



Stress Management Lesson Plan

Introduction

Ask students in the large group, or have them think/write, pair and share:

- Rate your current stress level from 1-10
- How do you know when you're stressed?
 - What are the physical and emotional attributes of being stressed?
 - What are you feeling or thinking when you are stressed?
 - What are you not doing when you're stressed?

Share with students that the number one impediment to academic success, as reported by students, is stress (often caused by poor time management). Explain that today you will seek to develop positive coping skills.

Distress/What causes stress?

Write this equation on the board: **Stress = Demands > Resources** (stress is caused by our demands (stressors) exceeding our resources (positive coping skills))

Ask students about their reactions to this equation. What does it mean? What can be done to alleviate stress?

Have students complete the *How Vulnerable Are you to Stress? Inventory* (available on SharePoint) to determine their demands/resources.

Everyone is vulnerable to stress, because stress is a part of life.

Ask students: If you could remove all of your stress, would you?

- Explain value of some stress, but that it has diminishing returns (for example the bell curve: from lack of motivation at one end, to optimal performance at the top, to distress at the other end)

Look at the results of the inventory and discuss:

- How strong are your demands?
- What can you control?
- How much time do we spend on things we can't control?
- What are you doing to cope with those demands?
- What can you do to add to your resources?
- How often do we ask for help from our support?

Additional talking points

- Relationships: #1 protective factor against stress, but unhealthy relationships cause or contribute to stress. Seek a balanced relationships that are supportive and assertive .

- Substance use: Diminishing rewards; alcohol worsens depression, caffeine worsens anxiety, neither solved the other

Practice some relaxation training (see following pages) as a positive coping skill

After the exercise, ask students: What is your stress level now on a scale of 1-10? How will you help yourself relax/add to your resources/develop positive coping skills in the future?

Positive coping skills:

- Healthy relationships
- Having things to look forward to
- Reflection time
- Sense of purpose
- Spirituality
- Humor
- Exercise
- Reframe negative thoughts
- Change demands
- Build resources
- Positive thinking
- Relaxation

Assignment/Reflective writing in class – How can you tweak the demands on you so that you are experiencing less negative stress? Develop an action plan by thinking about: Which demands can and will you change? Which resources will you develop/seek to cope with those demands? How will you reframe your thinking?