



Coping with Stress Unit

Grade 7 • Ages 12-14

TIME FRAME

Preparation: 10 minutes
Instruction: 30 minutes

MATERIALS

Video: Teens Talk About Stress (2 min 20 sec) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27Z-mfzgSyA>

Large space for activity, desks moved in classroom or gym/outdoor space

20-30 balloons, enough for each student to have at least one; don't blow up the balloons before class (Alternatively, use paper they can ball up)

Masking tape & markers, one for each team of five students

RAK Journals

[Kindness Concept Posters:](#)
Responsibility, Self-Care, Self-Discipline

LEARNING STANDARDS

Common Core: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1, 1b, 2 Colorado: Comprehensive Health S.3, GLE.2, EO.a-f; Reading, Writing and Communicating S.1, GLE.2, EO.b,c

SEL: Self-awareness, Social awareness, Self-management

[Learning standards key](#)

Stressed Out

Students will be introduced to stress; how it can be both beneficial and overwhelming.

Lesson Background for Teachers

Stress affects all of us in the classroom, our kids, parents and teachers. The right amount of stress can be motivating and create productivity, but as soon as we have too much, it can affect our mood, productivity and our brain's ability to process knowledge. And stress is contagious! It's critical for everyone's mental health to learn to recognize and manage our stress.

Article: How Stress Affects the Brain During Learning: <http://www.edudemic.com/stress-affects-brain-learning/>

Video: TEd Ed: How Stress Affects the Brain (4 min 15 sec)- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuyPuH9ojCE>

Video: Kristen Race: Generation Stress: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_JdVeadLnA

Key Terms for Students

Consider writing key terms on the board before class to introduce vocabulary and increase understanding.

RESPONSIBILITY	Being reliable to do the things that are expected or required in your life, home, community and environment.
SELF-CARE	Caring for yourself mentally, physically, emotionally and socially through your words, actions and thoughts.
SELF-DISCIPLINE	Controlling one's actions and words for the benefit of self and others.
STRESS	Something that makes you feel worried or anxious.



The RAK paradigm is the framework for teaching and building kindness skills.

RAK lessons teach kindness skills through a step-by-step framework of **Inspire, Empower, Act** and **Share**.

The **Share** step in the first lesson of each unit is intended to set the tone for teaching kindness.



TIPS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

Students might benefit from:

- Doing this activity in the gym or outside so they have more room to move around.
- Seeing the time projected on a screen to help with the game transitions.
- Having the responses to the questions available while they are journaling during the evaluation

Resources

Adapted from *More Activities that Teach* by Tom Jackson (Red Rock Publishing: Cedar City, UT, 1995)

4th Grade: Stress Busters Unit

Video for students about what happens in our brains during stress: Kristen Race: Helping Kids Manage Stress (3 min 53 sec)- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrDIU_Z_O7E

Video: TEd Ed: How Stress Affects the Brain (4 min 15 sec)- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuyPuH9ojCE>

Video: Teens Talk About Stress (2 min 20 sec) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27Z-mfzgSyA>

Article: The Neuroscience Behind Stress and Learning <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/neuroscience-behind-stress-and-learning-judy-willis>

Article: Adolescents' Coping with Stress <https://www.pdx.edu/sites/www.pdx.edu/psy/files/15-4-Zimmer-Gembeck-E.pdf>

Share (3 mins)

Tell the person next to you where you are and what you're doing when you feel the most comfortable and relaxed.

Inspire

Stress Video (5 min optional)

Consider starting the lesson by showing students the video:

Video for students about what happens in our brains during stress: Kristen Race: Helping Kids Manage Stress (3 min 53 sec)- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrDIU_Z_O7E

Stress Game (10 min optional)

Move desks aside in the classroom so students have a large area. You could also do this activity in the gym or outside.

Divide students into teams of about five, and make sure there is an even number of teams. Have two teams line up on the floor across from each other, with about six feet in between. Make sure teams are spaced out in the room so that they don't run into each other when playing the game described below. Place a piece of masking tape on the floor between the two teams. Give each team a balloon/paper and a magic marker and have one person on the team blow up the balloon and tie it off.

I want you to decide as a team ONE thing that stresses you out and write it carefully on the balloon/paper with a magic marker. Then one person on your team will share what you wrote with the rest of the class. If using paper option, have them ball up the paper.

This game is kind of like volleyball without the net. When I say "go," you will hit your balloon/ball over to the team across from you. Each team scores a point when a balloon touches the ground on the opposing teams' side of the masking tape. There are no out of bounds, so balloons can be hit over your heads. You can only hit with your hands. No kicking! I will say "go" and you will play for about 20 seconds. Have one person on each team keep score while you are playing.

Say go and allow students to hit the two balloons back and forth for 20 seconds. If you want, you can write the scores on the board for each team.

Then, hand a second balloon/paper to one person on each team. Have students write another stressor on the team's balloon. Then play another round, this time with four balloons between the two teams. Say go and allow another 20 seconds or however long you want to play.

Play as many rounds as you like, up to five balloons on each team. The more balloons (or stressors), the more challenging the game becomes.



Empower

Discussion (5 minutes—longer as needed)

After the activity, ask the following questions and write responses on the board:

- How well did your team do? Were you able to keep most of the balloons in the air?
- What happened as you added more balloons? Did you feel that the activity became more difficult? Why or why not?
- Even though you were stressed, did wanting to win motivate you to hit the balloons in the air? Can stress ever be a positive thing? Does it ever motivate you to get things done?
- In your own lives, what happens when you add more stressors? Do you find it easier to handle one or two stressors but that life becomes more difficult as you add more stressors? Why?

Wrap Up (5 mins)

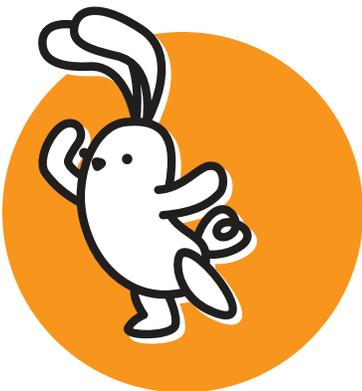
To gauge understanding of the material, choose from either the evaluation or reflection questions as discussion, writing or journal prompts. Consider providing additional time for deeper evaluation and reflection as needed.

Evaluation Questions

- What is **stress**?
- What are some of the things people listed as **stressors** in their lives?
- Can **stress** be good? Why?

Reflection

- Do you think it is important to learn how to manage **stress**? What is one way you can do that?
- We said a little bit of **stress** can be motivating. How do you think you know when you have too much **stress**?
- How do you think too much **stress** can affect the way you interact with others?



Summary

Everyone has stress in their lives. Stress can motivate us to try harder and work better, but it can also feel overwhelming. It's important for self-kindness and care to know when you cross over that line.



Act (2 mins)

Kindness Minute

One way to let your stress out is to take a deep breath and yell from the pit of your stomach for 5 seconds. (Just long enough to let off some steam, but not long enough that someone might call the police on you!)

Kindness in Action

Practice a stress relief activity by imagining the most peaceful place you've ever been. Write a paragraph about as many details as you can describe.

