

CSP E-Lesson 12, Fall 2008

Words of Wisdom: "My clients expect me to be calm, cool and collected. So I practice different relaxation techniques that help me control stress."
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Stressed Out

"Just thinking about everything I have to do makes me tired," Shelly mumbles as her eyelids droop. "I have to study for the SAT's and complete my senior Internet project this week. Maybe I shouldn't even take the SATs; my parents can't afford to pay for college, and it's too hard to get a scholarship."

Another passenger bounces into the bus seat next to Shelly, waking her up with a jolt and making her headache even worse. Will, her friend, usually sits beside her and listens to her concerns, but he's been avoiding her for over a week because of a stupid argument they had.

Suddenly, the edge of her seatmate's backpack scrapes Shelly's bare leg. "Ouch, that hurts! Watch what you're doing!" Shelly snaps and frowns at the girl.

"Chill!" the surprised girl barks back as she grabs her bag and heads for another empty seat.

Shelly's eyes fill with tears. "That wasn't like me. It wasn't her fault. If I didn't have such big legs, her bag wouldn't have scratched me. Maybe I'm getting sick again. I sure hope not. I can't afford to miss any more hockey practices, or I'll be off the team. I worked too hard for this varsity spot to lose it now."

Shelly's on stress overload. Why? Identify three reasons Shelly feels stressed and three symptoms of her stress overload.

Symptoms of Shelly's stress

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Causes of Shelly's stress

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Stress Test

How people view life and react to everyday situations determines how much stress they feel. We all react differently to stress-producing situations, and we may not even realize when we are stressed. No matter how well you cope with life's challenges, you will probably find yourself suffering from stress overload occasionally.

One way to help control stress is to know how stress affects you. Circle yes or no for each statement.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. There's never enough time to handle all of my responsibilities. | Yes | No |
| 2. I feel sick when I have to meet a deadline. | Yes | No |
| 3. I get angry at things beyond my control, such as the weather or traffic. | Yes | No |
| 4. I don't like to ask for help with a problem, even if I need it. | Yes | No |
| 5. I'm overly critical of other people's work. | Yes | No |
| 6. When I have too many things to do or too much on my mind, I chew my nails,
twirl my hair or engage in other repetitive behaviors. | Yes | No |
| 7. I get frequent headaches and stomachaches. | Yes | No |
| 8. My boyfriend or girlfriend can change my mood for an entire day or more. | Yes | No |
| 9. When I have too much to do, I can't get to sleep, or, if I get to sleep, I can't wake up. | Yes | No |
| 10. I feel like trashing a room or hitting someone when I feel stressed. | Yes | No |
| 11. I never have time to do the things I enjoy. | Yes | No |
| 12. I feel guilty when I'm relaxing or doing nothing productive. | Yes | No |
| 13. I care more about what others think of me than what I think of myself. | Yes | No |
| 14. I don't think I'm good enough unless I win or come out on top of every situation. | Yes | No |
| 15. I have negative thoughts about myself. | Yes | No |

If you answered yes to one or two questions, you need to learn to relax. If you answered yes to more than five statements, you should speak with your counselor about stress management techniques.

I'm in Charge!

Meg loves working at a fast pace. She's always racing to meet deadlines and pushing to be included in new projects. She thrives on pressure and enjoys meeting the challenge of the unexpected. If you ask her, she'll tell you that her hectic work life is a thrill.

On the other hand, Ron works in a calm, organized and methodical manner. He gets a great sense of fulfillment by making sure that each task is completed in an orderly fashion. He likes to plan ahead and follow a routine. Ron is happiest when work runs smoothly with no surprises or glitches.

Both Meg and Ron are content in their jobs and neither one feels an unusual amount of stress. But if you ask them to switch jobs with each other, both will begin to feel unhealthy stress. Meg will be frustrated by the steadiness of Ron's routine, and Ron will be overwhelmed with Meg's free-wheeling work style.

I Have the Power

Life and work are not stressful in themselves. However, the way you choose to live and react to life and work can make you anxious and stressed. That means that you have the power to control your stress!

By recognizing what pushes your stress buttons, you can make choices that will help you avoid an unhealthy stress overload. For example, choosing a career and work environment that energizes and satisfies you is an important step in reducing stress. Check off the work style that is healthiest for you.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm most comfortable when someone supervises my work. | <input type="checkbox"/> I work best when it's quiet. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't like someone looking over my shoulder. | <input type="checkbox"/> I need organization in my life. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I like to be around creative, talkative people when I work. | <input type="checkbox"/> Deadlines make me feel sick. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red tape and paperwork drive me crazy. | <input type="checkbox"/> Deadlines help me get my work done. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I learn best when someone shows me how to do things. | <input type="checkbox"/> Too much routine frustrates me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I learn best when challenged by the unexpected. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm most comfortable with a routine. |

I'm in Charge! (Continued)

____ I'm a quick learner, I only have to be told
or shown something once to learn it.

____ I have to take my time, concentrate and
repeat a task to learn it well.

____ I enjoy detailed, precise work even if it's repetitive.

____ I like to be physically active.

____ I work best alone.

____ I like to figure things out my own way.

____ I like to work as part of a team.

____ Detailed work bores. I like creativity.

I Know Best

You'll feel more satisfied with your life and less stressed if the career and work environment you choose fits your personality and mental make-up. Making a choice of career and work because someone else thinks they are best for you can be self-defeating and can lead to feelings of failure and dissatisfaction. Over time, these feelings are likely to bring on resentment and distress (bad stress) which can be very damaging to your physical and emotional health.

Write a description of your ideal work environment. Use statements from the list above to help you develop ideas about the type of career setting and work that will be best for you.

The Stress Made Me Do It

Stress is a normal physical reaction to events that you view as dangerous, difficult, or unpleasant. Stress increases your heart rate and sends a jolt of adrenaline throughout your body system. This reaction is called "fight or flight," and it helps you decide when to confront a situation (fight) and when to run away (flight). The right answer depends on the event or situation.

Stress can be good. For example, if you see an out-of-control, speeding car racing in your direction, adrenaline and stress will help you jump clear of a potential disaster. On the other hand, if you feel relentless pressure to make more money, please more people, or meet unrealistic expectations, you can develop bad stress that is destructive to your health and your ability to achieve your goals.

Bad stress is caused by many factors that pop up in our lives daily. But, fortunately, studies of the human body and mind have taught us to recognize the symptoms of stress and given us ways to relieve stress. Place a "C" beside each cause of stress, an "S" beside each symptom of stress, and an "R" beside each way that can help you reduce stress.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Death of a family member or pet | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgetfulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional withdrawal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too many responsibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Oversleeping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy meals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faster heart and breathing rate | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dancing | <input type="checkbox"/> Caffeine and sugar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demanding perfection from yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggression |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dangerous living environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Negative self-talk | <input type="checkbox"/> A network of friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga | <input type="checkbox"/> A loving pet |

The Stress Made Me Do It (Continued)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>___ Drawing and painting</p> <p>___ Laughter</p> <p>___ Divorce</p> <p>___ Unrealistic expectations</p> <p>___ Financial problems</p> <p>___ Muscle tension</p> <p>___ Skin problems</p> <p>___ Tests and exams</p> <p>___ Changing jobs or schools</p> <p>___ Crying easily</p> <p>___ Frequent colds and sicknesses</p> | <p>___ Writing a journal or blog</p> <p>___ Road rage</p> <p>___ Pleasant aromas</p> <p>___ Mood swings</p> <p>___ Drug and alcohol use</p> <p>___ Headaches and stomachaches</p> <p>___ Argument with a friend</p> <p>___ Knowing what you can and can't control</p> <p>___ Holidays</p> <p>___ Brisk walking</p> <p>___ Overeating</p> |
|--|--|

The things that stress you, and your reactions to them, are personal to you. What works for a friend or family member won't always work for you. List five things that stress you, and then list five symptoms that tell you when you're stressed. Finally, list five things that work for you to relieve stress.

Causes	Symptoms	Stress Relievers
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Rehearse, Replace, React

When events and situations cause unhealthy stress in your life, you can take steps to manage the stress in a healthy way. Here are three basic techniques for coping with school, work, and relationship stresses.

Rehearse

Can you see stress coming? Do you know when someone or something is likely to push your stress buttons? Anticipating stressful situations is one way to avoid them. After all, if you were standing in front of a fast-moving train, you wouldn't wait to see if you got hit! You'd get out of the way—fast! You can do the same with bad stress. You don't have to wait around and let stress build inside you. If you know stress is coming, take control by anticipating the event and rehearsing an outcome that will be good for you. Consider Martha's situation below.

Martha's new promotion means that she has to give presentations to potential clients.

Speaking in front of even a small group of people makes her so nervous that she gets physically sick. But she's determined that this stressor will not hold her career back, so she is taking a public speaking course and practicing speaking in front of her family and friends.

Think of a stressor you can anticipate and the desired solution you can rehearse in order to deal with the stress.

The stressor I anticipate is _____

The outcome I can rehearse is _____

Rehearse, Replace, React (Continued)

Replace

Does stress cause you to look for a quick fix, like a candy bar or soda? Does stress cause you to indulge in self-defeating habits like sleeping too much, or becoming a couch potato and escaping into daydreams or television shows?

Stress can create a vicious circle that causes you to indulge in behavior that is unhealthy and hurts your self-esteem. Don't forget that you are the person in charge of your habits, and you can replace the bad habits with good ones.

Stefan changed schools this year, and he feels like he doesn't fit in with the students at his new school. He doesn't make friends easily, and he misses talking to his old friends. As soon as he gets home from school, he disappears into a world of videogames, which makes him feel worse because he's getting out of shape. He's irritable with his family, and he feels like he's wasting his time. Stefan decides to take charge and replace the videogames with physical workouts. One day he skateboards, another day he runs, and another day he does weight training. Not only is he getting back into shape and relieving stress, he also has a better opinion of himself. In addition, he's met a few guys who are physically active just like him, and he's beginning to like them.

What bad habits do you turn to when you're stressed? What good habits can you replace them with that will make you feel healthier and raise your feelings of self worth?

My bad habit is _____

I'm going to replace this bad habit with _____

Rehearse, Replace, React (Continued)

React

Remember, life itself is not stressful. It's how you react to life that causes unhealthy stress. For example, the act of taking a test is not stressful in itself. But if you worry over what's going to be on the test, obsess over whether you will do well, get anxious about whether you will have enough time to finish, wonder whether your friends will make a better grade, fail to study, or study so much that you're too exhausted to do well, you will create unhealthy stress.

Chuck hears the familiar voices as he rounds the corner. He knows that Wayne and his friends will make fun of Chuck's clothes again, as they always do no matter what he wears. His stomach begins to knot and his ears start ringing. As he watches Wayne's mocking grin, Chuck realizes that Wayne's opinion shouldn't mean anything to him. Soon Chuck will be in college, and he will seldom, if ever, see Wayne again. Chuck's burden lifts when he chooses not to allow Wayne's behavior to matter to him.

Here are some tips for changing your reactions to stressors:

- Visualize a positive outcome where you get what you want.
- Look back to past events that you handled well and use them as models.
- Walk away from confrontations that can turn violent or damage a relationship.
- Think about the worst thing that can happen? Is it really so bad?
- Look at the situation from many different viewpoints. In the big picture of your life, how important is it?

Choose a situation that stresses you and select one of the techniques above to change your reaction to it.

My stressor is _____

I can change my reaction by _____

Meet the Stress

The popular TV show "Meet the Press" features a panel discussion on topics of national interest, such as the economy and wars we're fighting. The people on the panel present different points of view on complex issues. Having people with different ideas discuss important topics is one way to come up with solutions.

One complex issue for you and your friends is stress. Your life is changing fast, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed by pressures from school, your parents, your friends, part-time jobs and your own ambitions and feelings. To be successful now and in your career, you can learn strategies to help you handle stress.

Learn how stress affects you and your friends by forming a panel with a few of your classmates and holding a discussion on the topic "Today's Teens and Stress".

How to prepare your panel

A panel discussion consists of questions to the panel members, who then give their answers. A moderator presents the questions and makes sure that each panel member is given equal time to present a point of view.

Here is the procedure to follow:

First: Select a moderator. The moderator should be objective and not insert his or her own point of view.

Second: Select four to six panelists who are representative of different groups in your class or your school. Here are some suggestions for different groups that panelists can represent. List two other groups.

Female students

Physically active students, athletes

Male students

Students with large families

Students of various ethnic backgrounds

Students who are "only" children

Students of various social or athletic groups

Students of various academic levels

Students of single parents

Students with job experience

Students who live with grandparents

Students without job experience

Meet the Stress (Continued)

Third: Divide the rest of the class into small groups to identify the questions the moderator will ask. They should research the answers to give to the panel members. For example, one group might concentrate on how stress affects students based on the size of their family, another on how stress affects students of single parents. Although each panel member may be considered an "expert" on one point of view, all the members should contribute an answer to each question.

Fourth: Develop questions to ask the panel. Here are some suggestions. Add three additional questions.

Do you think stress affects women more than men?

Do you think the current generation of students suffer more stress than their parents?

Do you think some groups of students are more susceptible to stress than others?

What do you think are the most common causes of stress in teens?

What do you think are the worst symptoms of stress?

What can be done to reduce bad stress?

How do you recognize stress overload in your friends?

Who can teens turn to for help when they are overly stressed?

Question: _____

Question: _____

Question: _____

Seat the panelists in a semicircle where the entire class can see and hear them clearly. Ask the moderator to begin with the first question. Ask each person who is not on the panel to list the most important points they hear during the discussion. The next page is provided for their notes.

