



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 prepares the body to face a challenging situation. It boosts energy in the body if a physical reaction is needed to survive by fighting or fleeing.*)

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

3 How can uncontrolled stress lead to health problems? (*Ongoing or chronic stress can prevent the body's stress response from returning to normal levels. This has many health risks including getting sick; sleep problems; headaches; anxiety and depression; problems with learning and memory; and heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. It can also increase the risk for drug use and for developing an addiction.*)

Critical-Thinking Writing Prompts

All Grades: Imagine your friend tells you they are feeling overwhelmed by stress. What advice would you give them?

Grades 6–8: What are signs that may indicate a person is experiencing chronic stress?

Grades 9–12: How might chronic stress as a teenager impact a person's life into adulthood? Support your answer with evidence 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. 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 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 stress hormones.

PART 2 THINK ABOUT IT

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

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?

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 these activities and try it for at least 10 minutes every day for a week. Report back to your class how 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, let the breath out through your mouth for a count of four. Try to continue for 10 minutes or more.



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!



Step Away From Your Phone: Put your phone away and do not check it for one hour on the first day, then gradually increase that time for a few days. Let your parents know, and ask them not to call you unless absolutely necessary. Only pick up the phone for them. At first you may feel stressed and worried about what you are missing. But see if it gets better each day. Track your progress.