

Snowball Stress Toss

Feelings of stress are part of daily life and understanding the difference between helpful stress and toxic stress leads the way for healthy motivation and decision-making. Healthy stress motivates us to be mindful and prepared – for example, to wake up on time or study for that big test. We also know that unhealthy, toxic stress can lead to fear and anxiety about the future and might keep us from enjoying life, feeling confident, and accomplishing daily tasks. Stress can be tough to share about and feeling safe is crucial for genuine trust and connection. The following activity explores stress while maintaining anonymity, which creates a safe space for conversation with youth and adults. Use this activity to encourage self-awareness, social awareness, and genuine connection within groups.

Social Emotional Learning Competency:

- Relationship building/social awareness

Connection Key:

- Safe spaces create connections.
- Hands-on equals minds on.

Materials:

- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Enough space to toss “snowballs”

Purpose:

- Provides anonymity – a safe space to discuss big and small topics as a group.
- Participants learn to process a variety of topics openly.
- Promotes emotional recognition and understanding,.

Success Indicators:

- Participants share feelings about selected topic(s).
- Participants report feeling safe to share during the activity.

For more information and activity resources visit <https://u.osu.edu/4hjournal/>

Activity Instructions

1. Make sure that participants have paper and pen or pencil.
2. Prompt participants to think about their own stress, a stressful topic, or thoughts about stress in general. Prompts can also involve other feelings or topics, or they can be simple questions relevant to the participants (e.g., How is everyone handling their college search?). Participants might also write about a specific issue they or someone they know is facing (e.g., depression, anxiety, or other struggles).
3. Ask participants to write their response on a piece of paper. When finished, have everyone stand up and crumple up their papers. Share something like, “Stress can ‘snowball’ if we don’t know what to do with it, and oftentimes we just need to let it go. So, that is what we are going to do – let it go!”
4. Share that all paper balls are now snowballs and tell participants to toss their snowball to another part of the room (and avoid throwing it directly at someone).
5. After, have everyone pick up a paper ball near them. Go around the room and ask participants to share the information on their paper, emphasizing that this is a safe space. This allows for anonymous sharing. As a group, discuss what is shared.

Created by Tyler Kessler, 4-H Educator, for Ohio 4-H Conference, 03/12/2022



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