

## **Grade 5: Healthy Mind and Emotions**

### **Lesson 7: Recipe for Stress: Peers Pressure and Drugs**

#### **Objectives:**

1. Students will identify what stress is and how it affects the body.
2. Students will describe the physiological stress response and recovery mechanism.
3. Students will identify two kinds of stress.
4. Students will identify ways to manage stress.

#### **Materials:**

- Large easel paper or poster board
- Paper
- Student materials on stress management

#### **Activity Summary:**

In this lesson, students will identify the physiological stress mechanism, the two different types of stress, how peer pressure can be a stressor. The student will identify effective refusal skills when dealing with peer pressure to use drugs.

#### **Background information for the teacher:**

Stress is a normal and natural part of life. Our stress level is the product of our response to a stressor. Our response to a person, place, situation, or event that we consider to be “stressing” us is the cause of the stress we are feeling and not the event or person itself.

Physiologically, the stress response is a complex, sophisticated, finely tuned and even elegant mechanism to ensure our survival against the ultimate stressor, a life-threatening event.

The two divisions of the autonomic nervous system are responsible for gearing us up to deal with a stressor and to bring us back to normal when the stressor has passed.

The Sympathetic Nervous System starts the stress response within the body. When we are under stress, the sympathetic nervous system protects the body by increasing the heart rate, putting more blood and oxygen throughout the body, slowing digestion and waste elimination, activating the immune response, and many other activities that ensure our survival.

The Parasympathetic Nervous System reverses the fight-or-flight response and returns the body to a more normal state. This is recovery from stress and is an important job. Being stressed for a long time is very unhealthy for the body. The body needs time to restore itself. Having good nervous system health means having ways to relax, slow down, play, laugh, and be easy.

Stress can be both positive and negative. Eustress is stress that comes from events we consider positive. Most typically we think of stress as being negative and causing us distress. But both kinds trigger the body's physiological stress response.

The bodily response to stress initiated and monitored by the sympathetic nervous system is not harmful in and of itself. What is harmful, however, is chronic and/or repetitive stress that does not allow the body to fully recovery. That is, the parasympathetic system cannot do its' job to restore the body to normal functioning because there is no down time between stress events.

This can have serious long-term health consequences compromising the immune system and making us susceptible to infections, illnesses and disease. Ultimately it can also negatively affect our personal relationships, work and school progress, social activities, etc. Stress and relationships are intertwined. Stress can affect relationships and relationships can cause stress.

Among the many stressors in the lives of adolescents and teens are their peer relationships. Peer pressure can operate in positive ways as well as negative, and be subtle or blatant.

Drugs and peer pressure is a stress-inducing mixture for young people. It can be very difficult and stressful to say 'no' when everyone else is saying "yes". Add to that the curiosity of taking drugs, using drugs to relieve stress, and being "cool" with their friends and some children might find the temptation to try drugs almost irresistible.

It is difficult for children to stand up to peer pressure. The fear of losing friends, being left outside the group, or being ridiculed, etc., may outweigh the "rightness" of refusing drugs. Helping students to develop skills to pay attention to their own feelings, honor their beliefs and sense of right and wrong, and make healthy choices in the face of peer pressure is important.

Teaching students basic skills that they can use to avoid self-destructive behaviors such as taking drugs will not only help them with that issue, but with other stress situations and people as well. The student's ability to cultivate inner-strength and self-confidence are key for them in choosing wisely. Being successful in saying no to their peers requires both knowing the skills to use and having the assertiveness to use them.

Using effective refusal skills will build inner-strength and confidence. Having a stronger sense of self and self-mastery will encourage on-going cultivation and use of refusal skills. Working together a self-supportive and enriching circle of healthy mind and emotions that leads to lower stress, greater satisfaction and sense of mastery in life can be created. The circle, however, can turn into a self-destructive cycle if the student doesn't learn effective behaviors and strategies to resist negative peer pressure.

## **Vocabulary:**

Stress  
Stressor  
Eustress  
Distress  
Peer  
Peer pressure  
Refuse  
Self-confidence  
Assertiveness  
Attitude

### **Engage**

Create a stressful situation. Give students a 5-10 question test. Write the test based on something they are learning about in class but will most likely not know that answers to. Act like they should know the answers. Example: If the students are reading a chapter book act as if they were supposed to read the next chapter. Tell them that you told them to do that (even though you did not) and tell them they are going to be given a quiz based on that chapter and it will be graded.

### **Explore**

Have the students make a list of four or five situations that they have felt stressed about. Encourage them to think of things that are both positive and negative stressors. Next to each item write what kind of stress it was.

Have the students tell the situations they listed. Write some briefly on the board. Group the situations together in categories: School, Sports and activities, Family, Peers, Health, Loss, etc. Point out that we have many things and sometimes people in our lives that we feel causes us stress. Fortunately, there are some very helpful things we can do when we feel stressed.

Have the students review their list. How are eustress and distress alike? How are they different?

Why do we experience some stress as positive and some as negative? (Very often the difference is our attitude and the way we view things. Our attitude or emotions can be focused on fear of consequences, pain and difficulty or anticipation of rewards or pleasure. We experience one as a positive (eustress) stressor and we experience the other as a negative (distress) stressor.

What is the relationship between a stressor and feeling stressed? (Stress is the effect; the stressor and our attitude about it is the cause.)

### **Explain**

Ask the students to think about how they knew they were stressed. What were the indicators of stress that they felt in their body? And how did they feel emotionally when

they were in the stress situation? Next to each stress situation that they previously wrote down briefly write what they felt in their body and in their emotions.

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## **Extend**

### Personal Strategies for Stress Management

Have the students do research on how to manage stress.

Have the students create their own stress management plan. Since stress involves the body, the mind and the emotions encourage students to develop one strategy for each of those areas.

Students can use classroom, school or local library resources as well as Internet searches for information. To research on the Internet key words to search are: Stress Management, Stress and Relaxation, Stress and Relief.

Have students create a presentation and a poster about stress management.

## **Evaluate**

### 1. Tracking Stress

Have each student make a stress chart and track his/her stress level over a period or time (a few days or week). The chart should be divided in such a way as to track both positive and negative stress.

Set the chart up so that the following is recorded for each event:

The stress felt on a 1-10 scale

How the body felt during and after the event

What emotional and mental responses happened during and after the event

Have the student summarize their findings. Prepare a bar or line graph to compare:  
Numbers of positive to negative stressors  
Kinds of physical, emotional and mental responses to positive and negative stressors  
Difference in how the student felt during and after  
Have the students link these responses to the body systems involved.

### **Additional Web Resources**

Kids health.org

<http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/>

### **Missouri Standards:**

#### Health Frameworks:

#### II. Health Management and Assessment

##### D. Life Management Skills

##### What All Students Should Know

1. Life management skills such as stress management, goal setting, decisions making, assertive behavior, resisting peer pressure, and conflict resolution can be applied to personal situation that adolescents encounter

##### What All Student Should Be Able To Do

- a. Apply the decision making process to adolescent health issues.
- d. Apply peer pressure reversal techniques to reduce or resist negative peer pressure and aggressive behavior
- e. Apply stress management skills to reduce stress related problems
- f. Recognize conflict situations and apply conflict resolution/mediation strategies