

Course

Health Science

Unit VIII

Strategies for
the Prevention
of Disease

**Essential
Question**

What causes
stress?

TEKS

130.204 (c)
12A

**Prior Student
Learning**

n/a

Estimated time

1-3 hours

Rationale

Stress is a subjective feeling in response to environmental events that are perceived as frustrating or threatening. Individuals adapt to stressful situations by using coping strategies and defense mechanisms.

Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, the student will be able to

- Identify the basic elements of stress
- Identify events that cause stress
- Practice methods to reduce stress
- Evaluate defense mechanisms used to respond to stress

Engage

Obtain a straight-sided glass container. Add water to the container to the halfway level. Ask the students to look at the container and describe it. Did they say the container was half full or half empty?

Or on the board, brainstorm a list of stressors that are common to teens. Rank the stressors. The most traumatic stressor should be first on the list; the least traumatic should be last. Examples are listed at the end of the lesson.

Key Points**I. Emotions****A. Feelings that involve physical and psychological changes**

1. "Fight or flight" – a physical response to emotions related to a challenge or threat
 - a. Prepares the body for aggression (fight)
 - b. Prepares the body to escape a perceived danger (flight)
2. Learning to control emotions is a major task

B. Types of Emotions

1. Anxiety – a vague unpleasant feeling that produces physical sensations
 - a. Causes tension and increased heart rate
 - b. Often cannot identify the reasons for emotional distress
2. Fear
 - a. Result of a specific, identifiable cause
 - b. Physiological reactions similar to anxiety
3. Anger
 - a. Inborn, instinctive
 - b. An emotional reaction to loss
4. Aggression
 - a. A combination of frustration, hate, and/or rage

II. Perceptions of Control

- A. In control – the perception that one has choices and is able to create a change in a psychological state or current life circumstances
- B. Powerlessness –the perception that one’s actions cannot effect changes in outcome
 - 1. Long-term feelings of powerlessness lead to feelings of physical and mental fatigue which can ultimately lead to depression
- C. Hopelessness – the perception that one’s needs have no potential to be met
 - 1. Long-term feelings of hopelessness often lead to depression
- D. Spiritual Distress
 - 1. Leads one to question
 - a. The meaning of life
 - b. The meaning of suffering and pain
 - c. The value of living
 - 2. Short-term spiritual distress is a type of personal introspection that promotes personal growth and development
 - 3. Prolonged spiritual distress leads to depression

III. Stress and Coping

- A. Stress – the subjective feeling of tension to perceived events
- B. Coping – refers to how the mind reacts to stress
- C. Coping mechanisms vary from person to person
 - 1. An event that stresses one person, might not stress another
 - 2. Conscious behavior is usually based on the success of previous coping experiences

IV. Defense Mechanisms – unconscious, operate automatically

- A. **Compensation** – covering up weaknesses by emphasizing a more desirable trait or by overachievement in a more comfortable area
 - 1. For example, a high school student too small to play football becomes a star tennis player
 - 2. Purpose – allows a person to overcome weakness and achieve success
- B. **Denial** – an attempt to ignore unacceptable realities by refusing to acknowledge them
 - 1. For example, a mother, though told her daughter has terminal cancer, continues to plan for her daughter’s college entrance
 - 2. Purpose – temporarily isolates a person from the full impact of a traumatic situation
- C. **Displacement** – transferring emotional reactions from one object or person to another
 - 1. For example, a boyfriend and girlfriend are arguing, and he gets so angry that he slams his fist into the wall
 - 2. Purpose – allows feelings to be expressed at or through less meaningful objects or people
- D. **Intellectualization**– when an emotional response that would

normally accompany a painful (or uncomfortable) incident is avoided by use of academic or intellectual explanations that remove personal feelings from the incident

1. For example, pain over a best friend's sudden death is reduced by saying, "He wouldn't have wanted to live disabled."
2. Purpose – protects a person from the emotional reality of loss

E. **Minimization** – not acknowledging the significance of one's behavior

1. For example, a teenager says, "Don't believe everything my kid brother tells you. I wasn't so drunk I couldn't drive."
2. Purpose – allows a person to decrease and trivialize his or her responsibility for a behavior

F. **Projection** – projects shortcomings or feelings onto others

1. For example, a disgruntled college freshman, when called to meet with her advisor, believes that she's called in because the advisor doesn't like her
2. Purpose – allows a person to deny the existence of shortcomings

G. **Rationalization** – justification of certain behaviors with faulty logic and attribution of socially acceptable motives that did not, in fact, inspire the behavior

1. For example, a student cheats on an exam but blames the teacher for not making the material more understandable
2. Purpose – helps a person cope with an inability to acknowledge inappropriate behavior

H. **Reaction formation** – an individual acts exactly opposite to the way he or she feels

1. For example, a teenager feels bitterness toward a girl who beat her out of a cheerleader position, but acts very sweetly and friendly when they see each other
2. Purpose – a form of repression that allows feelings to be acted out in a more acceptable way

I. **Regression** – resorting to an earlier stage of life that is generally less demanding and responsible

1. For example, an adult throws a temper tantrum when he can't have his own way
2. Purpose – allows a person to return to a point in development when nurturing and dependency were acceptable

J. **Repression** – an unconscious mechanism by which threatening thoughts, feelings, and desires are kept from becoming conscious

1. For example, a child who was verbally abused by her alcoholic mother cannot remember certain events from her childhood
2. Purpose – protects a person from a traumatic experience until he or she has the resources to cope

V. Effective coping mechanisms

- A. A slight to moderate level of worry that engages adaptive activity to relieve mental distress

VI. Types of Behavior:

- A. Maladaptive behavior – a result of ineffective coping
- B. Psychotic behavior
 1. The most severe manifestation of ineffective coping
 2. Caused by psychosis
 - a. A state caused by lack of contact with reality
 - b. The mind unconsciously uses many defense mechanisms to deny, destroy, and avoid reality when it can't consciously cope and solve problems

Activity

- I. Write three short introspective essays about
 - A time in your life when you felt in control
 - A time when you felt powerless
 - A time when you felt hopeless.

The essays should not be shared with class in order to promote introspective authenticity. Reiterate to the students that there is no right or wrong answers to this activity. Grading should be on thoroughness and grammar.

- II. Practice the Relaxation Techniques.

- III. Complete the Partly Cloudy or Partly Sunny Activity.

- IV. Keep a stress log and develop an action plan for reducing stress

Assessment

Rubric for Introspective Essay

Quiz - Defense Mechanisms

Successful completion of activities

Materials

Quiz for Defense Mechanism

Key for quiz

Sample Stressors

Guideline for Relaxation Techniques

Resources

Mental Health & Mental Illness, Sixth Edition, Patricia D. Barry, ISBN 0-397-55473-7 (chapters 12-15)

Accommodations for Learning Differences

For reinforcement, the student will create a chart of each defense mechanism and give an example of each.

For enrichment, the student will review a video clip from a talk show and identify maladaptive defense mechanisms.

National and State Education Standards

National Health Science Cluster Standards

HLC02.01 Communications

Health care workers will know the various methods of giving and obtaining information. They will communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.

HLC06.02 Safety, Health, and Environmental

Health care workers will understand the fundamentals of wellness and the prevention of disease processes. They will practice preventive health behaviors among their clients.

TEKS

130.204 (c) 12A Research wellness strategies for the prevention of disease

Texas College and Career Readiness Standards

English Language Arts

II. B. Understand new vocabulary and concepts and use them accurately in reading writing and speaking.

IV. A. Apply listening skills as an individual and as a member of a group in a variety of settings.

IV. B. 2. Listen actively and effectively in one-on-one communication situations.

Sample List – Teen Stressors

In the event your students need some verbal prompts, here's an example list of stressors developed by a high school psychology class:

Unreasonable curfew	Teen pregnancy
Argument with best friend	Poor grade(s)
Parental separation or divorce	Sexual relationship
Death of a sibling	Parent loses a job
Lack of money	Death of a parent
Preparing for prom	Acne
Driving status	Bad hair-cut
Exams	Losing a job
Changing schools	A traffic violation
A sibling becomes sick or disabled	Having a date for an important event
Injury or illness	Best friend moves out of town
Too tall or too short	Need to find a job
Assigned detention hall	Overwhelmed with homework
“Wrong” clothes	Applying for college
Asking someone out	Waiting for someone to ask you out
Argument with a parent	Oral report
Embarrassment in front of peers	Elected to a leadership position
Breakup with a girlfriend or boyfriend	College entrance exams (ACT/SAT)
Moving to a different neighborhood	Death of a friend
Involved in auto accident	New “love” relationship
Too big or too small	Suspension from school
Disagreement with a teacher	Peers talking about you
Not making a team (football, cheerleader, etc)	Parental pressure & expectations
Getting into the college of choice	Holidays or vacations

Note: Stressors do not have to be “bad” in order to traumatize individuals. *Any* life-changing event is seen as a stressor and has the capacity to change behavior.

Rubric: Introspective Essay

Criteria	Comments	Score
Thoroughness 60%		
Spelling 20%		
Grammar 20%		

Total _____

Rubric: Introspective Essay

Criteria	Comments	Score
Thoroughness 60%		
Spelling 20%		
Grammar 20%		

Total _____

Rubric: Introspective Essay

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Grammar 20%		

Total _____

Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation techniques can be a useful way to help yourself feel better when you are depressed, stressed out, or angry.

Use these relaxation techniques as a group activity for the entire class. Dim the lights, play soft relaxing music, and slowly talk them through the steps. After the initial giggling dies down, they'll really get into this activity.

Mental Imagery Relaxation

As you focus on your mental image more and more, you direct your attention away from anxiety provoking situations

1. Close your eyes
2. Breathe deeply and slowly.
3. Think of a place where you feel entirely safe and comfortable. Your place should be real, such as a childhood tree fort or a waterfall you once visited. But it could be imagined, like a lush deserted island or in a castle high above the clouds
4. What does that place look like? What sorts of things are in your special place?
5. What does that place sound like?
6. Breathe deeply
7. Does your place have a particular smell? Imagine that smell
8. What does your place feel like? What is the temperature? Is it sunny or dark?
9. Humid or dry?

Your special place will always be somewhere you can go whenever you are scared or sad. You can also go there to simply relax

Physical Relaxation

By learning to relax your body, you can concentrate on feeling good and deal with unpleasant emotions and experiences.

1. Sit or lay comfortably
2. Close your eyes
3. Breathe slowly and deeply
4. Concentrate on feeling the air move in and out of your body
5. Concentrate on your toes. Relax them. Feel all the tension leave your toes, one by one
6. Feel yourself breathe slowly and deeply
7. Relax your feet. Let all the tension in your feet disappear
8. Now the tension in your calves disappears
9. You are breathing deeply
10. A soothing feeling rises through your legs, through your knees to your thighs
11. Your legs are completely relaxed and free of tension
12. Breathe deeply. Feel the air glide through you
13. Now your pelvis is relaxing. The muscles grow free of tension
14. The soothing feeling moves through your buttocks. Feel your buttocks relax
15. The muscles in your belly relax now
16. Feel yourself breathing deeply as the tension in the lower half of your body disappears
17. Now the tension in your back begins to disappear starting from the bottom and working upwards
18. The soothing feeling wraps around your chest and neck and extends down your arms

19. All tension leaves your arms and hands. You feel very relaxed now

20. All the while you are breathing deeply

21. All the muscles in your neck relax

22. Then the soothing feeling moves through your face

23. All of your facial muscles relax as you breathe deeply and feel the tension disappear from your body

You are now completely relaxed. Your body and mind feel free and without tension.

All bad feelings are gone

PARTLY CLOUDY, PARTLY SUNNY

Background – how we feel about things often affects how we react. At different times, we might react differently to the same situation.

Obtain a straight-sided glass container. Add water to the container to the halfway level. Look at the container and describe it.

Did you say the container was half-full or half-empty?

When it is a day with some sunshine and some clouds, how do you describe it? Do you say it is partly cloudy or partly sunny?

Read the following statements one at a time. Write your reaction as to what you think is happening in each situation. Don't try to carefully analyze the situation. Just react and write what you feel.

1. You arrive home and your mother tells you that your teacher called.
2. In school, a long-haired boy with tattoos and body piercings passes a small bag to another boy.
3. At a party, your friends, standing together in a group, suddenly stop talking when you come into the room.
4. At the mall, you see your young, married, female teacher hug and kiss a man who is not her husband.
5. You receive a note from the teacher that the principal wants to see you now.
6. You approach your home and find a police car parked in front.

Check your response. How many of your reactions were negative? How many were positive? What do you think days are for you: partly sunny or partly cloudy?

Quiz—Defense Mechanisms

Student _____

Date _____

MATCHING: Place the appropriate answer to left of the number.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| _____ 1. Resorting to an earlier stage of life | A. Minimization |
| _____ 2. Ignoring unacceptable realities | B. Regression |
| _____ 3. Acting opposite to how you feel | C. Projection |
| _____ 4. Trivializing the significance of one's behavior | D. Denial |
| _____ 5. Use of an academic-type explanation to separate personal feelings from a painful event | E. Compensation |
| _____ 6. An unconscious mechanism that keeps threatening thoughts, feelings, and desires from consciousness | F. Repression |
| _____ 7. Placing inadequate or hostile feelings onto others | G. Displacement |
| _____ 8. Justifying certain behavior by attributing action to socially acceptable behavior | H. Reaction-formation |
| _____ 9. Transferring emotional responses to another object or person | I. Rationalization |
| _____ 10. Covering up a weakness by overachievement in a more comfortable area | J. Intellectualization |

Key: Quiz
Defense Mechanisms

1. **B**
2. **D**
3. **H**
4. **A**
5. **J**
6. **F**
7. **C**
8. **I**
9. **G**
10. **E**