

Got Stress? Let's Deal With It

Outcome

USC6.4 Assess and demonstrate strategies used to identify and make healthy decisions in stressful situations.

Indicators

USC6.4(B) Inventory the kinds of situations that may create anxiety for grade 6 students (e.g., family break-up, moving, getting/unable to afford braces/glasses, public speaking, body image, academic pressure, foster care, death, economic status).

USC6.4(C) Analyze physical, mental, and emotional responses (both positive and negative) to stress (e.g., heightened alertness, motivations, 'fight or flight', illness, withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, difficulty eating and/or sleeping).

USC6.4(D) Examine stressors for which one can plan and/or over which one has control.

USC6.4(F) Propose healthy (e.g., exercise, sleep, self-talk, deep breathing, communicating) and unhealthy ways (e.g., substance abuse, aggression, withdrawal) of managing stress and compare related short-term and long-term consequences (e.g., physical, mental, emotional, spiritual).

USC6.4(H) Determine when anxiety is "normal" and when professional help may be required.

Refer to the background information pages on:

- Stress

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1. Brainstorm responses to the following question; "What is anxiety and what is stress? Encourage students to identify stressful situations.

- Bring a violin (or something else that uses tension with wires/strings). Use the analogy of tension on a violin string to help students understand what stress is. If the string is too loose, it results in a dull sound that is out of tune. If it is too tight, it produces a shrill, annoying sound and can snap easily. However, just the right amount of tension can create a magnificent tone. Similarly, everyone needs to find a proper level of stress that promotes maximum performance and a healthy balance for their lives.
- People are affected differently by stress. Everyone has a different personality and different ways of managing stressful situations. Adopting healthy stress-management skills is important in order to learn how to cope with stress. Part of adopting healthy stress-management skills is recognizing how we respond to stress.
- Ask students to brainstorm the physical, mental, and emotional responses to stress. Analyze how and why people respond to stress differently and how these responses may be positive or negative. (e.g., Some individuals in certain situations may feel a sense of heightened alertness from stress. This might be considered a positive response to stress as it can be a protective response. A negative example of stress would be if an individual is feeling overwhelmed or anxious and as a result has difficulty concentrating. This may make learning at school much more challenging.)
- Ask students to brainstorm the kinds of situations that may create anxiety for them personally.
- Ask the students to discuss when anxiety is normal. How do they know if it is normal/not normal? What should be done if someone is experiencing anxiety that is not normal? Identify when they believe people who are experiencing stress should seek professional help and discuss as a class.

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2. Divide the class into small groups. Have each group choose a leader and a recorder. Group leaders will ask each of the students to give two answers to each question. Document the answers to the following questions:

- What makes you stressed? Record the kinds of situations that may cause you anxiety or stress.
- Based on your answer(s) above, identify if this is a stressor for which you can plan and/or over which you have control. If yes, describe how. If no, analyze and describe why not.
- How does stress make you feel? What happens to you when you are stressed? (e.g., physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually)
- What are some ways that people manage stress?

3. Groups will research and summarize the key ideas/categories and then present them to the class.

4. Have students individually represent strategies for managing stress in an effective and healthy manner through reflection (e.g., journal, poetry, drama, dance, music, etc.).

Note:

Tobacco use (as well as the use of other substances) are unhealthy coping mechanisms for stress. It is important to reinforce that using tobacco is an unhealthy way of managing stress.