

LESSON

3

## Coping with Stress Unit Grade 7 • Ages 12-14

### TIME FRAME

Preparation: 10 minutes  
Instruction: 30 minutes

### MATERIALS

How Stressed are You? and Ways to Reduce Stress activity sheets, one for each student

Scrap paper students can crumple into a ball

Optional: Stress balls, Tennis Balls or DIY Flour and Balloon Stress Balls instructions at: <http://www.instructables.com/id/Easy-flour-stress-ball/>

RAK Journals

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

### LEARNING STANDARDS

Common Core: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1, 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, Self-management

[Learning standards key](#)

# Reducing Your Stress

Students will learn about what stress looks like and feels like in their own bodies and explore techniques to dissipate stress.

## Lesson Background for Teachers

Trigger warning: Talking about emotions and situations where strong emotions arise can lead to students revealing personal information that might require follow-up by yourself or a school counselor. If a student reveals any worrisome information or reaction, please know your school protocol for providing support and resources. Before class, find out the school policy about reporting a concern about a student's mental health to a school counselor or administrator.

## Key Terms for Students

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

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

## TIPS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

Students might benefit from:

- Referencing the Focusing Strategies, particularly if they are experiencing a lot of stress.
- Seeing you as the teacher practice deep breathing or taking a breathing break when you feel stressed.

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

However, each lesson starts with the **Share** step to reinforce learning from previous lessons.



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



## Resources

4th Grade: Stress Busters Unit

RAK Video: How to Change the World in One Minute:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mclwvr8Dik>

DIY Stress Ball Instructions using flour and balloons:  
<http://www.instructables.com/id/Easy-flour-stress-ball/>

## Share (3 mins)

Share as a class some of the things you did to reduce stress this week from the Kindness in Action from Personal Stressors lesson. Alternatively, share what with a person next to you the things that cause you the most stress.

## Inspire

### How Stressed Are You Activity Sheet (10 mins)

Hand out the activity sheet with two sides. Make sure the How Stressed Are You? side is facing up.

*Now I want you to think about the top three things you identified that stress you out, and mark the ways on the How Stressed Are You? Activity sheet that you feel inside your head or your body when you experience those stressors. You can mark as many items as apply.*

Allow a few minutes to complete the sheet.

## Empower

### Stress Reduction (10 mins)

*To learn to deal with the things that stress us out, it is important to figure out ways to reduce stress. Turn over the sheet. Let's read these statements aloud. Put a check before each statement listed that you think could help you reduce your stress.*

Ask for volunteers to read the statements.

After students finish, ask by a show of hands what ways of reducing stress apply to them and discuss why they think it could be effective for them. Have students share ideas not listed on the sheet.

Hand out the stress balls or paper they can crumple up.

*While there are many techniques, there are two that you can do wherever you are: squeezing a stress ball and learning to do relaxed breathing. Let's try these techniques right now. Stand up and think about something that has caused stress for you. Allow your mind to race a bit, in a way simulating the stress. Now squeeze the stress ball until you relax. Was that helpful?*

Allow students to respond.

*Now let's try the second technique. Close your eyes and think about the same thing or something else that makes you stressed out. Take deep breaths and think about a calming image, maybe the mountains or the ocean or a person you love or whatever calms you down. Think about breathing in positive energy and breathing out negative energy and thoughts. Now open your eyes. How did that feel inside you when you tried this relaxed breathing?*

*For the next week, I would like you to try the stress reduction techniques that you marked on the sheet with your friends, with your family, a guardian or an adult that you trust. Then I would like to discuss as a class how well they worked for you.*

#### **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 are some ways stress can manifest itself?
- What are some ways we can reduce stress?
- What is something you can do anywhere, any time to reduce your own stress?

#### **Reflection Questions**

- Was it helpful for you to think about ways to reduce stress? Why or why not?
- Do you think these techniques would work for you? Why? How about other people?
- What are some of techniques you learned about that you think you will use?

#### **Summary**

*Learning to reduce stress is highly important to self-care and kindness. There may never be a time in your life where you don't feel stress, but with these techniques, you can reduce your stress. You can also help others work through their own stress by having various suggestions to offer.*



#### **Act (2 mins)**

##### **Kindness Minute**

*A great way to relieve stress is to dance! It gets your blood pumping, it lets go of pent up energy and it's fun. Put on some music and dance it out.*

##### **Kindness in Action**

Home Extension Activity.



# How Stressed Are You?

**Directions:** Look at all the symptoms of stress listed below. Check ALL the symptoms that you feel or have felt when you are stressed out.

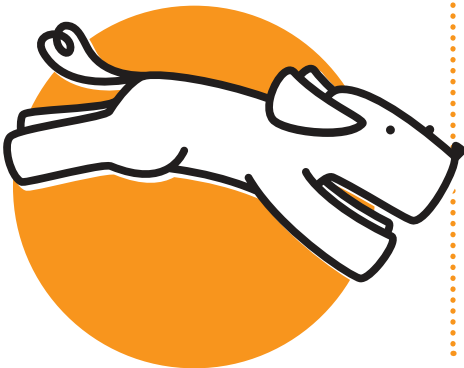
- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Confused
- ☐ Unhappy
- ☐ Restless
- ☐ Often tired/sleep a lot
- ☐ Feel helpless
- ☐ Can't eat
- ☐ Overeat
- ☐ Smoke
- ☐ Unable to concentrate
- ☐ Mood changes
- ☐ Nervous laughter
- ☐ Use of drugs or alcohol
- ☐ Always getting hurt
- ☐ Often feel cold or tremble
- ☐ Stomachaches
- ☐ Chest pain
- ☐ Grind teeth
- ☐ Sweat often
- ☐ Can't sleep
- ☐ Nightmares
- ☐ Severe headaches
- ☐ Scared easily
- ☐ Can't stay still
- ☐ Back pain
- ☐ Cry
- ☐ Constipated/have diarrhea
- ☐ Bite nails
- ☐ Don't care how you look
- ☐ Don't want to be with others
- ☐ Want to run away

Anything else not listed above?

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# Ways to Reduce Stress

**Directions:** Read the following ways to reduce stress. Put a check next to each statement that you think would help you reduce stress.

- ☐ Eat right. Junk food may taste good, but it's not healthy for you. The weight you gain from junk food is fat, not muscle.
  - ☐ Exercise! Find some sport that is fun for you. When you exercise, "endorphins" are released into the brain, which give you a natural high feeling. Endorphins are the body's natural way of reducing stress.
  - ☐ Get enough sleep. If you are tired, little things may bother you. You will have a more difficult time concentrating and getting things done.
  - ☐ Stress ball. Sometimes squeezing a stress ball can be a simple way to relieve stress!
  - ☐ Laugh. Spend time with people who make you laugh or watch a funny movie. Laughter is one of the best stress relievers.
  - ☐ Get organized. Try keeping your room and locker at school very neat for one week and see how it feels. Being organized may help you be more in control of your life and less stressed.
  - ☐ Talk to people you trust. Don't let stress build up inside you! Find someone you can trust (a friend, teacher, relative, counselor, etc.) to talk about what is bothering you.
  - ☐ Relax. Take deep breaths and think about calming ideas or images. Practice these breaths every time you experience stress.
- ☐ Find a hobby or activity. Join a club or group at school or in the community that you would enjoy. Or maybe you would like to start drawing or learning a sport!
  - ☐ Think positive. Hang out with healthy, positive people who will encourage you. Learn to think positively about yourself and others.
  - ☐ Find a peaceful place to go. There may be a room in your home where you can find peace and quiet. If not, consider walking to a park, a stream, a playground, etc.
  - ☐ Write in a diary or journal. It is not healthy to let things bottle up inside. Write a letter to yourself or a friend. It can help you deal with your feelings!
  - ☐ Keep your values and goals in mind. Don't let others force their values on you. Learn to say "no" to anything that can harm you or others.
  - ☐ Keep pictures of your favorite places and people in your room. Look at them and think about them when you need to relax and feel better.
  - ☐ Do something for someone else. If you help someone else, it can take your mind off your problems. Consider volunteering at a hospital, helping a neighbor or grandparent, being a role model for a younger child, etc.
  - ☐ Stretch. Stretch or do exercises like neck rolls, side bends, and leg stretches.

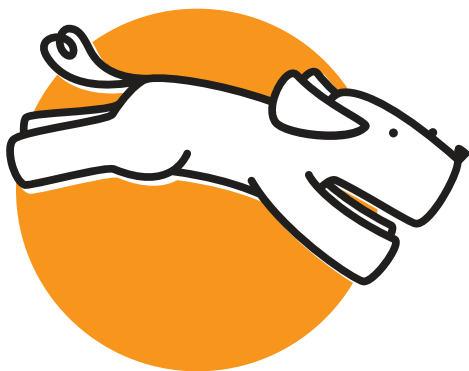
**Can you think of another way to reduce stress that isn't listed above? Write it here!**

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# Coping with Stress

## Home Extension Activity

NAME

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PLEASE RETURN BY

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### Background

As part of the Random Acts of Kindness program, we have been talking in class about ways to reduce stress in our lives.

### Vocabulary Words

**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.

### Instructions

Review the vocabulary words listed above. Then ask your student what he or she has learned about stress reduction techniques. Then discuss the following questions and have your student write responses below or on the back and return to school by the date shown:

What techniques worked for you?

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How can we use these techniques as a family?

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