

User's Guide



Straight Talk About Stress

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INTRODUCTION

World events seem to be moving faster. Life is getting more hectic for everyone including teenagers. While growing up was never a breeze for any generation, the current population of young people faces a barrage of media exposure, life and death sexual issues, heightened expectations plus an uncertain financial future. It can be tough to handle. On the flip side, in part from computerization and the tightening of the gender gap, today's teens have a wealth of opportunities and choices not available to their parents.

One result of this teen profile is increased stress across the board. Life isn't about to change and stress isn't about to go away. The key is to learn to manage stress and the harmful by-products that go with an interesting life. A person first needs to recognize the signs of stress and then practice skills that will reduce the negative effects of stress.

It can be done.



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EDUCATIONAL GOALS

After watching **CHILL: Straight Talk About Stress** and working through the *User's Guide*, students will be able to:

1. Understand that stress is not all bad; that some stress is beneficial.
2. Identify the symptoms of stress.
3. Learn the skills that can help a person manage stress by working with the CHILL formula.

Stress vs. Depression

It's important to distinguish between stress and depression. Stress appears as a period of tension brought on by specific events. Depression is more severe and the symptoms usually become a longer lasting pattern of behavior. This video and user's guide is intended to present information about handling day-to-day stress or beating the blues. When stress moves to the level of depression, professional counseling should be considered.

VIDEO OVERVIEW

Stress is a lot like playing a guitar. A guitar plays the best music when the strings are neither too loose nor too tight but at just the right tension. Too loose and the sound is flat. Too tight and the music screeches. It's the same for people. With no stress at all you could creep along like a slug. With too much, you can become frazzled, even snap like a guitar string. The key is to aim for the middle and find a physical, emotional and mental balance.

Causes

There can be as many causes of stress as there are people to experience stress. Some of the major stress triggers for teens include personal relationships, school, trying to meet unrealistic expectations, time management and change.

Symptoms

Sometimes it's easier to identify the symptoms of stress than it is to pinpoint the causes. Some common symptoms are headaches, sleeping too much or too little, eating too much or not enough, not being able to concentrate, feeling lonely, depressed or worthless, worrying, getting angry, getting sick, using tobacco, alcohol or drugs to feel better.

Negative Coping

To mask stressful feelings, many people drink caffeine, eat junk food, smoke, drink and use drugs. These approaches may work in the very short run but eventually they make the body too weak to fight off stress. Plus fighting an addiction is a stress in itself. Withdrawing, rebelling or becoming violent can create an added set of problems. There are better ways to get a grip on what is happening.

The CHILL Factor

A good way to manage stress is to *CHILL*. It's more than a word. *CHILL* is a formula for beating the blues.

C - Communicate.

Speech. Not being understood or taken seriously by others can be very stressful. Learn to say what you mean and mean what you say by planning your words and delivering them in a confident way.

Writing. Keep a journal or write a letter to someone and tear it up. This can help you understand what is stressing you out, get it off your chest and begin to develop a solution to your problem.

Supportive Relationships. It's important to keep open the lines of communication with friends and family members who can give you support during stressful times. Consider talking with a school counselor or community therapist.

H - Health

Diet. Eating a healthy diet following the food pyramid nutrition guidelines will build up your body's stress-fighting reserves.

Exercise. Exercise is perhaps the best kept stress secret because after an extended exercise session, your body releases beta endorphins into your system to help you feel more relaxed. Exercising can also take your mind off your problems as well as offer a good way to be with friends.

I - Image.

Your image is how the world sees you and how you see yourself. Trying to be perfect in every area piles on stress. Learn to appreciate the unique person that you are and don't let others inflict an unwanted value system on you.

L - Lighten Up.

Have some fun and relax. Practicing visualization is another way to relax by seeing restful pictures in your mind. Books and audiotapes offer help getting started with visualization.

L - Little By Little.

Practicing time management skills such as planning ahead and making a "To-Do List" can help you avoid the stress brought on by frantically trying to meet deadlines.

STRESS EXERCISES

Garbage Can Ice Breaker

The garbage can exercise can be used as an ice breaker to start a discussion about stress. It also offers a way for students to experience how writing can help them identify and work through problems.

1. Give each student a small slip of paper or an index card.
2. Ask students to write down a problem that is causing them stress. Be sure that they do not sign the paper.
3. Walk around with a small garbage can or a waste paper basket and let students crush up and throw away their papers and problems.
4. Ask them if their problem is something they can do anything about or if it's an issue out of their control. It is helpful to understand the difference.

Visualization Ice Breaker

This exercise will help students identify the physical and emotional symptoms of stress.

1. Ask students to close their eyes and relax.
2. Then ask them to remember a time when they were under a lot of stress. Replay the situation. What was happening? Who said what to whom? How did their bodies feel? Let them think about the questions for a few minutes.
3. Ask them to open their eyes. Initiate a discussion about what kind of stress symptoms they experienced.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What types of situations are stressful to teens? What things cause you stress?

2. How have you felt and what did you do when you were under stress?

3. What are some harmful ways people cope with stress? Why don't they work?

4. Is stress all bad? Can you think of a situation where stress might be beneficial?

5. What does CHILL stand for and how can each step help teens lessen the harmful effects of stress?

C. _____

H. _____

I. _____

L. _____

L. _____

6. If you could make a personal action plan to reduce the stress in your life, what would you do first?

MORE ABOUT STRESS

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