STRESSED OUT?

Learn how the body responds to stress—and healthy ways to cope.

Stress is a part of life, but students may have difficulty coping and feel overwhelmed, which can increase the risk for drug use. The article “Stressed Out?” helps explain how the body’s stress response system works, as well as the health consequences of ongoing (chronic) stress. Students will learn how their bodies respond to stress, and how they can manage under pressure.

Critical-Thinking Questions

1) What is the fight-or-flight response and why is it an important process in the body? (The fight-or-flight response prepares the body to face a challenging situation. It helps focus the brain to make decisions quickly and boosts energy in the body if a physical reaction is needed. This is important because fight or flight evolved to help us survive.)

2) Beyond helping you to survive in emergencies, how can stress be helpful to you? What are some examples? (Stress can increase focus, energy, and responsiveness. This can be helpful in giving you focus for studying for a test and energy to play sports. [Additional answers may apply.]"

3) How can pressures in everyday teen life lead to health problems? (Constant stress from problems might lead to chronic stress, in which the body’s stress response system is not allowed to return to normal levels. This has many health risks including illness; sleep problems; migraine headaches; mental health problems; problems with learning and memory; and chronic health problems such as heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. It can also increase the risk for drug use and for developing an addiction.)

Paired Reading/Writing Prompts


   Writing Prompt: Explain how situations in a person’s life that result in chronic (ongoing) stress might put him or her at risk for using drugs.

Tiered Vocabulary Tools:

Visit scholastic.com/headsup/stress-vocabulary-tools for vocabulary printables that support the student article and lesson.

Student Work Sheet: “Stress Test”

The skills sheet on the reverse side has students critically analyze what they have learned in the article.

Answer Key:

Part 1: 1. c; 2. e; 3. b; 4. a; 5. d

Part 2: Answers will vary but should include specific evidence from the work sheet as well as the student article about the specific body reactions to stress and the reasons for them.

Part 3: Answers will vary.

Additional Student Resource:

“Nine Tips to Help You Cope With Stress,” teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/nine-tips-help-you-cope-stress

Research Topic:

Read the blog entry: “Teens and ‘Nomophobia’: Cell Phone Separation Anxiety” at teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/teens-and-nomophobia-cell-phone-separation-anxiety. Conduct your own cell phone research. How often do you check your phone, and what is your stress level when you don’t have phone access?

[Continue to work sheet on next page.]
STRESS TEST

PART 1
MATCH THE RESPONSE

When you feel under stress, your body’s stress response system kicks into gear to tackle the situation. Match each body organ below with the way in which it responds to stress.

1. Heart
   a. Tense to protect against injury.
2. Brain
   b. Releases glucose into the bloodstream to power cells.
3. Liver
   c. Rate increases to push blood through the body faster.
4. Muscles
   d. Activity decreases so energy can be used in other parts of the body.
5. Stomach/Intestines
   e. Signals the release of the hormones adrenaline and cortisol.

PART 2
THINK ABOUT IT

Use information from this work sheet, as well as the article “Stressed Out?” to respond to the questions below. Record your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Identify a situation in which you experienced stress.
2. Write about how your body responded to the stressful event, and explain why your body reacted the way it did.
3. What strategies will you use to reduce this type of stress in the future? Be sure to use evidence from the texts to support your answer. Write in complete sentences.

PART 3
COPING WITH STRESS

Stress-release strategies can help you cope with day-to-day stress so that it doesn’t turn into chronic stress. Pick one of the exercises below and try it for at least 10 minutes every day for a week. Report back to your class how it helped you or not.

1. Deep Breathing Focus: Find a quiet space. Breathe deeply through your nose for a count of four. Hold your breath for a count of two. Then, let the breath out through your mouth for a count of four. Try to continue for 10 minutes or more.
2. Physical Activity: Lace up and go for a walk or a run. Try to get your heart pumping, but not so much that you can’t talk. In fact, you might ask a friend or family member to join you to help make it more fun!
3. Step Away From Your Phone: This exercise is best for those “attached” to their phones. Put your phone away and do not check it for two hours or four hours or a whole day. Let your parents know, and ask them not to call you unless it’s absolutely necessary, and then pick up only for them. At first you may feel more stressed and worried about what you are missing. But see if it gets better as each day goes by. Track your progress.