classroom

Who developed this program?

Stress Lessons was created by the Psychology Foundation of Canada in collaboration with Pfizer Canada.

The Psychology Foundation of Canada is a national registered charity dedicated to sharing psychological knowledge. The Foundation develops, promotes and supports programs that help educate Canadians on how to understand and manage stress. The Psychology Foundation also offers an acclaimed series of stress management resources for younger children that can be accessed online at psychologyfoundation.org

Pfizer Canada's More than Medication preventative health and wellness program reflects Pfizer's belief that it takes more than medication to be truly healthy. The More than Medication wellness initiative provides free, made-in-Canada health and well-being tools, information and inspiration. Learn more at morethanmedication.ca

Stress Lessons Advisory Panel

This resource has been developed with the help of the following experts:

Dr. Robin Alter
An experienced child and family psychologist with over 30 years experience who specializes in childhood anxiety and stress. Dr. Alter's first book: *Anxiety and the Gift of Imagination* is now available.

The Psychology Foundation of Canada thanks Dr. Alter for generously donating her ideas and suggestions on classroom activities for this initiative.

Eli Bay
Eli Bay has been helping Canadians relieve and manage stress for over 30 years, as the Founder and President of The Relaxation Response Institute in Toronto.

Marietta Bloch
Marietta is the Director of Education Services at Let's Talk Science, a national charitable organization dedicated to improving science literacy through leadership, innovative learning programs, research and advocacy. She was a founding co-chair of the Science & Technology Awareness Network.

Judy Hills
Executive Director of The Psychology Foundation of Canada, Judy, a former teacher, has worked in the not for profit sector for many years and served on the Advisory Board for CIHR Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction.

Dr. Bill Hogarth
Dr. Hogarth is the President of Education, Research and Development Institute (ERDI) Canada – and a former Director of Education for the York Region District School Board.

Charlotte Holtan
A retired educator, Charlotte was instrumental in the founding of Victoria's non-profit Community Options for Children and Families Society.

Heidi Lenet
Montreal Physical Education teacher, Heidi Lenet, is dedicated to keeping kids active and inspiring them to make healthier choices.

Patrick Niiya
For more than a decade, Patrick has been inspiring grade six Montreal-area students with his energetic and innovative teaching style.

Catherine Willinsky
A program consultant with the Psychology Foundation of Canada, Catherine works in mental health promotion in schools and has worked extensively with the Foundation's *Kids Have Stress Too!* program.

With special thanks to:

Dr. David Posen	Family Physician, Stress Management and Lifestyle Counsellor
Denise Marek	Stress/Anxiety Expert
Yvonne Clarke	Family Therapy and Counsellor, McGill University Health Centre
Dr. Tracy Vaillancourt	PhD, Relationship & youth Stressors, Teen bullying and victimization
Kathy Jurgens	Canadian Mental Health Association
Angela Shim	Nutritionist, Vitality Coach

What is stress?

Stress is an automatic reaction that happens in your body when there is a perceived threat. The release of chemicals (such as the hormone adrenaline) sharpens your senses, focuses attention, quickens breathing, dilates blood vessels, increases heart rate, and tenses your muscles. This is the "fight or flight" response that prepares us to act quickly to tackle or avoid danger.

Stress is a normal, everyday occurrence. We tend to think of stress as a bad thing, but a certain amount of it actually helps us feel alert, energized and interested in life. However, too much stress, particularly when we don't have any control over it, can make people unhappy and can interfere with their ability to respond to everyday tasks and challenges. Stress can also lead to health problems.

Stress is like a guitar string

Just like a violin or guitar string needs to have the right amount of stress or tension to make music, we all need some stress in our lives to get us moving and motivate us to be our best. But if the string is stretched too tightly, it will break. Human beings operate similarly to the guitar string: we need just the right amount of stress to perform well and feel good, but too much stress can make us snap!

Taking control of stress

Simple stress relievers include thinking more optimistically, talking to a trusted adult, taking a breather or doing something active, like running or playing basketball.

To help your children learn more about the stress response, watch a short video with your child called *What is Stress* at morethanmedication.ca/stresslessons/parents Dr. Alter suggests encouraging your child to talk about what they were most surprised to learn about stress — and how it affects our bodies and minds.

How to recognize it in your children

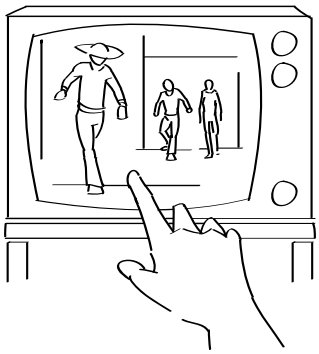
It's not always easy to recognize when kids are stressed out, short-term behavioural changes such as mood swings, acting out, changes in sleep patterns can be indications. Some kids experience physical effects, including stomachaches and headaches. Others have trouble concentrating or completing schoolwork. Still others become withdrawn or spend a lot of time alone.

To recognize possible signs of stress, anxiety and distress in your child, be on the lookout for physical clues that indicate your child may be experiencing stress:

- whining
- poor listening
- crying
- nail biting
- day dreaming
- fighting with friends and family
- being overly cautious
- poor school performance
- lack of appetite or eating more than usual
- tense muscles
- headaches or stomach-aches
- being cold
- disturbed sleep
- poor concentration
- forgetfulness
- difficulty problem-solving
- being easily distracted
- confusion

Stress Lessons Activities

Learning to manage stress can be fun for both you and your child. We've created several activities that you can do together to help cope with and manage stress.

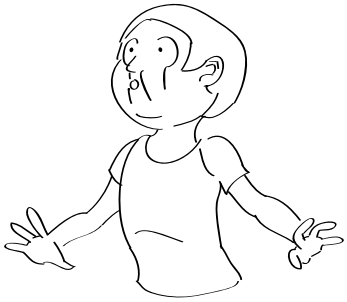


Point it Out

Movie night, story time and even just watching regular TV can be a great opportunity for your child to see how people react to stress in different ways and develop self-awareness and reflection.

How it works: During a movie, television show or story time, ask your child to point out moments when the characters are faced with stress. Ask them to think about how they managed their stress and how they might have handled things differently.

Why it works: This activity is an effective way for parents to start a discussion and encourage children to become more self-aware and reflective.



Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. This is because when you breathe deeply it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax.

How it works: Visit morethanmedication.ca/stresslessons/parents to watch a short video with your child on deep breathing. Together, you'll learn three basic deep breathing techniques from stress expert Eli Bay.

Why it works: When students practice deep breathing regularly, they learn that it's a tool they can use anytime, anywhere.



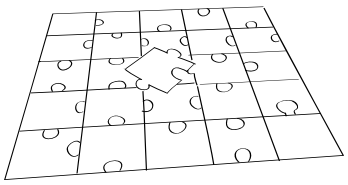
Worry Box

This exercise will help your child to think about their worries and fears in a realistic, productive way that can lessen stress and anxiety.

How it works: Invite your child to create a family Worry Box out of an old shoebox or envelope. Decorate and personalize it together. Encourage your child to write down their worries and fears and place them in the box anytime they're feeling stressed.

Why it works: The Worry Box is a great conversation starter that will help you know what your child is concerned about so that you can provide them with support. "Just talking about their concerns with their parents or a trusted adult helps children process anxiety and stress in a healthy way," explains Dr. Alter.

Puzzle Solvers

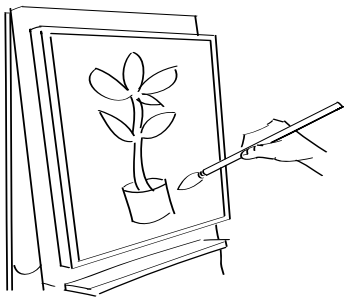


This exercise is designed to help your child learn problem solving skills. It will help your child to think critically about different kinds of problems and break them down into smaller pieces that can be managed proactively.

How it works: Sit down with your child and fill in the Puzzle Solving Activity Sheet found at the end of this guide. Use it as a family tool to talk about issues, build consensus and explore positive solutions to your child's worries.

Why it works: Problem solving can have a number of benefits including: better functioning at school, higher self-esteem, more satisfying relationships, and higher life satisfaction. This exercise teaches your child to break down problems into smaller, more manageable steps to figure out proactive solutions to their concerns.

Express Yourself



Self-expression is an important tool in learning how to recognize and manage stress. Self expression allows people to distinguish themselves from others, to reflect their own needs and beliefs and validate their own self concepts. This exercise will help you encourage your child to regularly explore journaling, drawing, art and music as a means of busting stress.

How it works: Encourage your child to set aside time everyday to explore various means of self-expression. They can write in a journal, play or listen to music, or draw. Create an Expression Wall at home where they can feature their works of art.

Why it works: Art, music, journaling and even role playing are safe, concrete ways to encourage your child to express more complex emotions and feelings.

Additional Tips and Exercises:

Get active: Physical activity is great way for your child to manage stress. Encourage them to play sports, swim, dance or anything else that gets them moving.

Connect: One of the best ways to show support, is by making time for your child because contact is a great stress reliever. Set aside time to throw a Frisbee, enjoy a family day, volunteer together or just hang out and connect.

Hug it out: Show your children that you love them with words, hugs, kisses. Play and laugh together.

Laugh and have fun: A good sense of humor can't cure all ailments, but it can help your child feel better because laugher actually causes physical changes in our bodies that help to relieve stress. Laughter fires up and then cools down the stress response and increases our heart rate and blood pressure, producing a good, relaxed feeling.

When does stress become too much?

Some stressors in a child's life may take the form of "daily hassles" that are typically short-lived. Examples include having to adjust to a new classroom schedule, meeting new people or feeling pressure to do well on a test.

Be attentive and seek professional help if:

- Stress is interfering in your child's life, stopping them from doing the things that are important
- Your child is constantly seeking abnormal amounts of reassurance
- Your child is not coping well with daily stressors
- As a parent, you would like to discuss parenting strategies and ways of increasing your child's resilience

Stress is contagious: Dealing with your own stress

Dealing with stress can be difficult. However, the most important thing to remember is that you are only in control of your own actions and reactions. And learning to deal with your own stress properly can have a profound impact on not only you, but those that are close to you as well.

If children see parents using stress-reduction tools in tense moments, they will learn by example.

Want to know how stressed you are? Take our quick quiz. Answer each of the following statements with 'yes' or 'no'.

- I feel nervous or anxious a lot.
- I take quick, shallow breaths.
- I suffer from depression and/or fatigue.
- I have chronic tension in parts of my body (raised shoulders, etc).
- I have on-going health problems (hives, headaches, indigestion, etc).

If you answered 'yes' to three or more, stress management techniques might be beneficial to you.

Dealing with your own stress in a healthy manner will have a positive effect on the people around you, especially your kids.

For more information about effective ways of dealing with stress, and about *Stress Lessons,* please visit www.morethanmedication.ca and www.psychologyfoundation.org

Stress Lessons in the classroom.

Stress Lessons features a free classroom resource designed to help educators build and teach self-regulation and resiliency skills in their grade 4 to 6 students.

The Classroom Tool kit is comprised of 7 Lessons.

- Lesson #1: What Is Stress?
- Lesson #2: Stressed Or Not Stressed?
- Lesson #3: Deep Breathing
- Lesson #4: Hooked By Stress!
- Lesson #5: Worries and Fears
- Lesson #6: Puzzle Solvers
- Lesson #7: Express Yourself To Bust Stress!

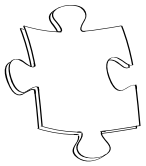
If you're interested in reviewing the full lesson content, Stress Lessons can be downloaded online at psychologyfoundation.org or morethanmedication.ca And if you think this would be a good resource at your child's school, share Stress Lessons with their educators.

stress lessons

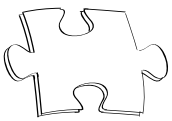
Activity Sheet

Puzzle Solvers

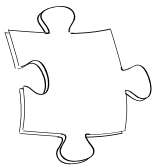
Puzzle Planner



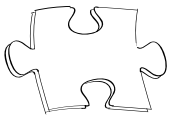
What problem do I want to work on?



How does the problem make me feel?



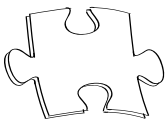
What do I have control over about the problem?



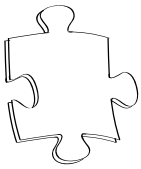
What don't I have control over about the problem?



What's the worst thing that could happen?



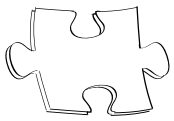
What's the best?



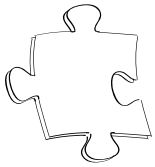
What do I think will REALLY happen?

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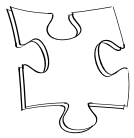
Puzzle Planner (cont'd)



What are some ways I can try to solve the problem?



Which solution do I want to try?



Who can I ask for help – or talk to – about this problem?



How did it work out?

My Plan:

What are three things that I can do immediately to help me learn more about – or start to – solve this problem?

1

2

3

Remember:

You don't have to solve every problem on your own. Sometimes you need help.
And if you do, talking about your feelings can be the first step twoard getting it.

Date

Parents Update

Stress Lessons: Let's Learn About Stress

Even the most nurturing school and home environment can't completely protect children from a range of every day stressors that can be both challenging and motivating.

While stress is a necessary part of development and learning, experts say Canadian students now face more stress than ever before due to the faster pace of modern life, school demands and busy family schedules.

The good news is that building emotional health and resiliency can help students concentrate, learn and interact more successfully.

Over the next few weeks, we'll be talking to our students about this important issue in a way that's developmentally appropriate and validated by Canadian child psychologists, educators and parents.

Attached you'll find a Parent's Guide that shares more information about Stress Lessons and he strategies and problem-solving thinking that we'll be teaching over the next few weeks.

Stress Lessons is a free classroom resource created by the Psychology Foundation of Canada, in partnership with Pfizer Canada. If you're interested in learning more, Stress Lessons can be downloaded at **psychologyfoundation.org** or online at **morethanmedication.ca**

Since our classroom discussions could spark questions from your child, I've attached a Stress Lessons Parent's Guide that offers suggestions for games, activities and strategies that will help you amplify the learning at home.

Like you, we're devoted to helping Canada's next generation grow up healthy and equipped with all the tools they need to live healthy, balanced lives.

Please don't hesitate to call or email me if you have any questions or feedback.

Sincerely,

Name
Contact info

Congratulations on completing Stress Lessons!

We hope you learned some great tips and techniques to help you manage stressful feelings and situations.

Stress Lessons is dedicated to sharing information about how stress affects your health... and what to do about it.

stress lessons



Pfizer

Working together for a healthier world™

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THE PSYCHOLOGY FOUNDATION OF CANADA

LA FONDATION DE PSYCHOLOGIE DU CANADA

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