

# Stress Relief and Self Care



## Goals

Participants will be able to:

- Define stress
- Use self assessment skills to identify personal stressors and responses
- Identify and practice specific healthy techniques to reduce stress

## Pre-group Preparation

- Review session
- Copy Handouts for each participant
  - Coping With Stressors
  - Self-Care Survey
  - Self-Care Tips

## Materials

- A heavy book
- Handouts:
  - Handout Coping With Stressors
  - Self Care Survey
  - Self Care Tips
- Pencils
- Post group agreements and goals for the session

## Icebreaker

- List 3 issues that you were concerned or worried about last week?
- Write 1-3 questions/comments about teens and stress
- Review Group Agreements

## Discussion

- Adolescence is a period of significant change, including physical, emotional, social, and academic changes; many teens are under more stress than at any other time of life.
- It is very important for teens to learn to handle stress, as long-term build-up of stress that is not handled effectively may lead to problems, including physical illness, anxiety or depression, which call for professional help.

### **Discussion: What is Stress?**

What exactly is stress? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), stress is the body's physical and psychological response to anything perceived as overwhelming. This may be viewed as a result of life's demands—pleasant or unpleasant—and the individual's lack of resources to meet them.

While stress is a natural part of life, it often creates imbalance in the body, especially a teen's body, which is already experiencing so many changes. A certain amount of stress can be helpful as a way of staying motivated. But, too much or too little may render us ineffective and interfere with our relationships at home and socially, as well as our physical well-being.

*Surprise the group/class by slamming a book down on a desk hard and loud!*

The fact that you just jumped in your chairs in response to the loud noise, is the body's natural adjustment to sudden or immediate changes ---the fight or flight syndrome.

### **Discussion: Invisible Tigers - Stressors and Responses**

Our reaction to stress is a primitive response, dating back thousands of years when humans faced life-threatening dangers every day. Surprising a saber-toothed tiger in the wild, humans needed that quick rush of adrenaline to help them fight or run.

Today our stressful situations rarely involve saber-toothed tigers, but the bodily reaction to things that concern, frighten, alarm or anger us are very similar. However, today it might be a text message from an angry friend or an unexpected classroom assignment which provokes the stress response. These hormonal reactions cause:

- Heart to pound rapidly
- Muscles to tighten
- Blood pressure to rise
- Breath to quicken

- Senses to sharpen

Stressors are circumstances or events that trigger a stress response. Stressors affect people in different ways. Many researchers believe that the effects of stress are related more to an individual's reactions to it than to specific stressors themselves.

Example: flat tire (some might react with anger, kicking the tire, using profanity, while a different person might just shrug off the incident and immediately start changing the tire).

### **Activity 1: Helpful...Not so Helpful**

- Using the Handout 2, **Helpful...Not so Helpful**, work in large group or pairs to identify responses to stressors under the different categories.
- Debrief activity

### **Activity 2: Self-Care Survey**

- Pass out Self Care survey to students
- Give them 5 minutes to fill out
- Share out answers; discuss 1-2 that are not highly sensitive

### **Activity 3: Brainstorm**

- Have participants brainstorm ways to take care of themselves in stressful situations
- Examples: Go for a walk; listen to music
- Refer to Self Care Tips for more ideas

### **Check Out – Self Care this week:**

What is one thing you are willing to do this week to take care of yourself?