



Coping Skills

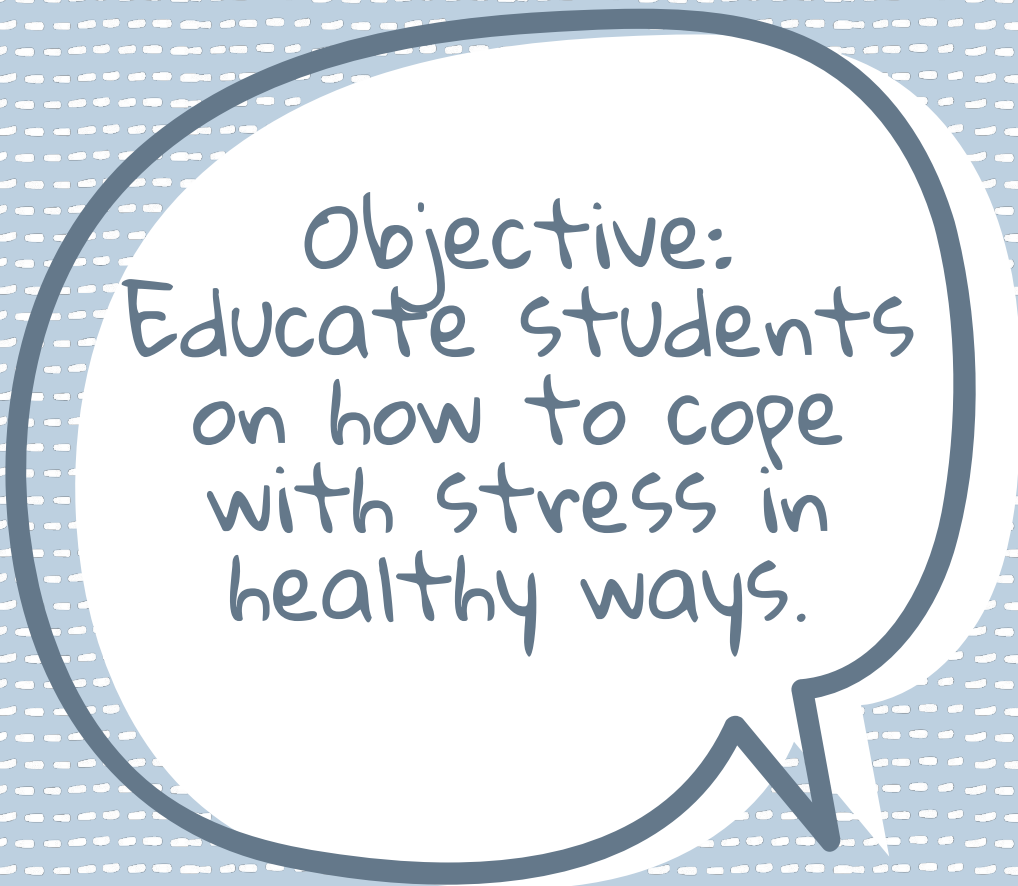
Mental Health Matters

Before we start...



1. How do you
handle stress?

2. Do you know
healthy ways to
handle stress?



Objective:
Educate students
on how to cope
with stress in
healthy ways.

What is stress? What are some causes?

Stress is a feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional pressure. Many different situations can cause stress. We all deal with stress differently, our ability to cope can depend on genetics, personality and other circumstances.

Common causes of stress:

- heavy workload
- poor management skills
- insecurities
- death of a loved one
- chronic illness
- traumatic events

What are the effects of stress?

A cluster of light blue plus signs (+) is located in the top right corner of the slide, arranged in a roughly triangular shape pointing towards the top right.

When stressed your body can have a physical response. Your nervous system releases hormones that we call the "fight or flight" response. This includes increased heart rate, increased breathing, tense muscles and sweat. This kind of stress is short-term and temporary (acute stress), and your body usually recovers quickly from it.

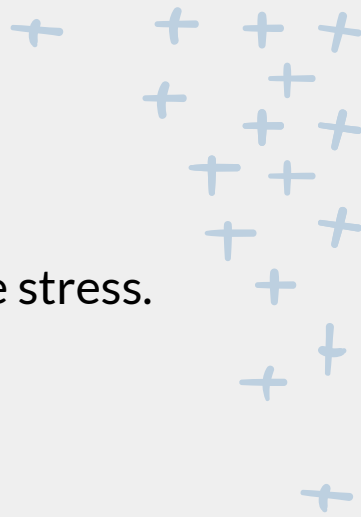
Stress that stays activated over a long period of time (chronic stress), is a bit different. The constant rush of stress hormones can put a lot of wear and tear on your body, causing it to age more quickly and making it more prone to illness.

What is a coping strategy?

Coping strategies are healthy ways to help decrease and/or relieve stress.

The most commonly used coping strategies include:

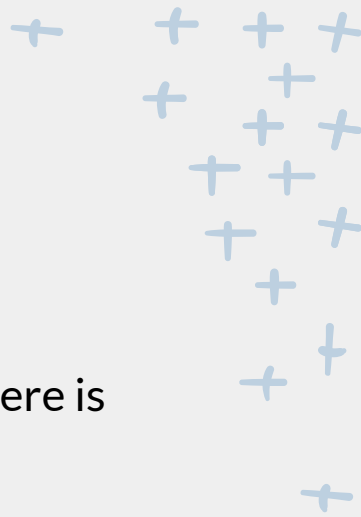
- Exercising
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Listening to music
- Eating healthy foods
- Positive thinking
- Being socially active

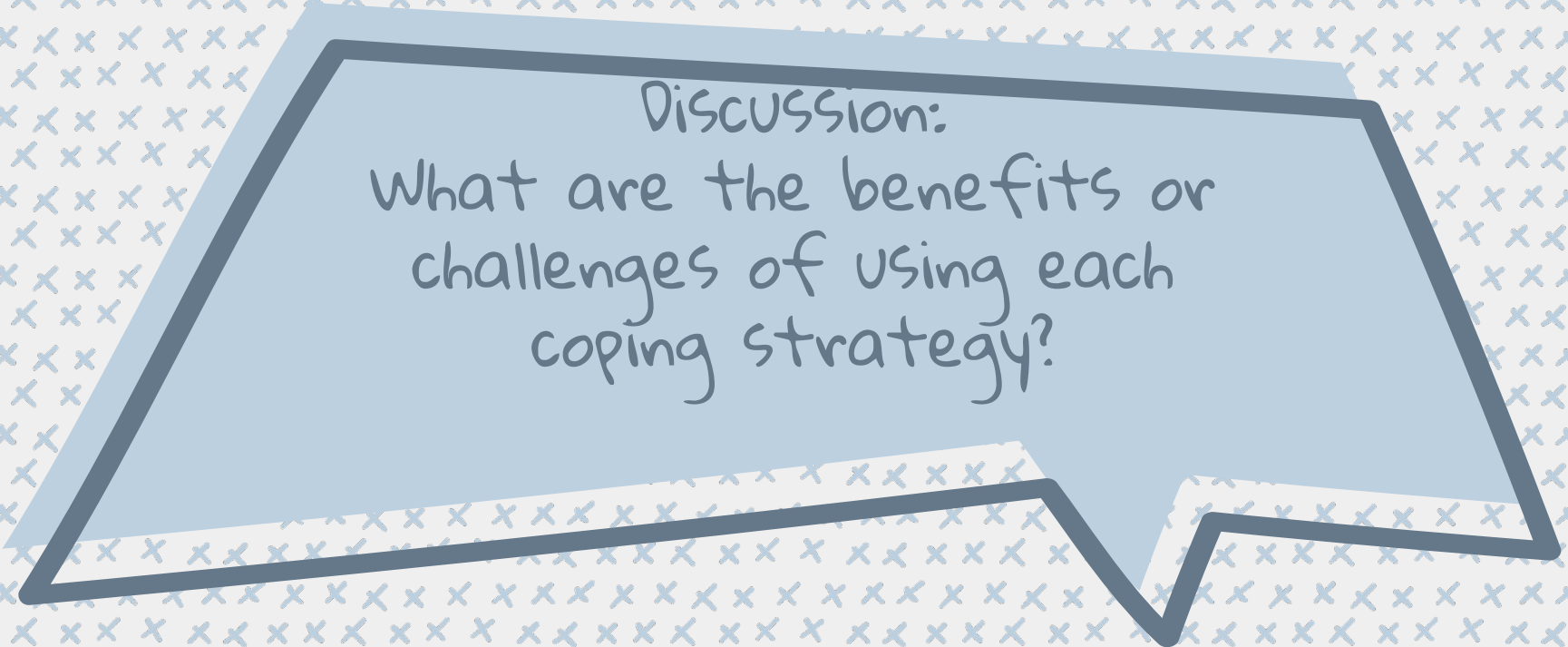


What is the stress to screen connection?

Although it may be hard to believe, technology is a source of stress. There is both a psychological impact and a physical impact from overuse of technology.

Stress from screens interrupts the normal function of a regulatory mechanism in our mind and body. "The lights and stimuli from screens stress our anatomy, and screen time causes repeated stress on the Central Nervous System." This causes people to become angry, impulsive, isolated, aggressive and less empathetic. Americans are growing more and more addicted to their technology, leading to serious mental health problems.





Discussion:
What are the benefits or
challenges of using each
coping strategy?

⇒ Deep Breathing Activity

Begin this exercise by sitting quietly in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and follow the instructions below.

1. Put one hand on your abdomen and one hand on your chest.
2. As you breathe in allow your abdomen to extend and your chest to remain relatively still. This is called diaphragmatic breathing.
3. Breathe in slowly and count to yourself to about 5 or 7, whichever allows you to just reach the point where your lungs are expanded fully.
4. Pause briefly while your lungs are expanded. Then exhale slowly counting to 5 or 7 again.

➤ Deep Breathing Activity

5. You do not need to force all the air out of your lungs when you exhale. Just allow your breathing muscles to come to rest as you normally do when you breathe.
6. Take three of these deep breaths in a row. Then breathe normally for a minute. Then take three more deep breaths. Continue this cycle of deep breaths and normal breathing until you feel relaxed enough.
7. If you begin to feel dizzy or light-headed, just breathe normally for a while.

While learning this technique, practice using it several times per day. Whenever you feel symptoms of distress, practice the deep breathing exercise. You can practice it before you know you are going to have to perform some stressful activity like taking an exam or giving a presentation. It is important to realize that although you may receive benefits from your first use of a skill, it may take days or weeks to learn the skill and receive full benefit from it. How much benefit derived from a skill will likely be in direct proportion to how often and consistently you practice.



Drawing Activity

With the paper and coloring utensils given to you, draw the effects of stress on teenagers.

This can be drawn however you see or feel fit. Open your mind and be creative!

Consider:

- Emotional indicators of stress
- Physical indicators of stress
- Environment and surroundings

To close...

1. Having this new information about stress, is there anything that you plan to change in your life to reduce your stress?

2. Do you plan to use any of the coping strategies you learned today?