


Spring 5-17-2019

## Stress Management: A Group Curriculum for Female Adolescents

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Stress Management: A Group Curriculum for Female Adolescents

A Plan B Project Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty of  
Minnesota State University Moorhead

By

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In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science in  
Counseling and Student Affairs

April 16, 2019

Moorhead, Minnesota

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### **Abstract**

In recent years, research has found that adolescents are experiencing stress at an astounding rate, even compared to adults. With a thorough review of the literature, it has been found that schools in the United States are experiencing an adolescent stress epidemic. Furthermore, students are experiencing stress in ways beyond an academic arena. With that being said, there seems to be a connection between stress leading to anxiety, as well as stress having a profound affect for students who have experienced traumatic experiences. Additionally, the research has shown that there are structural differences within a developing brain that may cause adolescents to perceive and experience stress in a different way than older individuals. School counselors have the responsibility to facilitate and support students in the group setting who are experiencing various stressors in their lives. The literature illustrates adolescents who foster positive coping strategies early on, are more likely to lead a healthier life.

### **Introduction**

Stress is a normal reaction the body undergoes when change occurs. Stress can arise from one's environment, one's body, or from one's thoughts or beliefs. Even positive life experiences can result in feelings of stress. Children and adolescents in our world today are experiencing a plethora of stress. Academics and the rigor of school can result in an abundance of stress for school aged children and adolescents, however, many students are also facing stressful situations that arise from many other issues beyond academics as well.

My goal for this group of young adolescent aged students is for them to be better manage stress in their lives. Students must first be able to identify the negative stress in their lives. Students must also be able to understand how stress works and how it affects one's body, both inside and outside. Finally, students must learn strategies and techniques, so they can better manage and cope with the negative aspects of stress.

With my undergraduate degree in Health Education, I am passionate about the topic of mental health. Educators, like myself, are seeing an ever-increasing need for mental health support in our school systems. Therefore, health related topics and issues have fueled my desire to build upon my bachelor's degree as a health educator, to also become a school counselor. Health education in our schools provides awareness regarding the topic of mental health and therefore it assists in reducing the stigma. It also educates students on various mental health concerns.

However, I have learned from my experience in teaching Health Education that students typically are only presented with one unit on mental health. The information presented within that unit is very educational and beneficial as it raises awareness and reduces stigma related to

mental health, however, it is not therapeutic for students. Students need time and therapeutic relationships to process through what it is in their own life that is causing them stress. Students need opportunities to develop strategies and techniques to overcome and work through their stress. Stress management groups give students the collaborative opportunity to form relationships, create universality among a common group of striving students, and it also allows the necessary time for students to process through stressful life events and experiences.

This past summer as I was teaching Health Education to high school students, I performed a survey. In the results, I discovered that 12 out of 12 students considered themselves highly stressed as they completed their first year of high school. Due to the ever-increasing need for mental health support and the need for our youth to successfully handle stress, I believe that stress management groups are a vital component to ensure secondary students receive the mental health support that they are seriously in need of. Stress management groups are a means to reach students whose stress goes beyond concerns with their basic academic subjects. Many students live with concerns and stress related to their home life, some have experienced one or more traumatic events during their lifetime, some may be living with parents who suffer from addictions while others may be living in poverty. Some, if not many, adolescents may be coping with stress related to several of these and other factors that challenge them daily.

As previously stated, the goal of my stress management group will be to focus on helping students identify and understand common thoughts and feelings associated with the experience of stress. It will also assist students on how to recognize and identify stress, how to develop positive coping strategies, and it will help them learn through the shared experiences of other students in similar circumstances. Management reduction groups focus on coping skills through supporting students on overcoming stress. These types of groups allow students the opportunity

to learn, grow, and succeed regarding wellness in many domains. With its wide array of applications, group reduction work in schools is an essential service that counselors utilize in addressing students' academic, social, and emotional concerns. Stress management groups provide great opportunities to enhance students' personal and academic development and increase student success. Additionally, peer-to-peer interactions within groups allow for students to observe and learn from one another in a controlled therapeutic environment.

The literature describes an ever-increasing rate of stress levels among our adolescent students in the United States. The American Psychological Association (2014), noted students experiencing rates of stress at a higher level than adults. Therefore, the need for positive coping skills through stress management groups in our schools is evident. Moreover, it was discovered through research conducted by McCormac (2016) that there is a connection between anxiety and stress and illustrated the idea that students with post traumatic experiences are greatly affected by stress. Furthermore, the discovery of structural differences in the brain may cause adolescents to experience stress at a high level according to (Roaten and Roaten, 2010). The literature reveals outcomes of positive versus negative coping strategies and the importance of the development of positive coping strategies. When students are better able to respond to stress early in their lives, it sets them up with a foundation for healthy coping throughout their lifetime.



### **The Epidemic of Adolescent Stress**

Professionals in school districts across the country are seeing the increasing need for further mental health services. This is especially true in areas related to stress and anxiety. One self-reporting study conducted by the American Psychological Association (2014), outlines the association between the rates at which adults are experiencing stress compared to the rate at which teenagers are experiencing stress. The study reported results for the 1,018 teens that were surveyed, ages 13-17, whom lived within the United States. The survey self-reported measures of stress on a 10-point scale (0 being not stressed and 10 being unbearable stress), as well as a 10 item Likert Scale (often, sometimes, never) on various stress related statements.

The results indicated that teens report their stress level during the school year to be a five point eight versus five point one for adults. Adolescents perception of a healthy level of stress by teens was a three point nine and for adults it was a three point six (American Psychological Association, 2014). The level of stress was said to be affecting their healthy behaviors and creating feelings of being overwhelmed, sad, or depressed, as well as increasing their level of fatigue. Furthermore, a broader United States study involving teens regarding the management of stress concluded that 27% of adolescents say they experienced extreme stress, 55% reported moderate stress, and 34% expected stress to increase in the coming year (Jayson, 2014).

One cross sectional study conducted by Gomez et al. (2018) analyzed stress levels using the Nowack Stress Profile Questionnaire, which asked students' their sources and response to stress from 335 students aged 15-19 in Mexico. It was discovered that exams were the number one stressor, with 50% of students identifying it as a stressor. Choosing a career came in number two with 13% identifying it as a stressor, and family problems came in at number three with 10%

percent of adolescents classifying family problems as a stressor. When it came to coping mechanisms, most responded that listening to music was their go to coping mechanism, followed by talking out the problem with someone they trust.

Regardless of the vast numbers that reveal adolescents in our country are stressed, it's also critical to examine the students' academic, social, and emotional functioning. The American Psychological Association (2014), also reported that the stress is affecting performance in all aspects of life. As many as 59% of teens report struggling to balance their activities, 40% of teens have neglected responsibilities at home, 32% of teens say they experience headaches, and 26% of teens report being short tempered with classmates when under stress. It is clear that stress is affecting students' performance at home and at school, both socially and physically.

As school counselors, it is our role to support academic success and healthy social relationships. When stress management groups are formed, academic stress coping skills can be acquired, as well as strategies for managing stress. Management of stress can improve physical health as well as allow for positive social relationships. Parker (2015), suggests an individual's mindset may be able to shape one's response to stress, allowing individuals to perform better. Consequently, stress can be viewed as a normal and positive experience, rather than a negative aspect in one's life. Educating students on how mindset affects stress may help students see how the way we think about stress can lead to reduced stress response, biologically speaking within our bodies. Overall, not only are teenagers identifying the concept of stress as prevalent in their lives, they are relating it to feelings of sadness and decreased involvement in healthy activities.

### **The Relationship between Stress and Anxiety**

There is a clear-cut connection between stress and anxiety. Noting the connection between stress and anxiety definitely helps professional school counselors recognize that

students who are struggling with anxiety, may unconditionally be first and foremost struggling with stress. McCormac (2016), identified students' who have trouble managing their stress, may later develop feelings of anxiety that spiral out of control. Increased stress and anxiety groups are necessary when planning to support our students. The very least a professional can do is create a stress management group with individuals in need of support in addressing stress management. This provides an opportunity to intervene with many of those students who are struggling with stress that, quite possibly, may lead to further issues of anxiety with these individuals.

McCormac (2016), also discussed how there is currently a stress and anxiety crisis in our schools. More than a quarter of teens report experiencing extreme stress during the school year. Extreme levels result in students feeling overwhelmed, having health problems related to the release of stress hormones in the body and sometimes even contemplating suicide. Stress is a trigger for anxiety and perfectionism. The need for management groups is evident, as a quarter of teens report experiencing extreme stress during the school year. We learn that stress may be a trigger for anxiety, which is why intervention regarding stress management is important in further preventing overwhelming feelings of anxiety among youth and adolescents.

### **Adolescent Brain Development and Stress**

If adolescents are now experiencing stress at even higher rates than adults, then it's crucial to examine the link or connection between stress and the development of the adolescent brain. We know that adolescent brain development is occurring within the prefrontal lobe, the hippocampus, and the amygdala parts of the brain. The hypothalamus region of the brain is responsible for memory, while the amygdala portion of the brain is responsible for motion and survival instincts. The prefrontal cortex region is still maturing during adolescence, and it is

involved in the action of stress response. One study tries to explain what puts this age group at greater risk for potentially harmful effects of sustained stress. In accordance with research from Eiland and Romeo (2014), factors converge during adolescence that lead to this stage of development. This is a sensitive period in regard to the occurrence of stress, specifically, in regard to microbiological processes. Furthermore, the maturation of the brain in the stress responsive region, hormonal activity, and changes or stressful situations in one's life during this time may cause heightened activity in relationship to stress.

(Roaten and Roaten, 2010) examined how the prefrontal cortex is associated with logic and reasoning, and it is the last area of the brain to develop. As a result, instead of responding to stress in a logical way, as adults can do because they have a developed prefrontal cortex, adolescents may react more emotionally to stress due to the fact that their prefrontal cortex is still developing. Although more research is needed on how biological processes within stress affect teenage brains differently, it is clear that many factors within the structure of an adolescent's brain may lead to an increased response to stress for adolescents. Further research is needed to determine the risks associated when high levels of stress that are present during the adolescence growth period.

### **Biological Stress Response**

In order to understand the impact of stress and the potential long-term effects correlated with stress, it's important to understand stress response in the human body. When an individual encounter's a perceived stress, a physiological pathway is initiated at the time the brain detects the threat to the individual. When stress is experienced by an individual, there are two systems that are activated to reduce the threat of the stress. In the first system, the release of epinephrine

and norepinephrine, triggers a flight or fight response, which was initiated by the activation of sympathetic nervous system (Romeo, 2013).

The second system within the stress response, in reaction to the perceived threat, is activated by the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. In short, the adrenal glands are triggered to release cortisol. When cortisol is released within the body, there is a series of actions that include increased activity of immune system and decreased learning and memory (Girdano, et al., 2013). The release of cortisol within the body causes us to feel stress from our stressors in life. The long-term activation of the stress response system and the overexposure or constant release of cortisol can disrupt body processes. This process, in turn, puts one at further risk for other health issues such as: anxiety, depression, digestive problems, heart problems, weight gain, along with memory and concentration impairment. Therefore, it's important that after one's body is triggered by a stressful situation (Alarm Stage), an individual utilizes stress management coping techniques to help the body repair itself in the resistance stage.

During the resistance stage, the body is attempting to return to a state of normalcy. Cortisol levels will decrease as heart rate and blood pressure begin to normalize. When coping strategies are used during the resistance stage, this prevents an individual's body from entering the exhaustion stage. If stress is not controlled during the resistance stage, one's body can enter the exhaustion stage. The exhaustion stage is a state of long-term stress. The exhaustion stage is typically when other physical health conditions will arise due to the effects of chronic stress.

### **Stress Management and Health**

Stress, if not managed and regulated, can lead to various and numerous secondary health issues. As mentioned earlier, chronic stress is part of the exhaustion stage, a component of the General Adaptation System. During the exhaustion stage, the body is chronically in a state of

alertness and releasing cortisol. The body cannot regain control to reach a level of homeostasis at this point. The goal is for individuals who encounter stress to return to homeostasis once the challenge of the stress is removed, or the person manages the situation. There are various forms of stress management, and individual differences and personal preferences should be considered when making recommendations and educating individuals about stress management (Jackson, 2013). Management and regulation of stress allows the body to more readily return to a state of homeostasis and it helps to prevent chronic stress.

Furthermore, research by Amnie (2018), found that early life stress, especially if extreme and left unresolved, is a predictor of future unhealthy habits such as: smoking, alcohol consumption, and drug dependence. Major stress in one's life can also result in an increased risk of individuals developing antisocial behavior among other adults. This indicates that there is a strong need for us to target adolescents early in their lives in order for them to develop healthy and adaptive ways to regulate stress in their lives. Adaptive coping promotes self-control, problem solving skills, and empathy. Adapting coping overall leads to more positive health outcomes.

Contrary to adaptive coping, maladaptive coping can lead to withdrawal, denial, aggression, and addiction. Vera et al. (2011), examined stressors and coping among 157 minority adolescents in a large, midwestern city. They used a brief COPE scale, a 28-item measure of coping strategies including active coping, denial, use of emotional support, venting, planning, humor, acceptance, and self-blame, rated on a Likert Scale. The results showed that students from ethnic backgrounds use more avoidant coping styles.

Moreover, research conducted by McEwen (2011), emphasizes that risky behavioral choices that affect adolescent health, are more likely to happen during times of high stress. On

the flip side, healthy habits such as physical activity, reduces stress response. Learning to effectively cope with stress from a young age in an adaptive way that works for an individual, leads to a healthier life across one's lifespan. Each adolescent may have different coping strategies that work for them. Our goal, as school counselors, is to assist individuals in discovering which techniques best help them to recognize and control the stress they are facing on a daily basis.

### **Reducers of Community Stress**

One of our important roles as school counselors is to advocate and support students through community resources, as well as collaborate with other professionals to support our students in our schools. Counselors can also address with parents the significance of parents helping with systematic exposure or desensitization to the source of their child's stress. Parents can be sensitive to their child's stressor by exposing their child to situations in which they are comfortable and in situations in which they do not feel pressure (McCormac, 2016).

Moreover, working with students on how to practice stress-reduction strategies, and therefore reduce stress, can help students prevent the damage that stress causes to an individual's brain and body. When individuals reduce stress, it also benefits their school performance and social relationships. Other professionals such as teachers and staff, as well as personal supports, such as parents, can help students with their stress management goals by supporting coping mechanisms for stress and increasing mindfulness.

Teachers can incorporate stress reduction into the classrooms by practicing mindfulness. One quasi-experimental study explored the impact of mindfulness on younger adolescence children, 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grade in Western Canada. Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor (2010) examined the impact of an implemented mindfulness education program as an extension and follow up

work of the school counselor. They implemented a mindfulness program called ME, with 139 children in an experimental group. Afterwards, students were assessed on a Likert Scale. They were assessed on skills with quieting the mind, mindful of thoughts and feelings, managing stress, and acknowledgement of self. It was found early adolescents who received the ME program showed ability to quiet the mind, manage emotions, and had a plan for managing stress, versus the control group who did not receive the mindfulness curriculum.

### **Trauma in Relation to Stress**

Nearly every school has children who have been exposed to traumatic experiences. These experiences can range from violence in the home, to abuse, to experiences with natural disasters, to neglect, and much more. The level of traumatic experiences in the general population is higher than ever imagined. It's vital for us, as school counselors, to be aware that trauma is not an event itself, but that rather it is a response to a stressful event or events in which one's ability to cope is drastically lowered. Today, with more of our students experiencing traumatic experiences and undoubtedly immense amounts of stress on their bodies, it is safe to say students who are living with trauma may have a strong need for outside therapy. Realistically, outside therapy is not plausible for all students. However, the least we can do within our schools is build rapport and positive relationships with students, provide structure and routine in a safe environment, and provide resources that include coping strategies to assist in meeting students' emotional needs.

A survey study was conducted to examine the developmental epidemiology of trauma and post-traumatic stress in a sample of 1,420 children in the ages of nine, 11, and 13. This longitudinal study followed students annually until the age of 16. The results found that more than two thirds of the children reported that they had experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime, by the age of 16. The study also revealed that 13.4 % of the children developed



some Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) symptoms (Copeland, Keeler, Angold, & Costello, 2008). Those who did develop PTS symptoms were those individuals who were affected by multiple traumas, anxiety disorders, and family adversity. Due to the fact that those children who showed some PTS symptoms were most likely to be children who experienced multiple traumas and anxiety disorders, this information allows school counselors to be aware of the serious impact and magnitude effect that multiple traumas and anxiety disorders have on individuals.

As mentioned earlier, regarding the relationship between stress and anxiety, stress can certainly be a trigger for overwhelming anxiety. One of the powerful roles that defines school counseling is that we, as counselors, are able to represent the profession in not only a reactive nature, but also from a preventative nature as well. From the preventative stand point, stress management and coping groups allow for individuals to learn strategies and skills to handle negative stress before anxiety disorders and/or trauma responses manifest within an individual.

The American Counseling Association (ACA)'s "Survivors of Stress Management Skills" recommends that counselors ask trauma and crisis survivors how they dealt with stress before the disaster and then ask them what they could do after the disaster or traumatic experience to effectively deal with the stress involved in the situation. Moreover, it's important to understand that stress management skills are appropriate, culturally sensitive, and that they do not cause re-traumatizing.

Therefore, it is crucial for school counselors to collaborate with other professionals, such as teachers and other support staff. This is important because it allows for all professionals involved in a student's school experiences. This team of professionals can distinguish collaboratively which behaviors are being displayed that may be a result of a traumatic experience and/or the buildup of stress within the student, due to their home environment. When

we, as counselors, are able to holistically see the child and how they are responding to situations throughout their day, we are able to best identify their needs and positively engage them within the group environment.

### **ASCA Development and Stress Reduction**

The main goal of the American School Counseling Association is to cultivate student success in three domains: Academic, Career, and Personal/Social. Within academic development, school counseling programs help implement strategies associated with supporting students' ability to learn. Stress education and reduction techniques that correlate with academic development include: attitudes, time and task management skills, behaviors, communication, goal setting, decision making and problem solving as they relate to current and future academic goals (American School Counseling Association, 2014).

The Career Development Standards Guide provides the framework for counselors to assist students in recognizing the necessary attitudes and career knowledge in order to make a successful transition into the working world. Stress education and stress reduction techniques are associated with decision making, hobbies, and life-long leisure. They also assist students in acquiring life skills and healthy habits that allow for stress reduction as well as adaptation to change within an individual's life (American School Counseling Association, 2014). Educating students on how to approach task management will also lead to successful career development.

Finally, Social/Personal Development Standards provide the foundation for social and personal growth. The American School Counseling Association (2014), suggests stress education and management promotes communication, problem solving, and goal setting. Communication, problem solving, and goal setting all are components of the domains which include acquiring self-knowledge and interpersonal knowledge. Additionally, stress education allows for reframing

stress in one's life in order for one to adapt to change, which also is under the component of application of self-knowledge, within the personal/social domain.

### **Group Dynamics**

#### **Type**

Surfing with the Sea is a group for students struggling with stress management. It is a psychoeducational and coping group formed for early female adolescents. The grade range is 7-10<sup>th</sup> grade. Bore, Hendricks, & Womack (2013), discussed how groups in schools give peers the opportunity to form relationships with each other in a controlled, therapeutic, environment. The psychoeducational/coping group I have formed gives students the opportunity of fostering a safe therapeutic environment. It focuses on educating and working with students on stressors encountered in their daily lives. Specifically, I chose to conduct this group with female adolescents. The American Psychological Association (2015), reveals with their research that females are 10% percent more likely than males of reporting stress in general. Additionally, they are 30% versus 20% percent more likely of having a great deal of stress as reported on a 10-point scale. Additionally, female adolescents are more likely to report physical and emotional symptoms from stress, with 40% of female adolescents reporting physical symptoms with their stress.

#### **Procedures**

Procedures in the first day of group may look different than in the weeks to follow. Mobley and Fort (2008), suggests the first session in group must accomplish confidentiality, the purpose of the group, a comfortable meeting of the group, followed by specific well-planned learning tasks each session to follow. The final session allows group members to consolidate what they have learned into an ongoing strategy after the group has ended. My group's

procedures reflect this format. My first session gives students the opportunity to form a comfort level with each other in a controlled environment, followed by specific goals each week. The last day allows students to appreciate their goals, accomplishments, and relationships established. Students will also have a choice to create a tangible tool for their tool box to aid in stress reduction. The curriculum and procedures are designed for students to interactively engage in activities on a given week that allow them to communicate, collaborate, and combat their struggles with stress.

### **Guidelines and Goals**

Students appreciate and thrive when adults give them choices and control. Therefore, when forming this group, it was appropriate as we were establishing the first session to allow students to help create the norms and guidelines of the group. On week one, students will create guidelines with the facilitator. Additionally, they will also have the opportunity to create an individual goal for themselves in group. Goals each week depend on the lessons and activities presented, but the overall group goals are for students to understand what stress is, how we identify stress, and coping with stressors.

### **Format and Structure**

Vandeven (2015), discusses the format of groups in schools are structured for a specific number of sessions, focus on specific topics, follow a pre-established agenda, and the membership should be closed. This allows students to provide reflection to content of pre-instilled lessons based on their experience. Structured groups in schools are important to ensure students are learning and collaborating on information learned, but also to ensure confidentiality. This stress management group will be a closed group meeting for a 45-minute duration over the course of eight weeks.

### **Screening Breakdown**

Vandeven (2015), suggests Telling student about group, Ask student about his/her level of interest/commitment to group, and Pick participants (TAP) process is an effective screening process in the schools. After a student is referred by a teacher, the counselor, or marked in a need's assessment, it is important to describe the topic, expectations, reason they are being considered for membership, and state that participation is voluntary. Next, I must ask the student to explain their interest in a group, if they are willing to commit to the group, and then ask about what their individual goal for group may be. Lastly, members must be picked based on students who are interested, committed, in need, and are willing to work towards the topic of the group goals.

### **Evaluation**

At the end of the eight weeks, students will complete a formal evaluation assessment for myself as the facilitator to collect for management purposes. Post assessments are a form of perception data and analyze on how students are different post intervention and what they now believe and can do after the stress management intervention. I utilized a Likert scale to address what students

### **Reality Therapy**

The essence of Reality Therapy is that we are all responsible for what we choose to do. Reality Therapy is an approach that should be taught and modeled. William Glasser was the developer of Reality Therapy. Glasser wanted to be proactive in favor of mental health, promoting growth and happiness. Reality Therapy can be applied in many different ways, in a variety of settings, and with diverse populations. Teaching, humor, and positive addicting behaviors are used throughout the process.

**Basic Needs**

Reality Therapy has five basic needs that should be met, one physiological and four psychological. These are survival, love, belonging, power, freedom, and fun. Glasser believed that through all of this learning, it is a life-long process based on choice. Glasser believed when clients or students change what they are doing, they often change how they are feeling and thinking about particular situations of obstacles in life (Glasser, 2016).

**Eight steps.** The foundation of Reality Therapy is conducted through eight basic steps. These are establishing a meaningful relationship, emphasizing present behavior, asking, “are your actions getting you what you want,” make a plan, solidifying a commitment, no excuses, and no punishment (Glasser, 2016). Throughout this process, students will realize they are responsible for their own actions to lead them to better manage stress in their lives.

**WDEP System**

Glasser (2016), suggests a main emphasis of Reality Therapy is cognitive and behavioral in nature. The WDEP system is a tool used to summarize Reality Therapy and guide clients in making positive choices and achieving their goals. It also helps to discover client’s basic needs. Each letter refers to a strategy. The W = wants, D = direction and doing, E = evaluation, and P = planning. Students explore their wants and needs first. Next is direction and doing, in which students look at choices to deal with problems, and the counselor helps to challenge clients in his/her way of thinking. The student then does a self-evaluation. This is a big step in making behavioral changes. Lastly, the student and counselor work together to develop a plan that includes how the client is going to carry it out in their everyday life. With the WDEP system, commitment is a huge component. The student needs to want change and believe in it.

Therefore, Reality Therapy is a client-centered approach that focuses on problem solving and making smart choices. The primary goal of Reality Therapy is to help students become psychologically strong and rational, and realize they have choices in the ways they treat themselves. This type of therapy is effective for a variety of mental health disorders, and useful for struggling youth.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, it is critical for school counselors to support students with the management of stressors. Students are experiencing stressors in academic, home, personal, and social arenas of life. If adolescents do not adapt healthy ways to cope with stress, the negative effects and coping can last through their lifetime. Furthermore, if stress is not resolved, it can lead to chronic stress and the development of anxiety. Adolescents with a traumatic background are likely to experience stress, and stress management groups in the schools are one way to reach these students within the educational setting. Once students are educated on the effects of stress within the body and the adolescent brain, school counselors can help students process through stressors they may be facing. Adolescents within the therapeutic group setting have the opportunity to formulate a plan utilizing Reality Therapy to best meet their goals for managing their stress.





## Surfing With the Sea

**Week:** One

**Duration:** Forty-five Minutes

**ASCA Standard:**

- M 3: Sense of belonging in the school environment.
- M 5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes.
- M 6: Positive attitude toward work and learning.
- B-LS 7: Identify long- and short-term academic, career and social/emotional goals.
- B-SS 2: Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.
- B-SS 3: Create relationships with adults that support success.

**Goals:**

- Students will understand the purpose of the group.
- Students will create positive group rules.
- Students will create individual goals.
- Students will begin to create appropriate relationships with facilitator and group members.

**Materials Needed:**

- Notecards, paper, pencil and Group Rules Contract

**Procedures:**

- **Introduction:** Facilitator will introduce herself. Explain to students this is a welcoming and safe environment for all and what the group has to offer in regard to identifying stress and finding healthy ways to cope with stress. Students will go around in a circle and say their name, one thing they want to share about themselves, and why they believe this group will be beneficial for their health and wellness.
- **Icebreaker:** Funny Faces. Students will sit in a circle. Facilitator will hand out a one piece of paper and pencil to each student. Facilitator will explain that they are going to draw the person sitting across from them. The rule is we have to look at each other and can't look down at our drawings or pick up our pencil. When you think you are done, you will exchange drawings to see what they drew. This should create laughter, establish a positive therapeutic atmosphere, and acceptance of being able to make mistakes.
- **Purpose/Overview:** Explain to students that this group is to help learn ways to manage stress and understand their own personal stressors and the effect stress has on the body. Stress is a common emotion fostered through the stressors of everyday life and obstacles, whether it be socially, emotionally, or academically. Facilitator will state that they will meet for eight weeks every Monday for forty-five minutes.
- **Group Rules/Goals:** Students will identify group rules with the facilitator on the Group Rules Contract. Facilitator will circle around and take group rule ideas from each member. The facilitator will write them on the white board for a visual. Each student will get a notecard and identify one personal goal they want to achieve from this group.
- **Activity:**

- ***It's Not Just Me?!-*** Facilitator will divide the room into three areas by putting up signs on each section stating: definitely true, sometimes true, and not at all true. Group members will walk to the most appropriate area that fits them after the group leader reads aloud a statement that is posed. After students move to a section, the facilitator can ask follow-up questions. These questions will help the facilitator get to know the students better and understand what they are going through. It will also help identify target areas for future group sessions.

**STATEMENTS:**

1. I don't always tell my parents/guardians how I feel.  
(What stops you from telling others how you feel?)
2. I have been stressed because of my life outside of school.  
(How does that impact your day to day functioning?)
3. I feel pressured by my friends to do things I don't want to do.  
(How do you think your friends would respond if you didn't do it?)
4. I feel happy most of the time.  
(What makes you feel happy?)
5. There are things that my parents/guardians and I cannot agree on.  
(What things?)
6. I have a strong support system?  
(What do you enjoy doing with your support system?)
7. There have been big changes in my family recently.  
(What has changed?)

**Closure:**

- ***Informal Assessment:*** Students will give a thumbs up, sideways, or down if they feel they are ready to open up next week and dive into identifying stressors!



## Surfing With the Sea

**Week:** Two

**Duration:** Forty-Five Minutes

**ASCA Standard:**

- M 5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes.
- M 6: Positive attitude toward work and learning.
- B-LS 9: Gather evidence and consider multiple perspectives to make informed decisions.
- B-SS 2: Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.
- B-SS 3: Create relationships with adults that support success.
- B-SS 4: Demonstrate empathy.
- B-SS 6: Use effective collaboration and cooperation skills.
- B-SS 7: Use leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse teams.

**Goals:**

- Students will be able to identify stressors based on Youth Stress Scale and Adolescent Life-Change Event Scale.
- Students will be able to define your largest source of stress followed by two other significant personal life stressors.
- Students will be able to understand the difference between stress, stressors, and stress response.

**Materials Needed:** Youth Stress Scale, Adolescent Life Change Event Scale, Stress/Stress Response PowerPoint, and Stress Management handout/worksheet.

**Procedures:**

- **Introduction:** Facilitator will welcome students back to our first day of diving into stress! Explain to students, today we are going to start our group on stress by being able to understand the differences between stress, stressors, and stress response, and then work on defining and describing our own personal stressors.
- **Overview:** Describe to students on how learning the difference between stress, stressors, and stress response helps us understand the process our bodies go through when experiencing stress. We will then move to beginning to identify our stressors. Identifying our triggers or what causes us to feel stressed is the first step in understanding how stress affects the body and then how we can utilize skills and tools to manage that stress. We will first be taking two surveys that address possible sources of stress. Remember, sources of stress listed on the survey may not be your main source of stress. Thereafter, we will have the opportunity to define our own stressors. Some stressors in our lives 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. Other stressors may be more serious or last longer, such as having problems

getting along with other students, feeling uncomfortable performing in front of others, family problems, or having an overly busy schedule.

- **Icebreaker: *The Island of Stress*.** Explain to students that you will each pick a partner and for this activity, each group will be asked to imagine that you are dropped off on a desolate island. You were instructed you could only bring five items if you were stranded. This activity will promote teamwork and decision making when placed under stress by identifying what five items you would bring to allow yourselves to feel as least stressed as possible, knowing you may be stranded on this island. Reminder: you may not be able to control this situation you are given, but you are able to control how you react and what tools you choose to utilize in this stressful situation. This compares to real life when we are placed under stress: we may not be able to control the stressful situation, but we can control how we react and manage our stress given the situation we are in.
  - Go around to teach group and ask them what they chose for their five items, and how those items contribute to reduced stress given the situation they are in.
- **Activity:**
  - 1) ***Psychoeducation on Stress***- Go through slides on PowerPoint on stress, stressor, and stress response.
  - 2) ***Stress Surveys***-Distribute each stress survey scale; Youth Stress Scale and Adolescent Life Change Stress Scale. Allow 10 minutes for students to complete.
  - 3) ***Identifying Stressors***- Instruct students when they are done with the stress surveys, to grab the handout titled “Stress Management”. Encourage students to complete the top section on page one where they are to describe their largest source of stress and two or more other stressors you are experiencing. They will also classify their stressors as emotional, social, or academic stressors.
- **Discussion:** When students are complete with the stressor surveys and identifying their main sources of stress, Discuss the following by going around and allowing each group member to share if they deem comfortable. Remind students not everyone experiences the same stressors or reacts the same to various stressors.
  - What are your main sources of stress? How do they make you feel?
  - Was anyone surprised by their stress survey results?
  - Was anyone categorized on the youth stress scale as severe stress when you didn’t believe you were?
  - Of the items you defined as stressors on the adolescent stress scale, which were in your control, possibly in your control, and outside of your control?
  - What thoughts come into your thought process when faced with this stressor?
- **Technique: Want:** The “W” component of the WDEP technique of Reality Therapy is for students to focus on their goals and what they want in regard to reducing and managing stress in their lives. Students will fill out the “W” section of the reality therapy handout; this includes how do they picture their lives when they are able to better manage the stress in it.

#### **Closure:**

- **Exit Slip:** Identify on a blank piece of paper the difference between stress, stressor, and stress response through the body.



## Surfing With the Sea

**Week:** Three

**Duration:** Forty-Five minutes

**ASCA Standard:**

- M 5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes.
- M 6: Positive attitude toward work and learning.
- B-LS 9: Gather evidence and consider multiple perspectives to make informed decisions.
- B-SS 2: Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.
- B-SS 3: Create relationships with adults that support success.
- B-SS 4: Demonstrate empathy.

**Goals:**

- Students will understand and describe the three stages of the General Adaptation System of the stress response within the body.
- Students will pinpoint their physical/cognitive/emotional symptoms or stress responses that manifest in their body from their stressors.
- Students will describe their emotional management of how they have attempted to manage stress in the past, and if they have habits or tendencies that worsen the situation.

**Materials Needed:**

- Your Body's Response to Stress handout, Stress/Stress Response PowerPoint, Reality Therapy WDEP worksheet, Computer, and Recognizing Stress worksheet.

**Procedures:**

- **Introduction:** Instructor describes, in our last session, we discussed and defined stressors we are facing in our lives. Today we are going to learn about the stress response in our body that happens as a result of the stressors in our lives.
- **Overview:** The way our body responds to stress is a very scientific process. We refer to this process called the General Adaptation System of Stress. Limited amounts of stress can have a positive influence on our motivation and creativity, but excessive or chronic stress can lead to debilitating effects and physical health impairment and interfere with memory, attention, and organization.
- **Icebreaker Video:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnpOrMqDogE&feature=youtu.be>
  - What did you learn from the video in regard to stress response?
- **Activity:**
  - 1) ***Psychoeducation on Stress Response:*** Hand out the sheet titled "Your body's response to stress". Draw a bell curve on the board. Explain to students that the alarm stage is when cortisol is released within our bodies when we encounter a stressor. This is the stage when we recognize our body is under stress. The next stage, the resistance stage, is where our body attempts to regain normalcy and where stress management skills should be implemented to keep our body from

entering the exhaustion stage which can lead to severe physical symptoms and chronic stress.

- 2) ***Stress Response Identification***- Have students identify on the “Recognizing Stress” worksheet their personal emotional, physical, and behavioral responses to stress on page one of the handouts and the life balances and basic needs section on page three.
- **Discussion:** Pose to the group when finished.
  - What stress responses from the stress management handout did you define is the “alarm” that your stressors are causing you to feel stressed?
  - Do you believe in your daily life now you cope with your stressors at the resistance stage, or do you ignore the signs your body is giving you and fall into the exhaustion stage? Explain.
  - If you currently or in the past employ a management skill in the resistance stage what coping mechanism do you utilize? Has it been beneficial or not?
  - Refer to life balance section on stress management handout, do you believe you have balance within your life areas? Do you believe you don’t have balance and it is contributing to stress in a particular area?
  - Refer to the basic needs section on the stress management handout. Are you neglecting basic needs because of stress?
- **Technique:** Doing: The “D” part of the WDEP technique is defined as doing. Using the Reality Therapy handout under the “D” section, students should spend up to 5 minutes exploring what they are currently doing (if anything) in attempts to manage and reduce stress and how stressors are affecting current health status.

### **Closure:**

- ***Exit Slip***
  - What are the three stages of the general stress adaptation system? And what happens in each stage?
- ***Week Three Challenge***
  - Instruct students to review your stressors before we meet next week. See if you identify whether their stressors are positive (motivates and excites) or is negative (extreme concern or worry). Next session we will discuss positive vs. negative stress and how we can reframe perceived negative stress into positive stress.



## Surfing With the Sea

**Week:** Four

**Duration:** Forty-Five Minutes

**ASCA Standard:**

- M 5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes.
- M 1: Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being.
- M 6: Positive attitude toward work and learning.
- B-LS 9: Gather evidence and consider multiple perspectives to make informed decisions.
- B-SS 2: Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.
- B-SS 3: Create relationships with adults that support success.
- B-SS 4: Demonstrate empathy.
- B-SS 6: Use effective collaboration and cooperation skills.
- B-SS 7: Use leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse teams.

**Goals:**

- Students will be able to explain and recognize the difference between eustress and distress.
- Students will be able to reframe perceived negative (distress) stressors into positive (eustress) statements.

**Materials Needed:** Eustress/Distress handout, Reframing Our Stressors Worksheet, Reality Therapy WDEP worksheet, string, rubber band, and plastic cups.

**Procedures:**

- **Check in:** Students homework from last week is to see if they could classify their stressors as either positive or negative. During this weekly check in, each student can share what they discovered about their stressors.
- **Introduction:** Explain to students that now that we have determined their stressors, individual stress responses on the body, what their goals are for combating stress, and what thoughts and feelings are associated with their stressors, we are going to examine how to turn perceived negative (concern and worry) to more positive stressors (motivation and excitement).
- **Introduction Activity:**
  - ***Stacking Cups:*** Provide each small group with string, rubber bands, and solo cups. The idea is for the groups to stack the cups without touching them with their hands. By the time we're done chatting, they've all calmed down and have mostly forgotten about the tournament. It's a great chance to remind them that just because something doesn't matter long-term, it doesn't mean our stress responses change. For example, how did you feel the last time you thought you lost your phone? (pose question to group).
- **Activity:**

- **Psychoeducation: Eustress/Distress:** Go through the Eustress vs. Distress handout.
  - Ask students examples of eustress and distress in people's lives around them or that they've witnessed on tv etc.? How did they cope?
- **Reframing Distress to Eustress:** Facilitator should hand out the sheet titled "Reframing Our Stressors". Model through the academic stressor example for students. Students must explain the perception of stressor through distress lens, reframe to positive (eustress) stressor, and the new mindset after a distress was reframed to a eustress. Go around and share after.
- **Discussion:**
  - How did reframing your stressors from negative to positive change the way you view your stressor?
  - What feelings do you associate with a negative stress statement versus the positive?
  - How would you react differently to your stressor when you have evaluated and reframed the way you think about the stressor?
- **Technique: Evaluate:** We evaluated what we are doing and how we are viewing stressors in our lives by completing the reframing our stressors worksheet. Students will also evaluate their stress by completing the "E" for evaluate box on the Reality Therapy handout.

**Closure:**

- **Exit Slip:** Explain how reframing stressors is beneficial to your own life in relation to stress management.
  - Next time, we will begin to talk about strategies for stress management. Remember, it's important to employ coping strategies during that "alarm" stage when we first recognize our bodies are experiencing stress. That way, our body can more readily return to homeostasis and prevent further health effects from stress.





## Surfing With the Sea

**Week:** Five

**Duration:** Forty-Five Minutes

**ASCA Standard:**

- M 5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes.
- M 1: Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being.
- M 6: Positive attitude toward work and learning.
- B-LS 9: Gather evidence and consider multiple perspectives to make informed decisions.
- B-SS 2: Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.
- B-SS 3: Create relationships with adults that support success.
- B-SS 4: Demonstrate empathy.
- B-SS 6: Use effective collaboration and cooperation skills.
- B-SS 7: Use leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse teams.

**Goals:**

- Students will practice progressive muscle relaxation therapy and describe if and how it will help them manage their personal stressors.
- Students will participate in guided imagery and describe if and how it helps them manage their personal stressors.

**Materials Needed:** Computer, Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script, Guided Imagery Script

**Procedures:**

- **Introduction/Overview:** Instructor describes how so far, we have defined our stressors, understood how the stress response is processed in our bodies, practiced reframing our negative stressors, and discussed various feelings and thoughts surrounding our stressors. We learned it is important to employ stress reduction activities during the resistance stage so our bodies can cope with the stress and do not enter the exhaustion stage. We also learned limited amounts of stress can have a positive influence on motivation and creativity, but excessive stress has an over-whelming and debilitating effect. Too much stress can have a dramatic effect on learning and social development, memory, organization, and attention. Today we will discuss and practice together two proven stress reduction strategies; progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery.
- **Introduction Activity: Stress Jenga**
  - 1) Place Jenga tower in the center of table.
  - 2) Decide who will go first. Each player will draw a card from the pile. Each card has a stressful situation and a number. Read the stressor and the number out loud to the group. The number on the card tells you how many Jenga blocks to take out of the tower. When you finish your turn, keep the card you drew in front of you. When the tower falls, discuss your cards and if you agree with the stressor severity as it relates to your life.

- Discuss: Lay stressor cards out on the table. Lay them in a line from most to least stressful. Is the stressor on the card that caused the Jenga game tower to fall the most stressful?
  - Think about the expression: “The straw that broke the camel’s back” How does it fit with your Jenga game and when the tower fell? How does this relate to the importance of stress reduction techniques?
- **Activity:**
  - **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** Facilitator will go through progressive muscle relaxation script. Thereafter, facilitator will present an electronic version of PMR at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=intVpw4LhMY>.
  - **Guided Imagery:** Facilitator will progress through two different guided imagery scripts of students choosing from the “Guided Imagery Script.”
- **Discussion:**
  - How can progressive muscle relaxation/guided imagery be a stress reduction strategy for stressors out of your control? Do you see it benefiting yourself in regard to your stressors?
  - During guided imagery, we are brought out of reality, into a calmer state of mind. Explain how you believe this state of mind can be helpful when encountering your stressor.
  - Predict how the stress response is changing within your body in relation to the general adaptation system when you are implementing these stress reduction techniques?

**Closure:**

- Facilitator explains to students how I hope you find these two stress reduction techniques helpful in combatting stressors in your lives. Next week, we will be discussing mindfulness and brainstorming other stress management strategies tailored to your own life and stressors.
- **Informal Assessment:** Thumbs up or down if you see progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery aiding in your stress reduction.
- **Week Five Mindfulness Challenge:** This week, I challenge you to notice and pay attention to one new aspect in your environment you did not notice before.



## Surfing With the Sea

**Week:** Six

**Duration:** Forty-Five Minutes

**ASCA Standard:**

- M 5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes.
- M 1: Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being.
- M 6: Positive attitude toward work and learning.
- B-LS 9: Gather evidence and consider multiple perspectives to make informed decisions.
- B-SS 2: Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.
- B-SS 3: Create relationships with adults that support success.
- B-SS 4: Demonstrate empathy.

**Goals:**

- Students will practice mindfulness-based breathing to aid in stress reduction.
- Students will define and describe three main stress management techniques they can implement in their own lives to reduce their stressors.

**Materials Needed:** Pinwheels, Jellybeans, Stress Management handout, Stress Management Strategy Circle, Stress Management Checklist, and Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies worksheet.

**Procedures:**

- **Introduction Activity:**
  - Students will notice various essential oils placed on the table when they walk in. Students will go around and write on the sticky note the scent they believe the essential oil is. They will then write any emotions or memories they associate with that smell.
- **Introduction:** Explain that today we're going to discuss mindfulness, specifically as it relates to breathing calm down techniques. When we are being mindful, we learn to do something that I like to call Zen breathing. When we participate in mindful breathing, we can calm our bodies, relax our minds, and focus on what we're doing. Pose the following discussion questions to the group.
  - What does it mean to be mindful?
  - What things should we try to be noticing when we are mindful?
  - How does being mindful aid in stress reduction?
- **Activity Part One (Mindfulness):**
  - 1) ***Deep breathing:*** First we'll try deep breathing. It's easy to do, but it is different than a way we usually breathe. First, we take a big breath in counting to 5, and then we *slowly* let it out counting to 8. Try to focus just on your breathing; don't let your mind wander to anything else. I'll show you, and then we'll try it together." Demonstrate. Then, count breaths for students to practice. Go through these 5 times.

- 2) ***Pinwheel breathing***: Give each student a pinwheel. Explain that we are going to try the same thing, but instead of just letting out our breath, we'll blow the pinwheel. So again, we'll take a deep breath in counting to 5, and then we'll slowly blow the air out onto the pinwheel. Watch the pinwheel spin, notice its movements, notice how you're breathing. Demonstrate and then lead students through 5 times.
- 3) ***Mindfulness Eating***: Each student will close their eyes and be given a flavored jelly bean. Students will be encouraged to think about eating slowly and focus on the taste, texture, feelings, and memories associated with eating the jelly bean.
  - Discuss feelings, memories, and texture.
- **Activity Part Two (Identifying Personal Management Techniques)**
  - Instructor will show the "Stress Management Strategy circle". Give students 5 minutes to look at the circle and brainstorm possible stress management techniques. Then instructor should hand out "Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies". Instructor should go over with students the scenario section and then give students 10 minutes to complete.
  - Direct students to turn back to the "Stress Management" handout from week two of group. Explain to students how social support is vital in managing stress to know we are not alone, and that people are here to support us and help us work through problems we may be facing. Give students 5 minutes to complete this section.
- **Discussion:**
  - What techniques did you identify in your quest to manage your stress? How do you think you will implement them?
  - Do you believe you need to utilize different strategies for stressors that are within versus outside of your control?
  - How will you know your stress reduction techniques will working? What will the physical and mental changes look like?

**Closure:**

- Debrief with students that next week will be our last week we will focus on a skill. Next week will be focused on making our stress management plan that will accumulate everything we have learned so far in our group.
- ***Stress Management Collection***: Students will write down one of their management techniques and drop it in a bucket.
- ***Week Six Weekly Challenge***: Your task before next time is as you go through your week to check mark any stress management techniques you utilize over the course of the week on the "Stress Management Checklist". Remember, reframing out stressors into positive statements and utilizing our support network, and realizing what's in our control, are all forms of stress management!



## Surfing With the Sea

**Week:** Seven

**Duration:** Forty-five Minutes

**ASCA Standard:**

- M 5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes.
- M 1: Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being.
- M 6: Positive attitude toward work and learning.
- B-LS 9: Gather evidence and consider multiple perspectives to make informed decisions.
- B-SS 2: Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.
- B-SS 3: Create relationships with adults that support success.
- B-SS 4: Demonstrate empathy.
- B-SMS 5: Demonstrate perseverance to achieve long- and short-term goals.
- B-SMS 8: Demonstrate the ability to balance school, home and community activities.
- B-SMS 10: Demonstrate ability to manage transitions and ability to adapt to changing situations and responsibilities.

**Goals:**

- Students will be able to formulate a stress management plan for coping that includes, social support, management technique, and reframing of the stressor.

**Materials Needed:** Reality Therapy WDEP, My Stress Plan, Cartoon Creation, and Computer.

**Procedures:**

- **Introduction:** Welcome to our second to last day of group! Let's start by going around and sharing what skills you guys used this week from your "Stress Management Checklist Challenge".
  - What did you notice about the pattern of coping used through different days of the week? Were there days you didn't use coping strategies? Days you used several?
  - Which coping mechanisms felt most useful at reducing stress this week and how do you know based on your bodies stress response?
  - Was using a checklist helpful and would you consider using one weekly in the future?
- **Technique:** Plan; Students will fill out the P section of the WDEP Reality Therapy handout. They will ask themselves: What am I prepared to do differently? (reframing, coping mechanisms), is it achievable? Am I committed? How do I know I am successful? How will my body and mind feel different?
- **Activity:**
  - ***Stress Plan:*** Students will complete their stress plan on the "My Stress Plan" worksheet. They will define their top three stressors, their bodies stress response, reframe their stressor, identify if it is in or outside of their control, who for social support can help and how, a stress management technique, and how they reframe from blaming themselves.

- ***Cartoon Creation-*** Students will think of a time from their past when a stressor took over. They will depict the stressor in the first box, and in the second box draw the outcome of the situation before they started in this group. Next, in the third box, they will draw they use now to help manage the stress, and then in the last box draw the new and positive outcome from utilizing this stress management technique!
- **Discussion:**
  - Explain how you will intertwine your stress plan into your daily life.

**Closure:**

- ***Gratitude Video/Exit Slip:*** Acknowledging gratitude in one's life is said to reduce stress and boost mental health. We will close today with a short video on how gratitude boosts your health! After you watch, your ticket out today will be to list three things that you are grateful for.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGTp9wJdvJ4&t=25s>
- ***Week Seven Gratitude Challenge***
  - Next week will be our last day of group! We will have fun and make stress calming jars! Also, we will take a post stress assessment. This week my challenge to you is to each day write something you are grateful for each day.



## Surfing With the Sea

**Week:** Eight

**Duration:** Forty-Five Minutes

**ASCA Standard:**

- M 5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes.
- M 1: Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/ emotional and physical well-being.
- M 6: Positive attitude toward work and learning.
- B-LS 9: Gather evidence and consider multiple perspectives to make informed decisions.
- B-SS 2: Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.
- B-SS 3: Create relationships with adults that support success.
- B-SS 4: Demonstrate empathy.
- B-SMS 5: Demonstrate perseverance to achieve long- and short-term goals.
- B-SMS 8: Demonstrate the ability to balance school, home and community activities.
- B-SMS 10: Demonstrate ability to manage transitions and ability to adapt to changing situations and responsibilities.

**Goals:**

- Students will be able to create their own stress calming jar for their stress tool box.
- Students will understand how calming jars can be used alongside mindfulness and breathing exercises we practiced for stress management.
- Students will be able to complete a post stress assessment on the knowledge and skills they gained from group.

**Materials Needed:** Jars, Glitter, Glue, and Stress post assessment.

**Procedures:**

- **Introduction:** Facilitator welcomes students to the last day of group. Facilitator will introduce today's activity as a hands-on opportunity to leave group with a better understanding of the benefits of utilizing a calm down jar as you leave group to control and manage your stress. We will then discuss what we can take away as individuals from the group as a whole.
- **Purpose/Overview:** Some of us find it difficult to keep calm or calm down from experiencing intense emotions such as stressful experiences. There are hands on support that we can use in addition to strategies like mindfulness and breathing to aid in reducing stress response.
- **Activity:**
  - *Surfing with the Sea Evaluation:* Students will fill out evaluation.
  - *Calm down Jars and Box:* Students will use materials to create calm down jars. First, they will fill their jars with water, and then add the glue and glitter.
    - We will then go around and have each student share a situation where they think a tool in the calm down box will benefit them and why.

**Closure:** Facilitator brings treats for students and thanks them for being a valuable member.

- Students will share two items from the Surfing with the Seas Evaluation that they feel comfortable sharing with the group.
  - Students will go around and write on a note on a piece of paper and write something nice to that member, whether it's changes they saw that person make during the group, or how they impacted group in a positive way.
  - Students will share and reflect upon the individual goal they made for themselves in the first week of group. Students will write if they believe they accomplished this goal and how/why.
- **Post Assessment:** The Surfing with the Seas Evaluation will be collected by the facilitator. This way, group data assessment can be collected in use for the school counseling program and future stress management groups.



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## Appendix A

**REALITY THERAPY - WDEP WORKSHEET**

<b>Wants</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you want?</li> <li>• What do you want instead of the problem?</li> <li>• What is your picture of a quality life, relationship, etc?</li> <li>• What do your family/friends want for you?</li> <li>• What do you want from counselling?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Doing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are you doing? (acting, thinking, feeling, physiology)</li> <li>• When you act this way, what are you thinking?</li> <li>• When you think/act this way, how are you feeling?</li> <li>• How do your thoughts/actions affect your health?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Evaluate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is what you are doing, helping you get what you want?</li> <li>• Is it taking you in the direction you want to go?</li> <li>• Is what you want achievable?</li> <li>• Does it help you to look at it in that way?</li> <li>• How hard are you prepared to work at this?</li> <li>• Is your current level of commitment working in your favour?</li> <li>• Is it a helpful plan?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are you prepared to do/think differently that will take you in the direction you want to go?</li> <li>• Are you clear about what you are going to do?</li> <li>• Is it achievable?</li> <li>• How will you know you have done it?</li> <li>• Can you start doing it immediately?</li> <li>• Is it in your control?</li> <li>• Are you committed to doing it?</li> </ul>	

# GROUP RULES

1. WHAT HAPPENS IN GROUP, STAYS IN GROUP.
2. BE RESPECTFUL OF GROUP MEMBERS.
3. ALWAYS TRY YOUR BEST. PARTICIPATE!

## CONTRACT:

I AGREE TO FOLLOW THESE RULES. IF I SHOULD BREAK ONE OR MORE OF THESE RULES, I KNOW THAT I MAY BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE GROUP.

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Appendix B

# Youth Stress Scale

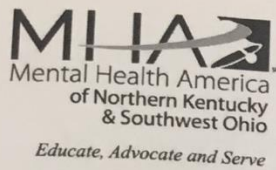
LIFE EVENT	LIFE CHANGE UNITS	SCORE
Death of a parent	100	
Unplanned pregnancy/abortion	100	
Divorce of parents	90	
Acquiring a visible deformity	80	
Death of a close friend	73	
Fathering a child	70	
Jail sentence of parent for over a year	70	
Marital separation of parents	69	
Death of brother or sister	68	
Change in acceptance by peers	67	
Unplanned pregnancy of sister	64	
Serious legal problems	63	
Discovery of being an adopted child	63	
Marriage of parent to stepparent	63	
Having a visible congenital deformity	62	
Serious illness requiring hospitalization	58	
Failure of a grade in school	56	
Not making an extracurricular activity	55	
Hospitalization of parent	55	
Jail sentence of parent for over 30 days	53	
Breaking up with boyfriend or girlfriend	53	
Beginning to date	51	
Suspension of school	50	
Becoming involved with drugs/alcohol	50	
Birth of brother or sister	50	

LIFE EVENT	LIFE CHANGE UNITS	SCORE
Increase in arguments between parents	47	
Fired from work	47	
Loss of job by parent	46	
Outstanding personnel achievement	46	
Change in parents' financial status	45	
Accepted at college of choice	43	
Being a senior in high school	42	
Hospitalization of a sibling	41	
Serious disagreements with parents	40	
Having to repeat a course	37	
Increased absence of parent from home	37	
Brother or sister leaving home	37	
Addition of third adult to family	34	
Change in living conditions	31	
Serious disagreements with an instructor	30	
Lower grades than expected	29	
Change in sleeping habits	29	
Change in social habits	29	
Change in eating habits	28	
Decrease in arguments between parents	26	
Mother or Father beginning work	26	
Too many missed classes	25	
Dropped more than one class	23	
Minor traffic violations	20	
Family vacation	13	
Currently in Xmas season	13	
<b>TOTAL</b>		

Adapted from the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale

300+ Risk of illness  
 150-299 - Risk of illness mod.  
 150+ - Slight risk





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### Adolescent Life-Change Event Scale

Read each statement and circle the points to the right if you have experienced that event in the past year. When you finish, add the points circled to get your score.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Points</u>
1.	A parent died	98
2.	Brother or sister died	95
3.	Close friend died	92
4.	Parents divorced or separated	86
5.	Failed one or more subjects in school	86
6.	You were arrested by the police	85
7.	Flunked a grade in school	84
8.	Family member had trouble with alcohol	79
9.	Taking drugs or drinking alcohol	77
10.	Losing a favorite pet	77
11.	Parent or relative got very sick	77
12.	Losing a job	74
13.	Breaking up with a girl / boy friend	74
14.	Quitting school	73
15.	A close friend getting pregnant	69
16.	Parent losing a job	69
17.	Getting very sick or badly hurt	64
18.	Hassling with parents	64
19.	Trouble with teacher or principal	63
20.	Having problems with acne, weight, height	63
21.	Attending a new school	57
22.	Moving to a new home	51
23.	Change in physical appearance (braces, eyeglasses)	47
24.	Hassling with a brother or sister	46
25.	Starting your menstrual period	45
26.	Having someone new move in with your family (grandparent, adopted brother or sister or other)	35
27.	Starting a job	34
28.	Mother getting pregnant	31
29.	Starting to date	31
30.	Making new friends	27
31.	Brother or sister getting married	26

**TOTAL SCORE:** \_\_\_\_\_


***Please turn this sheet over for scoring and suggestions.***


**SCORING:** 80 % of people who score over 300 points will get sick due to stress. With a total score between 150 and 299, people have a 50 % chance of getting sick. People with less than 150 have a 30 % chance of getting sick.

The important point is that you can significantly decrease your chances of serious illness by decreasing the amount of stress in your life. You can control much of the change that occurs. In addition, by anticipating changes and planning for them, you are more prepared to handle stress.

**ANALYZE YOUR SITUATION:** Look at the list of 31 items. Break them into three categories: 1) those you can control 2) those you may be able to control and 3) those you cannot control. Which events are within your control to avoid on a daily basis? Which ones must you work on to avoid?




LESSON 1  Expressing Emotions and Managing Stress




## Stress

- A source or cause of stress is a **stressor**
  - Physical, mental, social, environmental
- **Eustress** is a healthful response to a stressor.
- **Distress** is a harmful response to a stressor

Click the mouse button or press the space bar to display information.





LESSON 1  Expressing Emotions and Managing Stress

## The General Adaptation Syndrome

- The general adaptation syndrome, or **GAS** is a series of body changes that result from stress.
- The GAS occurs in three stages:
  - the alarm stage
  - the resistance stage
  - the exhaustion stage

Click the mouse button or press the space bar to display information.

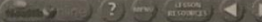



LESSON 1  Expressing Emotions and Managing Stress

## The General Adaptation Syndrome

- The alarm stage
  - The **alarm stage** is the first stage of the GAS in which the body gets ready for quick action.
  - During this stage, **adrenaline**—a hormone that prepares the body to react during times of stress or in an emergency—is secreted into the bloodstream.
  - The alarm stage sometimes is called the **fight-or-flight response**.

Click the mouse button or press the space bar to display information.

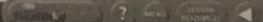


LESSON 1  Expressing Emotions and Managing Stress

## The General Adaptation Syndrome

- The resistance stage
  - The **resistance stage** is the second stage of the GAS in which the body attempts to regain internal balance.
  - The body is no longer in an emergency state and adrenaline is no longer secreted.

Click the mouse button or press the space bar to display information.



# Stress Management



**Stress:** an emotional and physical response to demanding situations, including symptoms that may include worry, a feeling of being overwhelmed, increased heart rate, headaches, sleep difficulties, procrastination, and more.

Describe your largest source of stress, in detail.


Briefly list two other stressors you are experiencing.

1
2

Circle any symptoms you have experienced in response to stress.

Anger / Frustration	Anxiety	Decreased Sex Drive	Drug or Alcohol Use
Fatigue	Headaches	Indigestion	Muscle Tension
Nail Biting	Over or Under Eating	Procrastination	Sleep Difficulties
Social Withdrawal	Teeth Grinding	Worry	Other



Contrary to popular belief, not all stress is bad. The stress response is a powerful tool used by your body to increase the odds of overcoming obstacles. It's when stress becomes too intense, or lasts for too long, that it becomes problematic.

## Stress Management

The negative effects of stress can be reduced with the use of social support, emotional management skills, maintaining a healthy life balance, and attending to basic needs. In the following pages, we'll explore each of these strategies.

### Social Support

Even when your social support cannot solve a problem, just talking can sometimes be enough. When we talk about our problems, hormones are released inside our brains that ease the undesirable symptoms of stress.

List three people who you can turn to for support.

Name:	How they can help:

How can you use social support to ease one of your current stressors?

------

### Emotional Management

Stress can trigger many emotions such as anxiety, self-doubt, and anger. When these feelings are ignored, they can exacerbate the original stressor. Remember, emotional management isn't about eliminating emotions—it's about dealing with them in a healthy way.

When faced with unpleasant emotions, do you have any habits or tendencies that *worsen* the situation?

------

List two ways that you have successfully handled unpleasant emotions in the past.

1
2

## Stress Management

### Life Balance

Stress can be especially destructive if your life is heavily focused on one area. For example, a person who is only focused on a relationship will struggle if their relationship becomes rocky.

Rate each of the following life areas from 1 to 5. A "1" means that you devote little attention to this part of your life, while a "5" means that you devote a high amount of attention to this area.

Career	Family	Fun / Recreation	Spirituality
Socializing	Intimate Relationship	Education	Other

Based upon your ratings, are there any areas where you would like to devote more attention?

### Basic Needs

During periods of high stress, many people take shortcuts when it comes to their basic needs. Examples include sleep, a healthy diet, exercise, and other forms of self-care. When basic needs are neglected, health and mental well-being deteriorate, which contributes to additional stress.

Circle any basic needs that you tend to neglect during periods of high stress.

Sleep	Healthy Diet	Exercise	Medical Adherence <small>medications, appointments, etc.</small>
Personal Hygiene	Social / Love Needs	Managing Addictions	Other

Describe the steps you can take to protect your basic needs during periods of high stress.

Appendix C

### Recognizing Stress

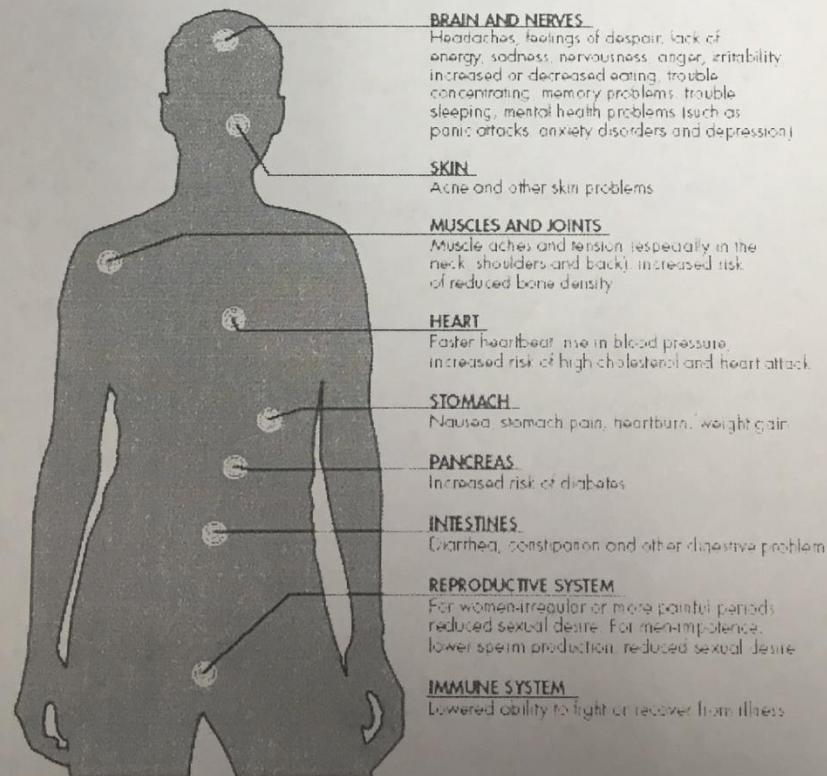
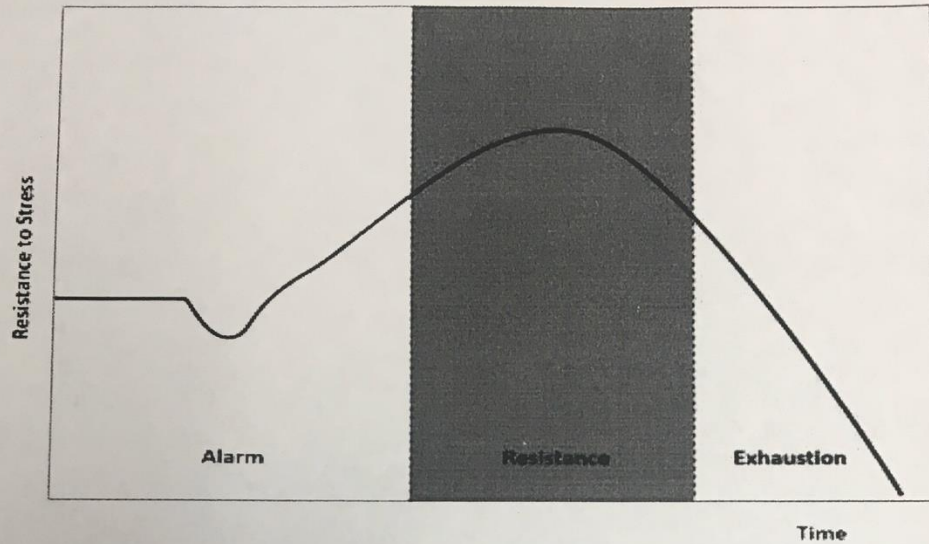
1. List the ways you experience stress physically, emotionally, and behaviorally.

Physically	Emotionally	Behaviorally

2. Circle the ways stress affects you that are most troubling.

3. List two or three things you can do to reduce these symptoms or times when you notice these symptoms are less intense.

## YOUR BODY'S RESPONSE TO STRESS



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## Appendix D



## *Positive stress*

- Motivates and focuses energy
- Perceived within our coping abilities
- Exciting
- Improves performance

## *Distress: Negative Stress*



- Worry or concern
- Perceived outside of coping abilities
- Feels unpleasant
- Decreases performance

- Possible further mental or physical problem

## ***Reframing Our Stressors***

### Academic Domain:

Example:

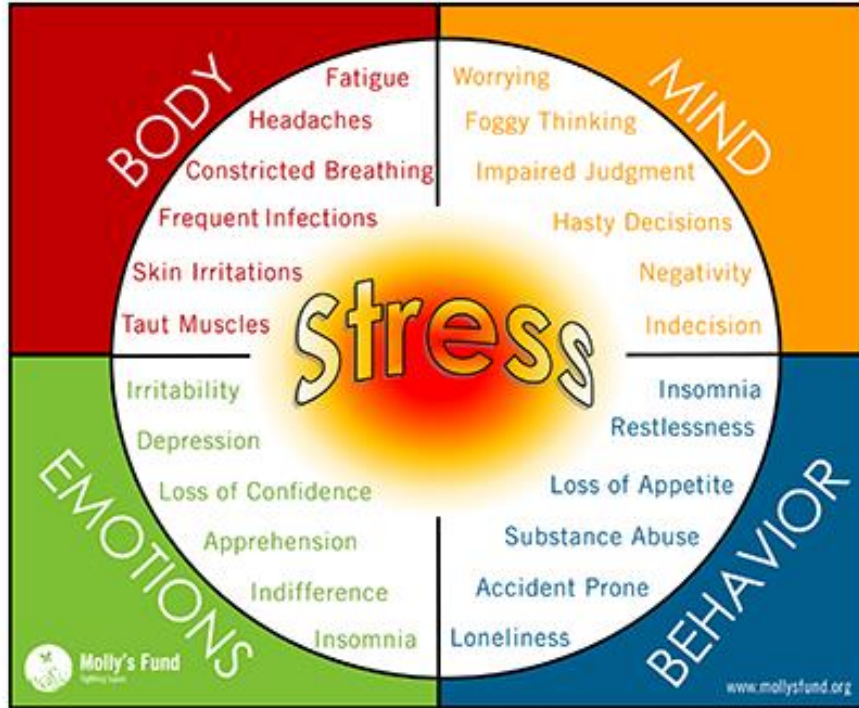
**Perception is Distress/Negative Statement:** Last semester, I failed two different classes. My mom made me quit my job, so I would have time to do my recovery credits online. I also don't have money now, and I am stuck babysitting my siblings to make any money.

**Reason for Distress Classification:** It's causing concern, feels icky, I feel like I can't make money or do well on my class, and I'm going stir crazy in the house and its effecting my mental health.

**Reframe to Positive Eustress:** Although I failed two classes, I am now familiar an online class system and was able to earn my credit back and I have a B in the class! I even learned time management skills when there isn't a teacher telling you to your face when a deadline is. My mom making me quit my job has allowed me to build a better caring relationship with my siblings, and at least my mom was willing to pay me for watching my siblings in the first place!

**New Mindset from Positive Stressor:** I'm motivated to manage my time better, do better in classes in the future, and it's exciting to see my siblings happy that I'm taking care of them.





**1) Perception is Distress/Negative Statement:**

**Reason for distress classification:**

**Reframe to Positive Eustress:**

**New Mindset from Positive Stressor:**

**OR** If Positive Perception:

**Positive Eustress Statement:**

**Mindset from Positive Stressor:**

**2) Perception is Distress/Negative Statement:**

**Reason for distress classification:**

**Reframe to Positive Eustress:**

**New Mindset from Positive Stressor:**

**3) Perception is Distress/Negative Statement:**

**Reason for negative classification:**

**Reframe to Positive Eustress:**

**New Mindset from Positive Stressor:****4) Perception is Distress/Negative Statement:****Reason for distress classification:****Reframe to Positive Eustress:****New Mindset from Positive Stressor:**

## Appendix E

**Imagery Script 1**

Prepare yourself for an experience of peace and calm. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Loosen any constrictive clothing and begin to shed the cares that keep you from feeling your best. Take a nice deep breath through your nose and hold it for a few seconds... and let it out through your mouth with a sigh. Again, inhale through your nose and let go of the breath with a relaxing sigh. Do this a few times, and each time, let the relaxation that you are beginning to feel grow a little deeper.

Now use your mind to scan your body for tension. Starting at the top of your head and slowly working down to the soles of your feet, notice wherever your muscles are holding on. Wherever you feel tightness or hardness, invite in looseness and softness. Your muscles have no need to work hard right now, so let them have some time off. Invite your muscles to become soft and flexible. They are strong when they need to be, but right now they rest with the gentleness of a flower floating on water.

As you scan your body, you let go, and your body settles into a comfortable position with no holding on, no grasping, just peace and alignment with the forces of nature. Your breath is calm and relaxed. Your head and arms and legs and torso have settled in gently to a position of complete

relaxation.

Now create in your mind an image of a beautiful place. This is a special place that you can go to in your mind to find refuge from your cares. You might select a tropical beach, a mountain meadow, or a forest glade. Maybe it is a lovely garden or some other place of significance to you. See yourself in this place on a perfect summer day. The sky is blue and there are a few white puffy clouds. You can feel a gentle breeze on your skin. The temperature is just right for you to be perfectly comfortable. You can hear nearby the sound of water. Take a moment to listen. What else can you hear? Perhaps you can hear the gentle call of birds or the rustling of leaves. What can you smell in this place? Is there a scent, perhaps of flowers in the breeze?

Spend as much time as you like in this place. Rest. Be at peace and know that you can come back here any time you wish for respite and relaxation.

When you are ready, in your mind, look for a foot path that leads away from the spot where you have been resting. Take a walk on this path. It will take you to another place, also a peaceful place, but this is a place to meet someone very special. Here you will meet a being of great wisdom and love. Follow the path in your mind until it comes to an open space. See this place as covered with grass, and on the grass is an exquisitely woven carpet. Upon the carpet rest a number of silk pillows. You know in your mind that you are to make yourself comfortable on the carpet and pillows. So, situate yourself in this meeting place and know that this place and everything there is for you to use as you see fit. Look around and see what is there. See this place as filled with a wonderful crystal clear light. Everything is bright and colorful. You see green grass and green leaves. Flowers bloom, and their scent is very pleasant.

Imagine now that you are inviting into this wonderful place a being of great wisdom and compassion. Because you seek understanding, this being is pleased to come to you. Soon you find that seated across from you is someone whose heart is full of love and whose mind is pure and wise. You look into their eyes and see love. It is as if their whole body radiates light and love. From the area of their heart a bright light shines directly into your heart. You feel in that light a warm and kindly energy. A sense of well-being builds in your heart and spreads through your whole body. From top to bottom you are filled with loving light that glows into every cell of your body. Every cell, every molecule in your body is touched by healing love.

Now perhaps you have a question for this wise one. Perhaps something has been troubling you and you need an answer. Perhaps some thought or emotion has been a stumbling block to your development. You are free to ask whatever you would like. Form your question and then listen very carefully. Take as much time as you need.

It is possible that this is not the time for you to have an answer, but if it is the time, see what presents itself. The answer may come as a thought. You might hear words in your mind or see an image. Be open to whatever arises from the source of wisdom.

Feel free to have a dialogue with this friendly being with whom you share this special place. Perhaps you would like to spend time with them quietly. When you feel that you are finished,

prepare to leave this place.<sup>[SEP]</sup>Return your attention to your body. Feel yourself in your body. Take a deep breath and let it out. Clench your fists. Stretch your arms and legs and open your eyes

### **Imagery Script 2: The Forest**

To begin the visualization, sit or lie down in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Take several slow, deep abdominal breaths. As you begin relaxing you may be aware of a variety of physical sensations or thoughts. Scan your body for any muscle tension. If you become aware of any tension, tense the muscles for a couple of seconds and relax them. Acknowledge any thoughts without trying to get rid of them. You may imagine thoughts or concerns as puffs of smoke that rise into the air and eventually disappear.

Now imagine that you are walking down a path into a lush forest. As you walk along the path you completely take in the sights, sounds, smells, and feel of the place. All around you are trees, grasses, ground cover, and fragrant flowers. You hear the soothing sounds of birds chirping and the wind as it gently blows through the treetops. You smell the rich dampness of the forest floor, the smells of rotting vegetation and new growth.

Through gaps in the treetops you see the sun high in a cloudless, blue sky. The sun is dispersed through the canopy of the treetops and filters down onto the forest floor, creating intricate patterns of light and shadow. With each breath you take in this place you feel a deep sense of peace and relaxation.

You soon come to a clearing. There are several flat rocks in the clearing surrounded by soft moss. A small stream runs among the rocks. You lie back on one of the rocks or on the cushiony moss and put your feet into the cool water. You feel the warm sun and a gentle, light breeze through your hair and across your skin. The sparkling clear water rushes around the multicolored rocks, making little whirlpools and eddies. You put your hand into the water and lift a handful to your lips. The water is cool and refreshing. You close your eyes listen to the water trickling through the rock. You bath in the warm sun and feel as though you are floating... relaxing deeper and deeper.

You let yourself sink further into relaxation, while continuing to be aware of the sights, smells, sounds, and feel of the forest around you. You allow yourself to let go of any concerns or worries and to feel completely refreshed and rejuvenated in this place.

When you are ready, imagine that you slowly get up and leave the clearing. As you walk back down the path through the forest, fully take in this place and realize that you may return whenever you wish by the same path. Each time you enter this place you will feel relaxed and at peace.

### **Imagery Script 3: The Beach**

For a few moments allow yourself to take several nice, long, deep breaths. Notice the cool air coming in, filling your lungs, and the soothing warm air going out. Just let all your thoughts float away as you bring your attention to your breathing... in and out.

You might mentally scan your body and notice if you're holding any tension in your muscles. If you are, just gently let all that tension melt away with every out breath. Bring your attention to your breathing, in and out... in and out... let yourself feel more and more comfortable sitting where you are.

In your mind's eye you see yourself descending down a long, narrow, wooden stairway towards a beautiful, inviting beach. Your bare feet feel the rough weathered steps, and with each step, you feel more and more tension gently melting away from your body.

As you continue down the stairway, you notice how the bright white sand stretches down the shoreline as far as you can see. The ocean is a deep shade of blue with the fine white crests of the waves sweeping towards the shore. You reach the end of the stairway and step down, sinking into the warm soothing sand. As you rub the sand lightly between your toes, a soothing sensation of relaxation gently melts through your entire body. The roaring sounds of the sea's surf, the waves crashing over each other, calms your mind and allows you to feel even more relaxed.

You begin walking slowly towards the edge of the water and notice the warm sun on your face and shoulders. The salty smell of the sea air invigorates you, and you take in a deep breath... breathe slowly out... and feel more relaxed and refreshed. Finally, you reach the water's edge and you gladly invite the waves to flow over your toes and ankles. You watch the waves glide smoothly towards you, gently sweeping around your feet, and the trails of sea water that flow slowly back out again. The cool water feels soft and comforting as you enjoy a few moments allowing yourself to gaze out on the far-reaching horizon. Overhead, you notice two seagulls gracefully soaring high above the ocean waters, and you can hear their soft cries becoming faint as they glide away. And all of these sights, sounds, and sensations allow you to let go and relax more and more.

After a moment you begin strolling down the beach at the water's edge. You feel a cool gentle breeze pressing lightly against your back, and with every step you feel yourself relaxing more and more. As you walk down the beach you notice the details of sights and sounds around you, and soothing sensations of the sun, the breeze, and the sand below your feet.

As you continue your leisurely walk down the beach, you notice a colorful beach chair resting in a nice peaceful spot where the powdery soft sand lies undisturbed. You approach this comfortable looking beach chair, then you sit down, lie back, and settle in. You take in a long deep breath, breathe slowly out, and feel even more relaxed and comfortable resting in your chair. For a few moments more, let yourself enjoy the sights and sounds of this beautiful day on the beach. And, when you feel ready, you can gently bring your attention back to the room... still letting yourself feel nice and comfortable sitting where you are.



## Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script

Progressive muscle relaxation is an exercise that reduces stress and anxiety in your body by having you slowly tense and then relax each muscle. This exercise can provide an immediate feeling of relaxation, but it's best to practice frequently. With experience, you will become more aware of when you are experiencing tension and you will have the skills to help you relax. During this exercise, each muscle should be tensed, but not to the point of strain. If you have any injuries or pain, you can skip the affected areas. Pay special attention to the feeling of releasing tension in each muscle and the resulting feeling of relaxation. Let's begin.

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Shut your eyes if you're comfortable doing so.

Begin by taking a deep breath and noticing the feeling of air filling your lungs. Hold your breath for a few seconds.

*(brief pause)*

Release the breath slowly and let the tension leave your body.

Take in another deep breath and hold it.

*(brief pause)*

Again, slowly release the air.

Even slower now, take another breath. Fill your lungs and hold the air.

*(brief pause)*

Slowly release the breath and imagine the feeling of tension leaving your body.

Now, move your attention to your feet. Begin to tense your feet by curling your toes and the arch of your foot. Hold onto the tension and notice what it feels like.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension in your foot. Notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Next, begin to focus on your lower leg. Tense the muscles in your calves. Hold them tightly and pay attention to the feeling of tension.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your lower legs. Again, notice the feeling of relaxation. Remember to continue taking deep breaths.

Next, tense the muscles of your upper leg and pelvis. You can do this by tightly squeezing your thighs together. Make sure you feel tenseness without going to the point of strain.

*(5 second pause)*



## Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script

And release. Feel the tension leave your muscles.

Begin to tense your stomach and chest. You can do this by sucking your stomach in. Squeeze harder and hold the tension. A little bit longer.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension. Allow your body to go limp. Let yourself notice the feeling of relaxation.

Continue taking deep breaths. Breathe in slowly, noticing the air fill your lungs, and hold it.

*(brief pause)*

Release the air slowly. Feel it leaving your lungs.

Next, tense the muscles in your back by bringing your shoulders together behind you. Hold them tightly. Tense them as hard as you can without straining and keep holding.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your back. Feel the tension slowly leaving your body, and the new feeling of relaxation. Notice how different your body feels when you allow it to relax.

Tense your arms all the way from your hands to your shoulders. Make a fist and squeeze all the way up your arm. Hold it.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your arms and shoulders. Notice the feeling of relaxation in your fingers, hands, arms, and shoulders. Notice how your arms feel limp and at ease.

Move up to your neck and your head. Tense your face and your neck by distorting the muscles around your eyes and mouth.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension. Again, notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Finally, tense your entire body. Tense your feet, legs, stomach, chest, arms, head, and neck. Tense harder, without straining. Hold the tension.

*(5 second pause)*

Now release. Allow your whole body to go limp. Pay attention to the feeling of relaxation, and how different it is from the feeling of tension.

Begin to wake your body up by slowly moving your muscles. Adjust your arms and legs.

Stretch your muscles and open your eyes when you're ready.

## Appendix F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Stress Management Checklist**

Use this checklist to keep track of your progress as to how you are managing your stress. Are there any days more stressful than others?

Question	Sun	M	T	W	TH	F	Sat
Kept a stress journal							
Exercised							
Laughed with friends							
Avoided unnecessary stress							
Refocused myself to look at the positive							
Used a stress coping skill							
Talked to someone about what was bothering me							
Accepted the stress I could not change							
Refrained from blaming myself							
Kept my expectations realistic							
Total of each column							

My most stressful days are: \_\_\_\_\_

1 thing I was proud of this week: \_\_\_\_\_



The following are strategies I will use in the future to bust my stress:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

## Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies

**Coping strategies** are actions we take—consciously or unconsciously—to deal with stress, problems, or uncomfortable emotions. Unhealthy coping strategies tend to feel good in the moment, but have long-term negative consequences. Healthy coping strategies may not provide instant gratification, but they lead to long-lasting positive outcomes.

Examples of <u>unhealthy</u> coping strategies:	Examples of <u>healthy</u> coping strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drug or alcohol use</li> <li>• Overeating</li> <li>• Procrastination</li> <li>• Sleeping too much or too little</li> <li>• Social withdrawal</li> <li>• Self-harm</li> <li>• Aggression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Talking about your problem</li> <li>• Healthy eating</li> <li>• Seeking professional help</li> <li>• Relaxation techniques (e.g. deep breathing)</li> <li>• Using social support</li> <li>• Problem-solving techniques</li> </ul>

### Example Scenarios

Noelle has a research paper due in one of her classes. Because the paper will require so much work, Noelle feels anxious every time she thinks about it. When Noelle distracts herself with other activities, she feels better. Noelle uses the coping strategy of procrastination to avoid her feelings of anxiety. This helps her feel better now, but will cause problems in the long run.

Juan feels jealous whenever his wife spends time with her friends. To control the situation, Juan uses insults to put down his wife's friends, and he demands that his wife stay home. When Juan's wife caves to his demands, he feels a sense of relief. Juan uses the coping strategy of aggression to avoid the discomfort of jealousy.

Rebecca is angry about being passed over for a promotion at work. Rather than discussing the situation with her boss and trying to improve her work performance, she holds onto her anger. Rebecca has learned to manage her anger by drinking alcohol. Drinking numbs Rebecca's anger temporarily, but the problems at work remain unresolved.

### Scenario Discussion Questions

- What consequences might result from this individual's unhealthy coping strategy?
- What healthy coping strategies could be helpful for the individual?
- What barriers might be preventing the individual from using healthy coping strategies?

## Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies

<b>Describe a problem you are currently dealing with:</b>

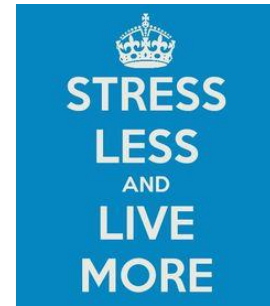
My unhealthy coping strategies:	Consequences of unhealthy coping strategies:
1	
2	

Healthy coping strategies I use, or could use:	Expected outcomes of healthy coping strategies:	Barriers to using healthy coping strategies:
1		
2		
3		

Appendix G

# Cartoon Creation

The worksheet is titled "Cartoon Creation" and contains four large, empty rectangular panels arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each panel is numbered in its top center: "1" (top-left), "2" (top-right), "3" (bottom-left), and "4" (bottom-right). The panels are designed to be drawn into, with a shaded area at the bottom of each panel representing a floor or ground line. The entire page is intended for a student to create a four-panel cartoon.



## My Stress Plan

Stressor:

Stress Response:

Reframed to Positive Stress Statement:

In or out of control:

Social Support/How they can help:

Management Technique/Explain:

How I refrain from Blaming Myself:

Stressor:

Stress Response:

Reframed to Positive Stress Statement:

In or out of control:

Social Support/How they can help:

Management Technique/Explain:

How I refrain from Blaming Myself:

Stressor:

Stress Response:



Reframed to Positive Stress Statement:

In or out of control:

Social Support/How they can help:

Management Technique/Explain:

How I refrain from Blaming Myself:

## Surfing with the Sea's Formal Post Assessment

1) Describe the difference between stressors in your life and stress response.

2) Explain the Three Stages of the General Adaptation Cycle of Stress.

3) What does it mean to reframe our stressors?

4) List three coping skills you will utilize as you leave this group in your "Stress Tool Box" and how they will be helpful to reducing your stress.

- 
- 
- 

5) Circle the following number, 5 being a coping strategy you found very helpful and you can and believe you can implement into your life, and 0 being not helpful and don't see yourself utilizing.

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| 1. The Practice of Reframing our stressors | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Practicing Mindfulness and Breathing    | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Guided Imagery                          | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Progressive Muscle Relaxation           | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Support System                          | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Formulating my own Coping Strategies    | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |

6) Your biggest takeaway and favorite part of group~