

**CREDITS**

**Executive Producer**

Anson W. Schloat

**Producer/Director**

John G. Young

**Consultant**

Dr. Hans Steiner

Professor of Psychiatry at Stanford University School of Medicine

**Teacher's Resource Book**

Elizabeth Hoover

Copyright 2003  
Human Relations Media, Inc.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction	1
Learning Objectives	2
Program Summary	3

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

1. Research Project	7
2. Spotting the Clues	9
3. Your Stress Diary	10
4. Stress RX	11
5. Problem Zone	13
6. Talking It Out	15
7. Relaxation Lab	17
8. The Anti-Exam Cram	21
9. Thoughts = Reality	24
10. Stress-Busting Hobbies	27
11. Personal Stress-Busters	28

**FACT SHEETS**

1. A Profile of Stress	29
2. Stress Reducers	31
3. Stress Management Techniques	33
4. The Body and Stress	34
5. Fight or Flight	35
6. Panic Attacks	36
7. The Four Quadrants	37
8. Finding Help	38

Other Products from Human Relations Media	39
---	----

Adolescence can be one of the most stressful stages of life. Common stress factors include college applications and entrance exams, romantic relationships, parental pressure to achieve, and the strain of becoming independent. These changes and demands can quickly escalate, making a teen feel overwhelmed and out of control.

For years, young people have been instructed on how to care for their bodies. Physical education and athletic programs are a staple at every high school. However, little or no time has been spent educating teens on how to care for their emotional selves. Studies show that stress management is most effective and easiest to learn when taught at an early age. By giving young people concrete information about recognizing and dealing with stress, we teach them long-term habits that can vastly improve their quality of life.

With so much discussion focusing on mood-altering medications, including anti-depressants and anti-anxiety drugs, teens are often given the false impression that taking a pill is the best way to solve a problem. Not only is this perception false, it may also contribute to the on-going problem of illicit drug use. “If my mother can take a pill to feel better,” a teen may ask, “then why can’t I smoke a joint to do the same?” In reality, most mood-altering medications are prescribed as a final option, to be used in conjunction with a form of psychotherapy. True disorders related to anxiety and depression should not be confused with everyday stress, which can usually be managed through a variety of non-medical techniques. By teaching these techniques to young people, we not only empower them to deal with stress, we also teach them to solve problems by taking healthy actions.

***Stressed Out: Stress Management 101*** and the activities in this Teacher’s Resource Book provide students with a diverse collection of tips and guidelines, allowing individuals to find the right remedies for their unique situations. First, students are encouraged to listen to stress cues. Recognizing serious stress often takes practice and heightened awareness. Through various activities, students are encouraged to “tune in” to certain situations and the physical, emotional and mental changes those situations cause. Once areas of stress have been identified, activities are presented to sharpen students’ problem solving and communication skills. Since these areas are crucial to stress management, students are guided to practice them on a regular basis.

Although talking about problems and working toward solutions are two important aspects of stress reduction, it’s also true that some problems simply do not go away. For these, other stress management techniques come into play. This Teacher’s Resource Book contains many descriptions of stress management techniques—such as deep breathing and meditation. Young people are given easy-to-follow instructions, as well as information on learning more about techniques that interest them. By trying various approaches, young people are empowered and educated, learning to deal with stress in a variety of proactive ways.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After watching the video *Stressed Out: Stress Management 101* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- identify various types of stress, including acute, chronic and episodic
- define healthy and unhealthy stress in daily modern life
- recognize the physical, emotional and behavioral symptoms of stress
- better understand how chronic stress can harm the mind, body and spirit
- realize that most stress is manageable through a variety of relaxation techniques and lifestyle changes
- improve diet, exercise and sleep habits in an effort to reduce overall stress
- understand and discuss various stress reduction methods, both medical and non-medical
- learn how to recognize their own personal stress factors and how to reduce them
- more effectively solve problems and express feelings—two key components in stress reduction
- understand how positive thinking can change their attitudes and their realities for the better
- reduce anxiety related to tests, parents, peer pressure, and social situations
- better understand panic attacks—their causes, symptoms and treatments

As *Stressed Out: Stress Management 101* opens, several teens talk about stressful situations—from everyday events like locking keys in the car to full-blown panic attacks. College admissions, relationship problems and family pressures are also mentioned. As the title comes up, a young narrator explains basic facts about stress. Stress can cause strong emotions such as anxiety and depression, as well as physical changes. Stressors, or things that cause stress, can be expected or unexpected. Expected stressors include problems with relationships, grades, sports and parents. Unexpected stressors include death, terrorism, violence and pain.

The narrator goes on to say that not all stress is bad. Some forms of stress actually motivate us to perform well or encourage us to face a problem. Dr. Hans Steiner, professor of psychiatry at Stanford University School of Medicine, says that “stress” is a word from the mechanical engineering world. If you take a piece of metal or wood and apply pressure, almost to the breaking point, you are applying stress to the material. In people, stress is also the result of pressure. But the effects are much more complex.

The best way to determine if stress is healthy or unhealthy is to ask, “Does this stress have a purpose?” If the answer is yes, the stress can help us act on a problem. If the answer is no, we must reduce the stress before it causes harm. When stress happens, a cascade of hormones is released into the bloodstream. Muscles tense, the heart speeds up, and blood pressure rises. This can be useful in sports or creative performances, but it can be harmful during other activities, such as a big test.

In a section called “Stress and Anxiety,” viewers learn that stress and anxiety are not the same thing. Anxiety is an emotion, like happiness or sadness. Emotions tell us what is going on in our lives. They help us navigate through various situations. Anxiety usually tells us that we are in danger. A severe form of anxiety can lead to panic attacks. Dr. Steiner describes a panic attack as an intense period of fear that occurs suddenly. A teenager describes the frightening experience of a panic attack, explaining what caused it and how he got help from a school counselor. Panic attacks may occur after long-term stress, such as a death in the family or a change in schools. Young people offer suggestions on coping with long-term stress, such as taking a break, removing yourself from stressful situations, and talking with friends.

“Different Kinds of Stress” are discussed next, including acute, episodic and chronic. Acute stress comes on suddenly. Once it happens, it is usually gone with no lasting side effects. Examples of acute stress include being late, hearing a loud noise, or being in a very crowded room. Episodic stress occurs during certain periods of life, such as adolescence. This type of stress is longer in duration, but can usually be managed without causing major problems. Examples of episodic stress during adolescence include college entrance exams, parental conflicts and peer pressure to use drugs. During other times of life, episodic stress can be triggered by marriage or having a baby. Chronic stress is the most serious type, and it causes the most problems. Chronic stress lasts for a long time, with few or no periods of relief.

Common examples of chronic stress include a long-term illness, an abusive relationship, or an unhealthy job environment. Each type of stress can also be broken down into normative and non-normative. Normative stress arises from events that are expected, such as the death of an elderly grandparent. Non-normative stress is caused by an unexpected event, such as a violent crime.

“How We Respond to Stress” explores a study performed by Dr. Steiner to examine the way males and females handle stress. In the study, teens were asked to describe stressful experiences while having their heart rates monitored. Dr. Steiner found that females generally reacted more emotionally, while their heart rates changed very little. Males, on the other hand, showed less emotion, but usually had a greater increase in heart rate. After the study is explained, teenagers share their opinions about how males and females deal with stress. The males note that women usually enjoy talking, while guys feel obligated to be tough and “show they can handle it.” A young female theorizes that males react to problems more physically, by working out, playing sports, or even by becoming violent. Dr. Steiner reminds viewers that a broad study does not explain individual behaviors, and that males and females often overlap in their coping mechanisms. Some young men enjoy talking about problems, and not all young women are highly emotional.

The next section, “Reducing and Managing Stress,” is broken into several parts. The first part examines the importance of “Talking About It.” Young people share their thoughts about friendship and its role in reducing stress. One young male shares a common concern when he asks, “Should I go to [my friends] and make them deal with my emotional baggage?” He decides that, because his friends are supportive, the problem is not a concern. Dr. Steiner agrees, saying that friends usually know when you are troubled—even before you say anything. Most friends would rather hear about your problems and offer advice than worry about your well being.

“Reducing and Managing Stress” continues with “Seeking Balance.” In this section, viewers learn about the four quadrants of a healthy life: Relationships, Work (including School), Recreation and Health. If one of these areas takes up too much of our time or focus, stress can occur. Dr. Steiner encourages viewers to make time for each quadrant. Contact with family and friends is an important part of building healthy relationships. School and work offer structure and a feeling achievement. Recreation allows us to take a break and have time just for ourselves. Eating balanced meals, getting enough sleep and exercising are vital parts of our overall health. In fact, Dr. Steiner explains that exercise is often as beneficial as some anti-depressant medications.

“Reducing and Managing Stress: Therapy” is covered next, as young people talk about the stigmas that therapy often carries. Some people may feel that you should handle problems on your own, or that getting therapy is a sign of weakness. Dr. Steiner says this is often an attempt to ignore serious problems. It takes great practice and training to understand some

problems, and a therapist can provide this assistance to speed up the healing process. A young girl reminds viewers that the patient must work just as hard as the therapist for results to happen. She says, “If you can say, ‘I have a problem and I want to fix it,’ that’s good. That’s already a step to getting better.”

“Medication” is discussed as the final method for “Reducing and Managing Stress.” Mood-altering medications do not get rid of stress or the problems causing stress. Instead, they help the person deal with stress by helping chemicals in the brain to work better. Dr. Steiner explains that medicine is most effective when used in conjunction with therapy.

As the program concludes, Dr. Steiner recommends getting all of the information you can about a problem and asking questions. The more you understand stress and the problems it causes, the more quickly and effectively you can work toward a solution.

This page is left blank intentionally.

# **STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Research one of the topics from the following list, and write a brief paper on your findings. You can gather information at your school or local library, as well as on the Internet. Use a *Resource Tracker* (Activity 1b) to collect information.

**MEDITATION**

What are the different types of meditation? How is it done? What are the mental and physical benefits of meditating? How long has meditation been around?

**BIOFEEDBACK**

What is biofeedback? Where can it be learned and practiced? What are the benefits? In addition to stress, what specific problems is biofeedback used to treat?

**COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY**

What is cognitive-behavioral therapy? What does each part of its name mean? How does it differ from traditional psychotherapy or “talk” therapy? Discuss some of the activities involved in this type of therapy.

**MEDICATIONS**

What stress-related disorders are usually treated with medication? What are some of the most common medications used? What are the side effects of these medications? How long do they usually take to cause an improvement?

**EXERCISE**

What does the latest research say about the link between exercise and stress? What are the specific psychological benefits of exercise? When can exercise be harmful or damaging to the body? What is the best way to plan and execute a realistic exercise plan?

**THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE**

What is the Fight or Flight response? What happens to the body during this acute form of stress? How does this response help the body during times of danger or crisis? In the modern world, how can this response lead to stress disorders? How is persistent, low-level stress (a diluted form of Fight or Flight) harmful to the body?



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY 2

**SPOTTING THE CLUES**

Everyone reacts to stress differently, with a unique set of physical “clues” that can tell us when a stressful situation is brewing. The sooner we learn to recognize these clues, the faster we can begin to deal with stress. To find your own stress clues, circle the word that best describes how often you experience each stress symptom below.

Increased sweating or clammy hands	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Stuttering, shaky or strained voice	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Anxiety or panic, feeling out of control	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Trouble sleeping, nightmares	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Feeling tired much of the time	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Trembling, shaking or muscle twitches	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Stomach aches or digestive problems	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Rapid heartbeat or palpitations, chest pains	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Muscle tension; back, shoulder and neck pain	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Clenching of jaw or grinding teeth	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Shortness of breath, dizziness or hyperventilation (breathing too fast)	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Tension headaches or migraines	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Dry mouth or throat, trouble swallowing	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Loss of appetite or a greatly increased appetite	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
Trouble sitting still, pacing, foot tapping, etc.	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>

Think carefully about the stress clues you described as feeling “Often” or “Always.” These are your earliest signs that trouble is brewing. When you notice these symptoms, try one of the activities described on Fact Sheet 2 (*Stress Reducers*).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Keeping a stress diary is a great way to spot your major stress factors. Once you know the people, places and events that tend to stress you out, you'll be more prepared to deal with them.

On a separate sheet of paper, use the questions below to record how you feel every two hours during the time you are awake. Feel free to add any comments about your state of mind, the physical symptoms of your stress, or stressful events that have taken place. The more information you have, the better. Keep the stress diary for three days in a row, choosing days that are most likely to be stressful, such as school days.

1. What time is it right now?
2. Where have you been for the last two hours?
3. Who have you been with during the last two hours?
4. What did you do during the last two hours?
5. On a scale of 1-5, record the amount of stress you have felt during the last two hours, 1 being the least amount and 5 being the most.
6. On a scale of 1-5, record your level of happiness or contentment during the last two hours, 1 being the least amount and 5 being the most.
7. On a scale of 1-5, record how well you were able to work, study or concentrate on your activities during the last two hours, 1 being the least amount and 5 being the most.
8. What other comments, if any, do you have about the last two hours?

Whenever a stressful event occurs, record the following information:

- What happened?
- What important factors made the event stressful?
- How stressful was the event?
- How did you handle the event?
- Did you tackle the cause of the stress or the symptoms it caused?

After three days, look over your stress diary. What situations created the most stress? What do these situations have in common? What can you do to lower your stress during these times? For helpful ideas, look over Fact Sheets 2 and 3.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes we can reduce stress by addressing the problem that is causing us to feel stressed out. This might mean leaving a bad situation or removing a stress factor from our lives. At other times, we have no choice but to learn to live with a stress factor and learn to reduce the stress it causes.

Read over each situation below. Imagine that you must give the person involved a prescription for reducing his or her stress. First, decide whether or not the stress factor can be resolved or eliminated completely. If so, explain how. If not, suggest how the person might reduce stress even if he or she cannot change the situation. There are many possible answers, so use your imagination.

1. Kyle's science teacher seems to single him out and treat him unfairly. Kyle doesn't understand why. Kyle dreads going to science class every day.

---

---

---

---

---

2. Cari always stands Sela up when they make plans. For instance, last weekend Cari told Sela she had to cancel their plans because she was sick. Later, Sela saw Cari at the mall with someone else. If Sela confronts Cari, she always seems to come up with a good excuse.

---

---

---

---

---

3. Tim is being harassed by a group of guys. During basketball practice, they taunt and insult him. The guys are great players, and the coach lets them get away with it. Tim's stress is starting to affect his game.

---

---

---

---

---

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Miguel's friends are stressing him out. They say really gross and insulting things to girls in the hall, including a girl who Miguel likes. The guys are Miguel's only friends, but they are giving him a bad reputation.

---

---

---

---

5. Lin's mom and dad fight all the time. She has trouble studying or relaxing at home. Sometimes she just wants to run away.

---

---

---

---

Now use your advice-giving technique to write a prescription for yourself. Think of a problem that has been stressing you out. Can the stress factor be resolved or eliminated? If so, how? If not, how can you reduce the stress caused by the situation?

Write your own Stress Rx in the space below.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

THIS SHEET IS PRIVATE. NO ONE WILL SEE IT BUT YOU.

Learning to recognize and face our problems is the best way to reduce stress in our lives. Like most things, problem solving takes practice. Use the steps below to work through a problem that is stressing you out.

1. Write about the problem in your own words. What happened? Who else was involved?

---

---

---

---

2. How did you feel about the problem? (Listen to feelings in your head and in your body.)

---

---

---

---

3. Why do you think you had these feelings?

---

---

---

---

4. Have you done anything yet about the problem? If so, what did you do? Did it help? Why or why not?

---

---

---

---

5. What can you do now about the problem? In the space below, list as many choices as you can invent.

---

---

---

---

---

---

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

6. For each choice, list the possible outcomes—both good and bad.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

7. Try the best choice and see what happens. After a week, answer these questions again. Were the answers different? Did the solution you chose work?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

A big part of working out problems (and reducing stress) is learning to *talk* about problems. By following the tips below, you can be a better talker and a better listener:

- Calm down before trying to talk about anything.
- Talk softly and respectfully instead of yelling. Yelling only makes others feel defensive.
- Take responsibility for your mistakes. Don't blame everyone else.
- Listen as much as you talk. Take your time before responding.
- Try not to respond to another person's feelings by talking about your own. ("I know just how you feel. One time, I was...")
- Let other people tell their side of the story without interrupting them.
- Never threaten, call names or bully anyone.
- Don't exaggerate.
- Don't bring up things that are not related to the immediate problem.
- Be honest about how you feel.
- Always stand up for your beliefs.
- Start sentences with "I," instead of "you."
- Try to find a peaceful solution that is agreeable to everyone.

Simi and Niah are having a stressful problem. Use the tips above to correct their conversation. Wherever you see negative or hurtful language, cross it out and replace it with words that are more respectful and constructive. The first part has been done for you.

**Simi:** ~~I am so furious with you! I never thought you could be such an idiot!~~ I was really furious with you last night. Now that I've calmed down, I think we should talk.

---

---

**Niah:** What did *I* do? You're the one who went totally crazy and stormed off! You made *me* furious!

---

---

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Simi:** I'll tell you what you did. You blew me off in front of everyone! I was really...

\_\_\_\_\_

**Niah :** I did not blow you off. I was having a bad night and I wasn't in the mood to talk to anyone. And I really didn't feel like hearing about your stupid problems with your parents.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Simi:** You're the worst friend a person could have. If you don't start respecting me, I'm never speaking to you again.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Niah:** Don't be so melodramatic. You blew me off once last week and *I* didn't lose it.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Simi:** That's not the point. My parents are worse than ever and I feel like I don't have anyone to talk to.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Niah:** I know how you feel. My parents have been really weird lately. I can't even talk to them. I mean... now what's wrong?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Simi:** Nothing.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Niah:** Are you still mad at me?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Simi:** I guess not. Want to get some lunch?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Niah:** Sure. So like I was saying, my parents have really lost it...

\_\_\_\_\_



### **Relaxation Method 1: Imagery**

Imagery involves using your imagination to recreate a place or scene that is very relaxing. Follow the steps below to practice imagery:

1. Sit comfortably or lie down in a cool, quiet place. If you find that lying down makes you sleepy, try sitting against a wall with cushions beneath and behind you.
2. Close your eyes and imagine a scene, place or event that you think of as peaceful, beautiful and happy. Popular choices include a quiet beach, a shady garden filled with flowers, or a tropical waterfall.
3. As you imagine the scene, involve all of your senses. For instance, if you imagine a beach scene, you may “see” the ocean around you, “feel” warm sand between your toes, “hear” the crash of waves on the beach, and “smell” the salt in the air.
4. Breathe deeply as you continue to add sensations to your image. If your mind wanders, let a central thought pull you back into the image. For instance, at the beach you might focus on the endless sound of waves, one after the other.
5. Continue the imagery for at least fifteen minutes. Try not to use a timer, as it can be distracting.
6. Stand up and stretch for a few seconds, focusing on how relaxed you feel.

### **Relaxation Method 2: Meditation**

The goal of meditation is to quiet your thoughts and focus completely on one thing, giving your mind and body a rest from stressful thoughts or situations. Meditation has been shown to have numerous benefits, including lowered blood pressure, better sleep patterns, and increased creativity. Follow the tips below to practice meditation.

1. Sit in a comfortable position that is relaxing and easy to maintain for 20 to 30 minutes. Sitting in a lotus position or sitting cross-legged is not required. You may sit in a comfortable chair or against a wall, with cushions behind and below you.

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Choose a focus method. You may want to look at an object, such as a candle flame or a flower. You may also choose a sound, such as the ticking of a clock. Lastly, you may choose to focus on your breathing. Picture your breath as it slowly goes in and out of your body.
3. It is normal to find your attention wandering from time to time. That is what the mind does. Use your focus method to bring your attention back to a single place. Accept other thoughts as they come in, but do not focus on them.
4. Try to meditate for at least 20 minutes. It will be easier as you practice.
5. When you are done, spend a few minutes writing down your thoughts. The mind is often clearest just after meditation.

### **Relaxation Method 3: Progressive Muscular Relaxation**

Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR) is a physical technique that involves tensing and relaxing muscle groups. By learning to feel different levels of tension in muscles, you will learn to pick up on your body's stress clues more quickly. PMR also has an overall relaxing effect, and can be very useful for getting to sleep.

1. If possible, lie down in a comfortable position. Although lying down is preferred, you may also sit comfortably. Close your eyes and begin to breathe slowly and deeply.
2. Practice by tightening all the muscles in your right arm. Flex your arm muscles and make a tight fist with your hand. Hold for a count of 5 to 10 seconds. Then release your arm completely. Imagine it is made out of lead. (It helps if a friend or partner checks by lifting your arm and dropping it. The arm should fall freely, with no hesitation.)
3. After practicing, begin with the top of your head and progress downward to all areas of the body. Be sure to include the forehead, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, shoulders, arms and hands, chest, belly, thighs, calves and feet.
4. Rest for a few minutes afterward, feeling the warm glow of relaxation throughout your body.

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Relaxation Method 4: Breathing Techniques**

Breathing is one of the easiest and most powerful relaxation methods. Best of all, it can be done anywhere. Studies show that just a few seconds of deep breathing can lower adrenaline levels and heart rate. This can help during times of great stress or for maintaining a relaxed state throughout the day.

1. Inhale through the nose slowly as you count to 10 (or 5, or 15, or whatever is a comfortable count during a calm inhalation).
2. Make sure the stomach and abdomen expand but the chest does not raise up.
3. Try to hold the breath for the same count as the inhalation.
4. Exhale through the nose slowly and completely, also to the same count.
5. At the end of your exhalation, hold for the same count before inhaling again.
6. Repeat this cycle 10 times.
7. To relax the mind, concentrate fully on your breathing. Accept other thoughts as they come in, but do not focus on them.
8. As you begin, you may need to readjust your count so that it is comfortable for each of the four stages of breathing: inhalation, hold, exhalation, hold.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Make sure you have all the information you need to study for the test. If your textbook does not explain things clearly, ask your teacher for other suggestions. A library book, website or magazine article might present the information in a way that is more useful to you. Write the name of at least one extra learning material below.

---

---

---

---

4. Don't drink too much coffee, tea or soft drinks. Even though it can perk you up temporarily, the sugar and caffeine will eventually cause you to "crash." The stimulant effects of sugar and caffeine can also cause you to think less clearly. Junk foods that are full of sugar and carbohydrates can also make you crash. Instead, choose snacks and drinks that are healthy brain foods. (See Fact Sheet 3 for suggestions). Jot down a short list of these foods and make sure you have them on hand when you're studying.

---

---

---

---

5. Find a quick relaxation technique that helps you calm down. Most test anxiety occurs during the first few minutes. If this happens, it helps to spend a few minutes relaxing before tackling the test. See Fact Sheets 2 and 3 for suggestions. In the space below, write a brief description of the technique that works best for you. It's okay to combine or alter methods to suit your own personal style.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

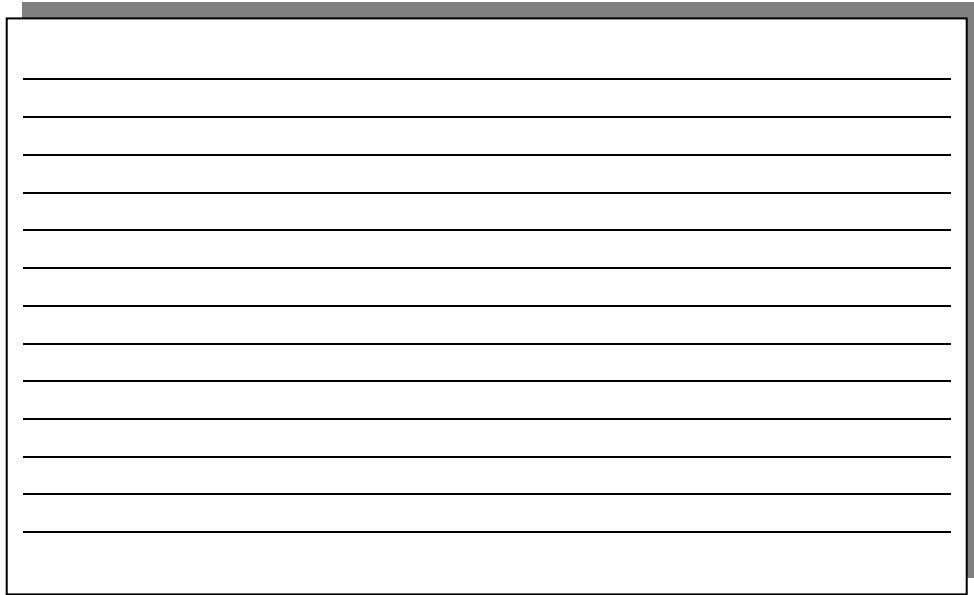
---

---

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Simplify the information. Pretend you can take a 3 x 5 card into the test. Write down all the information you can onto one side of the card below. Review it until you have memorized it.



7. Plan an activity to reward yourself for your hard studying. Don't make the reward dependant on your test grade. If you follow the steps on this worksheet, you deserve a reward. Write about your reward in the space below.



8. Relax. You're prepared!



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**THOUGHTS = REALITY**

When we're upset, we tend to exaggerate our thoughts. "This will never get better!" "Everything is ruined." "He is always mean to me." These exaggerated thoughts are rarely true, but sometimes it's easier to complain about something than to deal with it. These dramatic thoughts tell us, "You can't solve this problem, so don't even bother." Thinking more positively makes it easier to take healthy actions.

**PART 2:**

Look over the thoughts you recorded in the previous section of this activity. Pay special attention to the specific words that you used, especially during stressful or angry times. In the LEFT column, write down at least three thoughts that were negative.

1.	1.
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
2.	2.
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
3.	3.
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
4.	4.
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
5.	5.
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**PART 3:**

In the RIGHT column above, rewrite each of these thoughts using language that is more positive, hopeful and realistic. Avoid using words like "always" and "never." Try to name your feelings. For example, you might think, "This is very frustrating. It's not surprising that it makes me angry." You might also try to ask yourself questions that are helpful, like, "What's going on here?" "Why does this make me angry?" "What can I do about it?" These questions give you the power to make things better.

This activity is continued on the next page.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Having a hobby is one of the most healthy and fun ways to beat stress. Using the suggestions below, choose a hobby that you have always wanted to try. Try it for one month, spending time on the hobby at least one hour each week.

When the month is over, create a five- to ten-minute presentation in which you describe or demonstrate your hobby to your class. For instance, if you take up Tai Chi, you might perform some basic postures. If you choose reading mysteries, you might review the last good novel you read.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- short story writing
- poetry writing
- golf, tennis, weight lifting, etc.
- reading a certain genre or type of book
- drawing
- painting
- meditation
- yoga
- a martial art (karate, judo, etc.)
- jewelry making
- role-playing games
- dance
- sculpture
- playing a musical instrument
- singing
- improvisational or stand-up comedy
- cooking

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes all we need is a quick fix to prevent a moment of anxiety from turning into a full-blown stress attack. Fill out this sheet with your own personal remedies, and then keep it in a handy place as a reminder. You will not have to share this information with anyone else.

When I'm stressed, the best person to calm me down is \_\_\_\_\_.

I can reach this person at \_\_\_\_\_ . (phone number)

When I need to unwind, I read my favorite book or magazine: \_\_\_\_\_

When I need to laugh, I watch my favorite funny movie: \_\_\_\_\_

When I need to calm down, I close my eyes and picture:

---

---

---

---

When I need a break, I take a five-minute "vacation" by closing my eyes and imaging myself:

---

---

---

---

When I want to feel happy, I think about the time that:

---

---

---

---

When I need to relax, I like to:

---

---

---

---

When I need to be good to myself, I treat myself to \_\_\_\_\_

# **FACT SHEETS**

**What is Stress?**

Stress is what you feel when you react to pressure situations, either in the outside world (a geometry test) or from inside yourself (wanting to be more popular). Stress is a normal part of everyone's life.

**Healthy Stress vs. Unhealthy Stress**

Some stress is healthy and necessary. Without it, most of us would find it hard to do well in school, get to work on time, or finish projects. When we're in danger, stress also helps our bodies become temporarily stronger. But sometimes, stress can be destructive. When we feel like we can't control our lives, or when we don't know how to solve a problem, things can seem overwhelming and hopeless. Don't worry—there is always hope.

**Types of Stress****Acute—**

This type of short-term stress is often called the “Fight or Flight” response. In times of danger or intense stress, chemicals are released into the bloodstream to help the body react or defend itself. In primitive times, acute stress was often needed to help people stay alive. In our world, things that set off acute stress are usually not as dangerous. They include things like loud noises, crowds, or insect stings. Acute stress comes on suddenly. But once it's over, the effects usually disappear quickly.

**Episodic—**

This type of intense stress occurs during certain periods of life. Adolescence is a major time for episodic stress. Things that can trigger episodic stress for teens include entrance exams, peer pressure, and parental pressure to get into a good college. Episodic stress lasts longer than acute stress, but most people are able to manage it without serious problems.

**Chronic—**

Modern life is filled with on-going situations that are stressful, but not deadly. These situations can cause chronic stress, a mild version of “Fight or Flight” that lasts for days, weeks or longer. Chronic stress can be triggered by family problems, pressure at school, illness, and relationship problems. This type of stress causes the most physical and emotional problems.

**Normative vs. Non-Normative Stress**

The three types of stress mentioned above may also be divided into **normative stress**—stress caused by events that are expected to occur, and **non-normative stress**—caused by things that are not expected. Examples of normative stress include relationship issues and grade anxiety. Examples of non-normative stress include serious illness, divorce in the family, and assault or rape.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Signs of Serious Stress**

Stress becomes a problem when it keeps you from doing normal things. Below are some clues that you may be experiencing serious stress:

- feeling edgy, guilty or depressed most of the time
- laughing or crying for no reason
- only seeing the negative side of situations
- no longer enjoying things that were once fun
- feeling angry toward others most of the time
- having headaches, stomach aches, or sleeping problems
- having trouble concentrating, thinking clearly or remembering things

## TEN THINGS THAT **DO** REDUCE STRESS

1. Eat healthy meals with fruits, vegetables and grains. These raw materials provide your body with energy that keeps you feeling happier and healthier, even during times of stress.
2. Try to get the same amount of sleep every night—at least eight hours. Even though you may not realize it, feeling tired actually causes stress.
3. Exercise on a regular basis. No single activity can lower your stress levels more than exercise. In addition to a host of health benefits, exercise releases chemicals into your bloodstream that fight stress, depression and anxiety.
4. Make a list of the things stressing you out. Change the ones you can. Accept the ones you can't change.
5. Don't commit to things you can't do or don't want to do. Remember to think about yourself and save some time just for you, even if you only spend it relaxing.
6. Have at least one friend you can talk to about problems. Having a close friend requires effort, trust and sacrifice, but the benefits are well worth it. When choosing your friends, remember that no one is perfect.
7. Have fun. It may sound simple, but having fun often requires planning and effort. Find a hobby, sport or healthy activity that you love, and do it as often as you can.
8. Learn to express your feelings. Your feelings are important and you have a right to share them with others. If someone makes you angry or hurts you, don't keep it inside. Unexpressed feelings can quickly grow into huge stress factors. Respectfully telling someone how you feel has two benefits: it releases the bad feelings and it often prevents the hurtful problem from happening again.
9. Learn to read your stress cues. Pay attention to clues from your thoughts ("I wish I'd never gotten out of bed!") and your body (headache). The more you learn to listen, the sooner you can spot stress and work toward reducing it.
10. Find a stress buster that works for you. To get some ideas, check out Fact Sheet 3.

# FIVE THINGS THAT **DON'T** REDUCE STRESS

1. Caffeine is a stimulant found in coffee, sodas and tea. A little can help you wake up and become more alert. Too much can cause nervousness and anxiety. Everyone has a different tolerance level for caffeine. If you think you might be drinking too much, try replacing some of your caffeine intake with decaffeinated coffee or tea, or caffeine-free sodas.
2. Drinking alcohol can seriously disrupt sleeping patterns, making it hard to get a good night's sleep. Painful hangovers are another stressful side effect of drinking. To top it off, alcohol affects good judgment, which can lead to a host of stressful problems.
3. Nicotine's poisonous ingredients raise the heart rate and stress out the body. Although tobacco users feel relaxed at first, they soon feel nervous again—leading to the desire for another cigarette or dip of chew. Nicotine keeps the body on a stress roller coaster at all times.
4. Sugary foods raise energy levels for a short time. The trouble is that your body deals with high levels of sugar by releasing insulin, which reduces the amount of sugar in your blood. Insulin can lower your sugar level, even after your blood sugar has normalized. This is called a sugar crash. It's a cycle that is stressful to the mind and the body. Eating healthy foods and keeping sugary snacks to a minimum will keep your body running smoothly and feeling great.
5. Being lazy is a stress factor that can sneak up on us. Napping, watching TV and playing video games are okay sometimes, but doing them too often can cause frustration and boredom, two things that lead to major stress. Get out and enjoy the world—it's worth the effort!

**STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

**BIOFEEDBACK** uses electronic sensors to measure stress responses, such as blood pressure and skin temperature. These measurements are given to you in the form of a sound, such as a rising and falling tone, or a visual cue, such as a light. Using these cues, you can learn to control stress responses by practicing a variety of relaxation methods.

**BREATHING TECHNIQUES** are one of the easiest and most powerful relaxation methods. They can be done anywhere, at any time. Most breathing techniques involve slowly breathing in and out while counting silently.

**COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY** identifies current sources of stress, as well as the actions and thoughts that can be changed to lower stress. Along with medication, this type of therapy is probably the best treatment for anxiety or panic attacks.

**GUIDED IMAGERY** involves using your imagination to recreate a place or scene that is very relaxing. You can use your imagination to create the scene, or you can listen to a tape or CD that creates the scene for you. These “audio guides” can be checked out in most libraries or purchased in music or bookstores.

**MASSAGE** slows the heart rate, relaxes muscles, improves blood flow, and increases “feel-good” chemicals in the brain. Many massage schools offer low-priced massages given by students. Self-massage of the arms and legs is also very effective. Self-massage is discussed in many massage books found in bookstores and local libraries.

**MEDICATIONS** are available to treat people who suffer from chronic stress, anxiety or panic attacks, and depression. These medications are usually combined with therapy aimed at helping the person deal with stress and problems in a healthier way. Only a medical doctor can prescribe these medications.

**MEDITATION** focuses your attention on one thing and quiets your thoughts, giving your mind and body a rest from stress. Many communities offer free or affordable meditation classes. You can also meditate by yourself or with a friend.

**PHYSICAL EXERCISE** of all kinds is one of the most powerful stress management techniques around. In addition to many health benefits, exercise releases chemicals into the blood that lower anxiety and depression. Walking is a cheap and easy form of exercise available to almost anyone.

**PROGRESSIVE MUSCULAR RELAXATION (PMR)** is a physical technique that involves tensing and relaxing muscle groups. To learn more about PMR, check out a book from the library or search the Internet for “progressive muscular relaxation.”

**YOGA** is a form of exercise that emphasizes the balance of mind, body and spirit. It takes time and patience to learn, but the physical and mental rewards are great. You can learn yoga from a video or a book, but a beginner will learn best in a class environment.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE BODY AND STRESS**

Long-term stress that is unresolved or untreated can have harmful effects on every system of the body. The list below is only a brief sampling of the problems that can be caused or worsened by stress.

**Circulatory System**

Heart attack  
Stroke  
High blood pressure

**Digestive System**

Stomach aches  
Ulcers  
Constipation  
Diarrhea  
Irritable bowel syndrome  
Weight gain  
Weight loss

**Immune System**

Lowered immune response  
Greater risk of cold and flu  
Greater risk of diseases  
(including cancer)

**Nervous System**

Sleeping problems  
Headaches  
Migraines  
Poor memory  
Lessened ability to concentrate  
Depression  
Panic attacks  
Phobias  
Vertigo (dizziness, especially  
in high places)

**Respiratory System**

Asthma  
Allergies  
Shortness of breath

**Skeletal System**

Joint pain  
Rheumatoid arthritis

**Muscular System**

Muscle pain  
Back pain  
Muscle spasms or twitching

**Reproductive System**

PMS (premenstrual syndrome)  
Lowered fertility  
Low birth weight in babies  
Genetic abnormalities  
Miscarriage  
Sexual disorders

**Urinary System**

Frequent need to urinate  
Kidney infections  
Bladder infections

**Integumentary System (Skin)**

Hives  
Psoriasis  
Acne  
Eczema

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Acute stress is often called the “Fight or Flight” response. When danger or intense stress occurs, several physical changes take place that allow the body to react more quickly and more efficiently. Compared to our primitive ancestors, we do not face life-threatening situations very often. However, in order to understand “Fight or Flight,” we’ll step back in time and imagine being chased by a saber-toothed tiger.

As soon as our bodies detect the tiger, a lightning-fast series of events takes place:

1. The brain releases steroid hormones to rev up the heart, lungs, and circulation.
2. White blood cells and other infection fighters are sent to areas where injury or infection is most likely to be serious—such as the skin and lymph nodes.
3. Chemical messengers called neurotransmitters are released. These messengers shut down parts of the brain that deal with short-term memory, concentration and rational thought. This makes the brain able to respond more quickly to the decisions at hand—in this case, whether to fight the tiger or run from it.
4. The chemical messengers also store an emotional experience into our long-term memory. In primitive times, this would have helped our ancestors avoid future problems with saber-toothed tigers.
5. As the tiger moves closer, breathing becomes more rapid. The increase in oxygen allows the body to perform at greater-than-normal levels.
6. Blood flow increases dramatically, sometimes by up to 300 percent.
7. The spleen discharges red and white blood cells, allowing the blood to deliver oxygen more quickly.
8. Fluids are diverted from nonessential areas, such as the mouth and throat. This can result in a dry mouth and difficulty talking or swallowing.
9. Blood flow is directed toward the body’s vital organs, such as the heart and lungs. This means less blood near the skin, which can result in cool, clammy hands.
10. Nonessential systems, such as digestion, are temporarily shut down.

Although these physical changes can be lifesavers in the short run, they can do serious damage in the long run. When our bodies are constantly facing chronic stress, these changes can overwork the body and cause many problems.

Other symptoms caused by chronic stress can also be traced to Fight or Flight, including dry mouth, clammy hands, and constipation. While we can thank our bodies for this highly effective defense mechanism, we also must be able to recognize when to turn it off.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

A panic attack is a sudden and frightening feeling of doom, such as the fear of having a heart attack, making a scene, passing out or suffocating. Physical symptoms can also take place, including:

- Dizziness
- Racing heart
- Shortness of breath
- Confusion
- Choking sensation
- Lump in throat or difficulty swallowing
- Heartburn
- Blurred vision
- Chest pains
- Numbness or tingling in mouth, hands and feet
- Muscle pains
- Shaking
- Nausea
- Weakness

A panic attack may not seem to have a cause. It usually happens after months of chronic stress, such as the stress of moving or going to a new school. Although panic attacks are frightening and often hard to understand, they can be controlled. The most important step is getting help. Panic attacks are a serious health problem, just like diabetes or high blood pressure. They often require the help of a doctor or therapist. No one who experiences panic attacks should feel ashamed to ask for help.

To learn more about panic attacks, call the National Mental Health Association's toll-free number at 800-969-6942, or visit their website at [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org) (enter "panic" in the search window). This organization provides free information about panic attacks and will make referrals to doctors, counselors and clinics.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE FOUR QUADRANTS**

Everyone's life can be broken down into four basic areas or quadrants:

<b>Health</b>	<b>Recreation</b>
<b>Work (including school work and chores)</b>	<b>Relationships with friends, family and romantic partners</b>

If we spend too much time focusing on any one of these areas, stress is likely to occur. Stress can also happen if one of the areas is missing in our lives. Believe it or not, even the absence of school and the structure it provides can cause stress. Follow the tips below to keep each area balanced.

- Remember that, although education is important, it is not the only part of life. You will be a better student if you allow yourself to enjoy other activities as well.
- Contact with family and friends is a vital part of life. Make sure you make time each day to talk with someone about your day. Have an ally you can talk with about problems or big decisions.
- Make time for yourself. Spend your personal time doing something you really enjoy, even if it's just taking a nap. Also, try to find a relaxing hobby that requires thought, creativity and energy.
- Always make time to eat three healthy meals a day, get plenty of rest, and get some form of exercise. It doesn't have to be something athletic or strenuous. Something as simple as walking or biking can boost your mood and help you deal with stress.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Check out the following resources to learn more about stress and how to handle it.

National Youth Crisis Hotline 800-448-4663

National Adolescent Suicide Hotline 800-621-4000

National Mental Health Association 800-969-6942

[www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)

Provides free information about panic attacks and makes referrals to counselors and clinics

National Anxiety Foundation 800-755-1576

Provides good information about anxiety disorders, their symptoms and treatments

Anxiety Disorders Association of America

[www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org)

Online bulletin boards, chat groups, and referrals to therapists and self-help groups

The Anxiety Panic Internet Resource (tAPir)

[www.algy.com/anxiety/index.html](http://www.algy.com/anxiety/index.html)

Self-help resource providing support and information concerning panic attacks, anxiety disorders, etc.

Anxieties.com

[www.anxieties.com](http://www.anxieties.com)

Free self-help source for those wanting to learn more treatment and symptoms of panic attacks, anxiety and phobias

[www.meditationcenter.com](http://www.meditationcenter.com)

Simple instructions and information about a variety of meditation techniques

[www.psychwww.com](http://www.psychwww.com)

Excellent stress management tips, assessment tests and information

[www.soothingyourself.com](http://www.soothingyourself.com)

Relaxation techniques, advice, personal stories, comfort food recipes, and more

[www.stressbusting.co.uk](http://www.stressbusting.co.uk)

Tips for beating stress, anxiety, depression and nervous tension

<http://thestressoflife.com>

Articles, info and tips about many specific kinds of stress

## Other Products from Human Relations Media

<i>Social Skills Workshop: Basic Social Skills</i>	video/print
<i>Social Skills Workshop: Negotiation and Compromise</i>	video/print
<i>Social Skills Workshop: Developing Self-Confidence</i>	video/print
<i>Social Skills Workshop: Shyness Busting Skills</i>	video/print
<i>Conflicts, Communication and Relationships</i>	video/print
<i>Dealing with Difference: Opening Dialogue about Lesbian, Gay and Straight Issues</i>	video/print
<i>Emotional Self-Control: Do You Have It?</i>	video/print
<i>Hurting With Words: Understanding Emotional Violence and Abuse</i>	video/print
<i>When Relationships Break</i>	video/print

Available from

Human Relations Media  
41 Kensico Drive  
Mount Kisco, NY 10549

Phone: 800 / 431-2050  
Fax: 914 / 244-0485  
Web: [www.hrmvideo.com](http://www.hrmvideo.com)