Stress Management

Stress is our reaction to emotional, physical, or environmental pressures, usually caused by events or thoughts that make you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress can take its toll on our body and brain, so it's important to make sure we learn how to control and improve the levels of stress in our lives.

Mental Stress:

When we become stressed, the chemicals in our brain become unbalanced. Our brains can get tired and it is challenging to stay mentally strong. Some of these symptoms include becoming easily moody, feeling overwhelmed, having difficulty relaxing, or avoiding others.

Physical Stress:

Since stress occurs in the brain, and our brains control our body, there are also negative effects physically. When you're stressed, it's hard to"turn your brain off" and get a good night's sleep.

Sometimes, stress can also have an effect on our daily diets. Stress can make us want to eat a lot or a little, but it's important to try and maintain our normal, healthy lifestyles. When we're stressed, we sometimes think the best way to feel better is to eat something comforting. **Examples include:** candy, chips or soda. We think these foods will help us feel better, but in reality they won't help us in the long run because they aren't giving our body the nutrients it needs. Did you know that when you're stressed, your body retains more calories as fat? This is because your body biologically knows something is wrong and is preparing itself for scarcity.

Also, when we're stressed our immune system is negatively affected. This means it's easier for us to get sick because our body isn't strong enough to fight off the germs that are trying to infect us, and takes longer to recover from injury and illness.

How to Combat Stress:

Be Active

Stress is hard to deal with, and unfortunately, it's something that we deal with almost every day. It's important to learn how to manage stress and try to limit negative effects on our bodies. A great way to combat stress is exercise. When we exercise, our brains release good chemicals that can help overcome the bad ones caused by stress. Exercise helps bring in good thoughts and kick out the bad ones, all while getting more fit! So, it's always a good idea to get active when you're feeling stressed to help your brain and body feel better.

Be Organized

If you feel like your brain is too full and causing you to feel stressed, being more organized can help keep yourself in check. Try writing things that you have to do in a planner or keeping folders on your desk with your important papers in it. By laying out all the stuff you have to get done, it's easier to plan ahead and mentally prepare for what you have to do. By setting goals and achieving them, it's easier to level out your stress.

Learn to Say "No"

One of the most important things in controlling stress is knowing when to say enough is enough! Sometimes, it's hard to say no to others, but you need to make sure to take care of yourself first. If you've had a long day, don't be afraid to just take some time for yourself. Watch a movie to calm down, take a long bath to relax or read a book in bed. Making sure to take time by yourself is a great way to de-stress and re-energize for another day. Knowing how much you can handle is important for knowing your appropriate stress level and when you should take a step back.

Stress is hard to deal with, but it's something we all experience! Taking a moment to evaluate your mental and physical health is important to know how to go about handling stress. Don't be embarrassed or afraid to do what is best for you (because only you know how to handle your own stress level Take a deep breath, stand up tall, and show stress who's the real boss!

Activity Option:

- Present a case study to the team and together work out an efficient stress management strategy for the fictional character.
  - **Challenge -** have team members try and identify what type(s) of stress are in the case study!
  - **Example Case Study:**
    - Cheryl is a 15 year old girl that is in high school. Her mom has become worried that Cheryl is experiencing lots of stress in her life and wants to try and help. Some symptoms that Cheryl's mom sees include Cheryl being physically exhausted more than normal, easily irritated and quick to react negatively to comments, and fluctuates in weight. What are some ways that Cheryl's mom can help Cheryl combat her stressful life as a teenager?
    - **Examples of types of stress –** mental (Ex: easily irritable from school stress); physical (Ex: physically exhausted and fluctuating weight from mental stress).
    - **Example solutions –** try to start a group exercise program, make sure to get enough sleep, make "To Do" lists and use breathing techniques for relaxation.

• Try and choose 1 activity **every** day for self-care. Keep track of what you do each day on the calendar. **Examples may include:**

1. Breathe – take three slow deep breaths in and out of the nose.
2. Listen to a song that makes you feel good.
3. Make yourself a cup of tea.
4. Go for a walk.
5. Stretch.
6. Talk to a friend.
7. Listen to music.

Month: _____

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday