



# STRESSED OUT?

Stress is a part of every teen's life, even more so during intense challenges such as a pandemic, racial discrimination, and life transitions. But uncontrolled stress can cause serious health problems and increase the risk that students may use drugs to attempt to deal with stressors, including mental health issues and trauma. Use these materials to help your students understand how stress affects their body, and learn healthy ways to cope with pressure.

## Reading-Comprehension Questions

**1** What is the fight-or-flight response and why is it an important process in the body? (*The "fight or flight" response is the body's natural stress response. It prepares the body to face a challenge.*)

**2** Beyond helping you to survive in emergencies, how can stress be helpful to you? Give one example. (*Stress can increase focus and energy. This can be helpful when studying for a test. [Additional answers may apply.]*)

**3** How can chronic stress lead to health problems? Give two examples. (*Chronic stress can prevent the body's stress response from returning to normal levels. This can lead to problems like headaches, anxiety, or depression. [Additional answers may apply.]*)

## Critical-Thinking Writing Prompts

**All Grades:** Imagine your friend tells you they are feeling stressed. What advice would you give them?

**Grades 6–8:** What two signs may indicate a person is under chronic stress?

**Grades 9–12:** How might chronic stress as a teenager impact a person's life into adulthood? Support your answer with two reasons from the text.

## Answer Key: Student Activity Sheet "Stress Test"

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

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

**Part 3:** Answers will vary.

## Remote Learning Suggestions

- **Create** an online discussion board and ask students to share at least one situation in which they have felt stressed. Alternatively, have students journal individually.
- **Send** students links or print copies of the student article and student activity sheet. Instruct students to read the article independently.
- **Organize** small groups of students and send each group the reading-comprehension questions. Schedule online video chats for each group to discuss the questions. Alternatively, have students respond in writing individually.
- **Have** students complete the student activity sheet. Then, instruct them to return to the online discussion board or journal and share a strategy they could use to try to cope with pressure. A few days later, have them describe the results.

### Subject Areas

- Science, Biology
- English Language Arts
- Health/Life Skills

### Standards, Grs. 6–12

#### Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

##### RST.1

- ▶ Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts.

##### W.2

- ▶ Write informative/explanatory texts.

#### Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)

**MS-LS1.A/HS-LS1.A** Structure and Function

**Practice** Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communicating Information

**Crosscutting Concept** Systems and System Models

### Additional Lesson Resources

**Vocabulary Tools:** Visit [scholastic.com/headsup/stress-vocabulary-tools](https://www.scholastic.com/headsup/stress-vocabulary-tools)

**More Lessons** on Science and Health:

- ▶ [headsup.scholastic.com/teachers](https://www.headsup.scholastic.com/teachers)
- ▶ [teens.drugabuse.gov](https://www.teens.drugabuse.gov)



National Institute on Drug Abuse

# STRESS TEST

## PART 1 MATCH THE RESPONSE

When you are stressed, your body's stress response system kicks in 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 stress hormones.

## PART 2 THINK ABOUT IT

Respond to the questions below on a separate sheet of paper. Use information from this activity sheet as well as the article "Stressed Out?"

1. Identify a situation in which you experienced stress.

2. Write about how your body responded to the stressful event. Tell why your body reacted the way it did.

3. Name two strategies you might use to reduce this type of stress in the future.

## PART 3 COPING WITH STRESS

Stress-release strategies can help you cope so day-to-day stress doesn't turn into chronic stress. Pick one of these activities. Try it for at least 10 minutes every day for a week. Report back to your class to share if it helped you or not.



**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, breathe out through your mouth for a count of four. Try to continue for at least 10 minutes.



**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. Ask a friend or family member to join you to make it more fun!



**Step Away From Your Phone:** Put your phone away for one hour on the first day. Gradually increase that time over the next week. Only pick up the phone for your parents. Ask them not to call you unless absolutely necessary. At first you may feel stressed about what you are missing. But see if it gets better each day. Track your progress.