

Stress Management



Overview: Stress Management is a lesson that helps learners to understand that stress is a part of everyone’s life. This lesson focuses on how learners are feeling and what they can do to control the stress they may have in their life as workers, parents, and citizens.

Educational Goal: The objective of this lesson is for each learner to (1) comprehend stress, (2) manage it and (3) respond positively to stress management as it applies to their life and goals.

Objectives: The learners will:

- Cognitive:*
- Define stress
 - Explain what causes stress
 - Identify causes of stress in personal life
 - Predict how they can apply stress management to their lives.
- Affective:*
- Participate in class discussion
 - Describe the importance in managing stress

Skills Connection: This lesson has connections to the Tennessee KSAs – *Solve Problems, How and When to Make Decisions*, and *Stay Calm Under Pressure* and the EFF Standard – *Solve Problems and Make Decisions*.

Teaching Strategy: If learners have been in an adult education class for several weeks they may be feeling some stress with their workload, time management, etc. Both good and bad events can cause stress in an adult’s daily life. Learners have felt stress in their roles as workers, parents, and citizens. Sometimes they will voice their frustrations to the class.

In this lesson use mind mapping and the Read, Write, Discuss Method to bring out the learners’ prior knowledge and experiences with stress. Give the learners time to think about where stress comes from in their lives and record their answers on the board. After they have completed the mind map have each student complete a *Stress Survey* to determine their level of stress. Follow up the survey with a discussion about what they learned about themselves specifically and what they learned about stress in general.

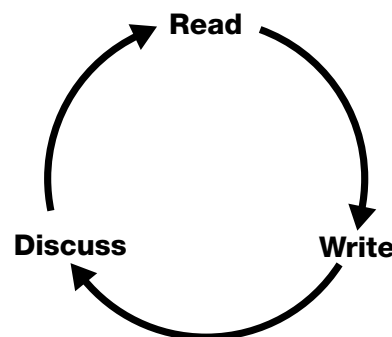
Time: 1-2 hours

Teaching Materials:

- Draw beginning of the mind map on the board
- Social Readjustment Rating

Student Materials:

- Social Readjustment Rating Stress Survey or a survey of your choice. *Example:* Life Stress Test on the web at: www.cliving.org/lifestrstst.htm
- Learner Note Taker
- “What Everyone Should Know About Stress,” A Scriptographic Booklet by Channing L. Bete. Co. Inc., South Deerfield, MA 01379 (www.channing-bete.com)



Lesson Plan

Introduction

Stress management is an important skill that all adults need in order to improve themselves as problem solvers and to be more in control of their lives. Many adult learners come back to school when there has been a change in their lives. Sometimes the change is triggered by a stressful event in an adult's life. In many classroom situations, there are several opportunities for learners to voice what they are feeling and what they are experiencing in their lives. This lesson focuses on what stress is, what causes it, where individuals are on the Social Readjustment Rating and what you can do to manage your stress.

You will use the EFF Standard *Solve Problems and Make Decisions* to understand how to identify your sources of stress, understand the stress and its root cause, generate alternative solutions, and select the best solutions. This is a developmental lesson that prepares you to begin to develop the following KSAs: *Self-Awareness*, *Accept and Manage Change*, and *How and When to Make Decisions*.

Attention: Reflect back to why you made the decision to return to school.

Question: What changes in your lives caused you to return to school? (Record their responses on the board.)

Question: Do you think that any of the changes on the board could be labeled as sources of stress?

(At this time some learners will want to share some of the stresses that they have in their lives. Accept all answers. After they have shared tell the learners that today they will learn to identify sources of stress, generate and evaluate solutions, and select the best solutions to try.)

Overview: Everyone suffers from stress on some level. No one is immune to it. Sometimes stress levels are higher and sometimes they are considerably lower. We are going to learn what stress is, what causes it, and how to manage it. We don't have to let stress stop us from achieving what we want in life. If we can learn to control it, then we will probably have a better chance at succeeding. We will be using the read, write, and discuss method and mind mapping throughout this lesson. At the end of this lesson you should be able to:

1. Define what stress is.
2. Explain stress management.
3. Predict how you can manage your stress in life.
4. Describe how you can use what you have learned.

Body of Lesson

Main Point 1. Sources of Stress

A. What is stress? Stress is our body’s physical and emotional reaction to circumstances or events that frighten, irritate, confuse, endanger, or excite us and place demands on the body.

B. What creates stress? Stress can be caused by events that are pleasing as well as events that create crisis in our lives. Change causes stress—good change or bad change; it does not make a difference. When change occurs we usually experience some level of stress. For example, the birth of a baby can create stress. Working toward your GED can create stress. Trying to fulfill the requirements of your case manager can be stressful. Getting married or planning a birthday party for a family member can cause stress. Anything that causes us to have a physical or emotional reaction can create stress.

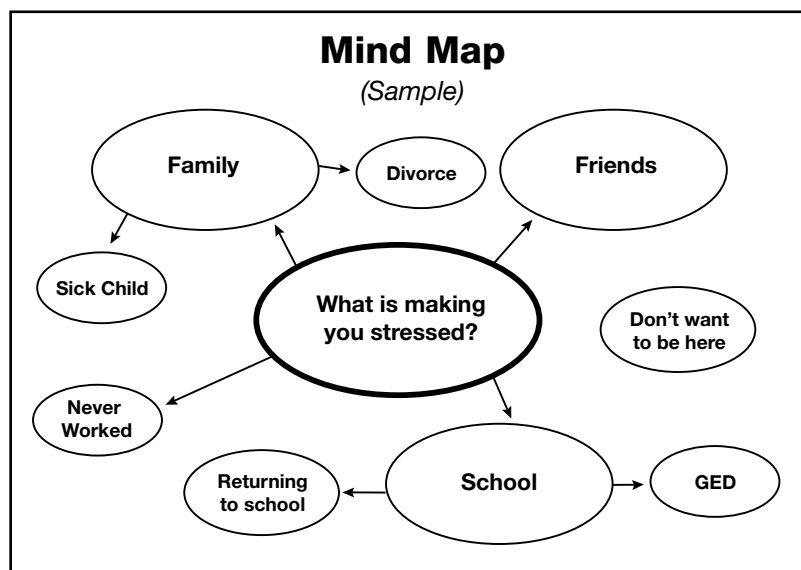
C. Let’s think about times when you may have felt stressed. How many of you have ever felt stressed? What was causing your stress? Think of changes that have occurred in your life. What were those changes? (Record student responses on board using a mind map.)

Now that we have identified some sources of stress, let’s take a closer look. (Give each learner the *Stress Handout Survey* by Thomas H. Holmes and R.H. Rahe. Tell students that we are going to look at a list of life events. Read the list and tell students to listen. If this life event has happened to them within the last year they should check the box next to it. Read the list aloud and give plenty of time for students to mark their sheet. When they have finished, give them the scoring sheet and explain how to score their sheets. Walk around the room and help students with the scoring.

Teaching Tip



It may difficult for some learners to identify the causes of their stress. When this is the case, allow them time to think and keep probing to see if they can identify the root cause of the stress in each example.



When students have completed scoring their sheets, make the following points:

1. The more change you have in your life, the more likely you are to get sick.
2. The higher your score, the harder you should work to stay well.
3. Stress can be cumulative. Life events that happened two years ago may still be affecting you.)

Teaching Tip



You may want the group to work together or individually depending on reading levels and comfort levels. Ask students to add up their scores. They should be reminded that they do not need to share their answers with anyone else.

Now that we have finished the survey, let's discuss some of the things that we discovered and what the list implies. The events do not have to be negative to create stress. You may discover some events that you have never thought of as stressful.

Question: Did you notice anything different or surprising about the list?

Question: Why would these kinds of events be stressful?
(Record student answers on the board)

Main Point 2. Symptoms of Stress

Now that you have identified your areas of stress, let's take a closer look and see the physical results of stress. Our body can react to stress either by preparing for flight or fight. How do you feel when you know you are going to be tested or have to discuss a problem with your caseworker? Have you ever suddenly gotten sick at your stomach and not been able to eat? That is your body shutting down the systems that are unnecessary as it prepares for "flight or fight." (Give students the Scriptographic booklet, *What Everyone Should Know About Stress*. Read together pages 6-9. Discuss the symptoms of stress and ask the students to look back at their survey and see if they can identify how they felt when these events happened in their life. Next, read pages 10-13 to identify ways to cope with stress. Read and discuss these pages with the students.)

Main Point 3. Controlling Stress

It is important to learn how to reduce stress. The following activities can help reduce stress.

- Take time to think and relax.
- Read a good book.
- Work on a hobby.
- Play an instrument.
- Exercise, take a walk—this is the easiest and most effective means of reducing stress.

- Listen to music.
- Be aware of the foods you eat. Some foods with high fat, sugar, caffeine, salt and additives can contribute to stress.
- Breathe deeply and use breathing exercises to relieve anxiety, depression, irritability, and fatigue.
- Build a support system. Talk with friends or family that you trust about problems you have or decisions that you must make.
- Develop your communication skills so that your communication is honest, direct, and respectful of yourself and others.
- Identify areas of agreement and disagreement and look for options to resolve the conflict in a win/win solution.
- Improve your ability to see options and resources that can be used to solve problems.
- Plan.
- Laugh.
- Take a mental health day and spend time with yourself or with friends.

Four ways to deal with stress before taking a test, giving a speech, or completing a project:

1. **Breath deeply**—this will get oxygen into your blood and will help you to feel invigorated.
2. **Exercise**—take a quick walk for about five minutes.
3. **Eat a snack**—fruit or something sweet will help raise your blood sugar and give you some energy.
4. **Take a quick break**—get up, walk around, listen to music, use positive self-talk, and visualize yourself completing the test, project, speech, etc.

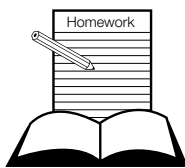
Main Point 4: Applying What You Have Learned

How can you apply what you have learned? (Allow learners to answer this question and record their answers on the board. After they have contributed all the ideas they can think of, share the following information with them.) The first thing you should do is to identify your stress, then use the following steps to manage or to eliminate the stress in your life.

1. Identify the source of the stress.
2. Use information to come to a clear understanding of the problem and its root causes. You can use Five Whys to determine the cause. For example, if I am not making progress in my adult classes I can ask the questions. Why am I not making progress? I missed five days this month. Why? My car broke down. Why? The engine burned up. Why? I didn't change the oil. Why? I didn't take time and make plans for preventive maintenance.

Teaching Tip

There are many books, magazine articles, and cartoons available on the subject of stress. Collect these and use as resources for this lesson. You may also want to invite in special speakers who can speak to your class about stress management or a group who would be able to provide your class with a stress management seminar. We have used all of these methods in *Learning Skills* and found that they all worked equally well as long as the teacher followed up with a discussion of how the learner could use the information presented.



3. Generate possible solutions to the problem.
4. Evaluate the strength and weakness of each solution.
5. Determine the potential risks and benefits of each solution as well as the consequences.
6. Select the solution that is most appropriate.
7. Carry out your plan and develop criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the solution.

It is important to take care of problems that come up in life. Be prepared to make good decisions, think about the result of an action; try to improve problem-solving methods. There may be less emotional stress if we allow ourselves time to think about ourselves, others, or problems.

Conclusion

Summary: Today you have learned that stress can be caused by positive or negative events. By learning how to identify the stress factors in your life and strategies to cope with these factors you take control of your life. The basic points to remember are: be aware of the symptoms of stress, identify the source of your stress, and choose a strategy to control your stress.

Re-Motivation: Knowing how to control stress will improve the quality of your life as a learner, parent/family member, or worker.

Close: As you grow and develop your skills, the potential for stress in your life may become greater. Don't let that stop you! You now have some basic strategies to help you meet your challenges. Re-read "What Everyone Should Know About Stress," A Scriptographic Booklet by Channing L. Bete Co. Inc. Apply the techniques to your school life, family life, and community life.

Homework Assignment: Document Your Stress. Discuss with your family the stress factors in your life. Write down your family's responses and be prepared to share with the class ways to cope with these factors.

Weekly Review – What Have I Learned This Week and Changes
(see Master Lesson 9)