

## Lesson: Stress Management

*"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."*

*~Albert Einstein*

### **Standards:**

CASEL/OSELS: **Self-Awareness Self-Management Social-Awareness Relationship Skills Responsible Decision-Making**

### **Beginning of Lesson**

- ★ Each class begins by greeting students and taking attendance using the sign-in form provided.
- ★ At the beginning of each lesson, you can invite students to greet one another by filling in the phrase "Hi my name is \_\_\_\_\_ & today/this week I smiled when \_\_\_\_\_." Briefly remind students of the rules they created if necessary.

### **\*Note**

- ★ Define the following before beginning the lesson:
  - Stress: Stress is the body's way of responding to any kind of demand.
  - A stressor: A stressor is a situation or event that causes you to feel stressed. For example, it could be family drama, a test, or performing in front of a crowd.
  - Ask the students to answer "true" or "false" to the following statement: "Stress can be positive and healthy."
    - Answer: "True." Positive stress is known as eustress and can help you perform well on tasks like tests. However, if stress becomes prolonged, it can have negative effects on your health and performance, which is referred to as distress.
- ★ Coping skills bingo from [Bullying & Conflict Resolution](#) is another great activity that can be implemented under this topic.

### **Journal**

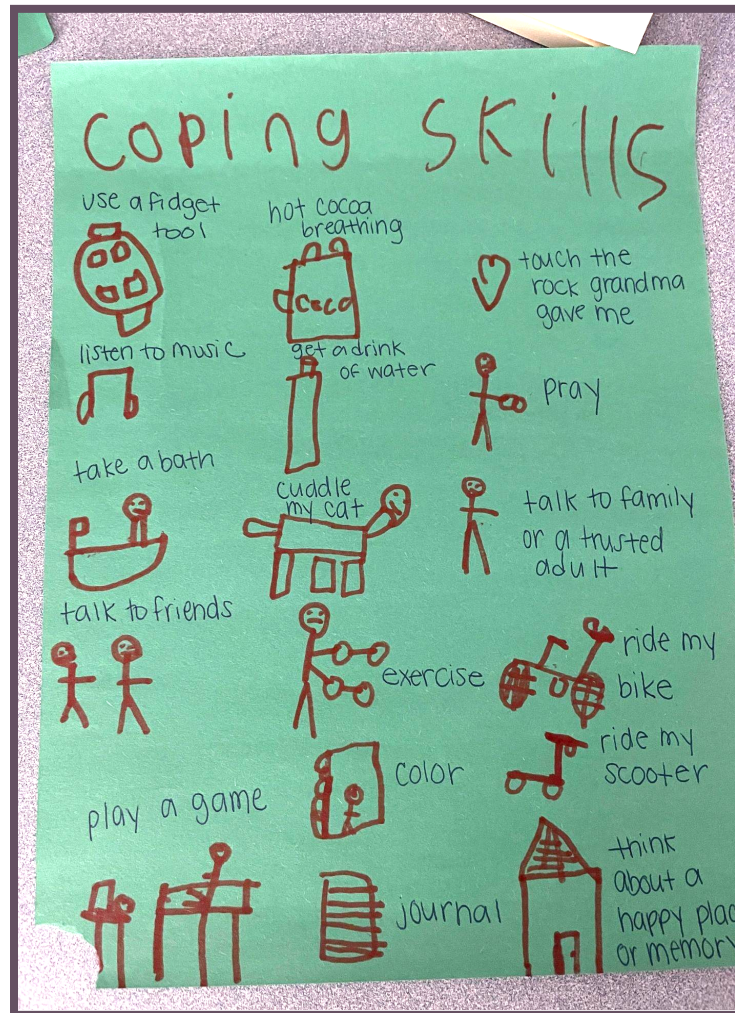
- ★ Option 1: What causes you to feel stressed, worried, or anxious? How do you cope with these feelings?
- ★ Option 2: Imagine you have a magic wand that can instantly make you feel calm and relaxed whenever you're stressed. What does the wand look like and how does it work?
- ★ Option 3: Think about a time when you felt stressed, worried, or anxious. What did you do to make yourself feel better?

### **Discussion**

- ★ Where and how do you feel stress? (e.g., stomach ache, headache, rapid heartbeat)
- ★ How can you cope with stress? (e.g., deep breathing, exercising, journaling)
- ★ Do you have a "calm corner" in your classroom? If yes, how can it help you? What suggestions do you have to improve it? If not, what suggestions do you have to create one? If possible, consider sharing students' ideas with school personnel.

**Activity: Coping Skills List**

In this activity, students will brainstorm ways to calm their minds and bodies during times of stress, anger, or overwhelm. They'll create a personalized list of effective strategies, understanding that what works for one person might not work for another. The goal is to develop a list that can be utilized during challenging times to help them regulate their emotions and improve their emotional well-being. This list can be shared with loved ones and leaders (e.g. teachers, coaches) to assist in supporting them.

**Example: Picture 13**

This student drew his favorite coping skills and had an adult assist in writing words to match the pictures. Now, he can refer to this guide when he has overwhelming feelings, and the adults in his life can also provide support. This list is a great example of the *Coping Skills List* activity and it can be stored in a school desk or proudly displayed at home.

**Supplies**

- ★ Coloring supplies
- ★ Paper

### Instructions

- ★ Ask students to share ideas about what they can do to calm their bodies and minds when they are stressed, overwhelmed, angry, or upset.
- ★ Then, have them choose the strategies that work best for them. Remind them that what works for one person may not work for another and that's okay!
- ★ Have them create a list with words or drawings so they can use this when they can refer to it when they need ideas on how to calm themselves.
- ★ Challenge them to fill their entire paper and share it with their loved ones so they can offer help when needed.

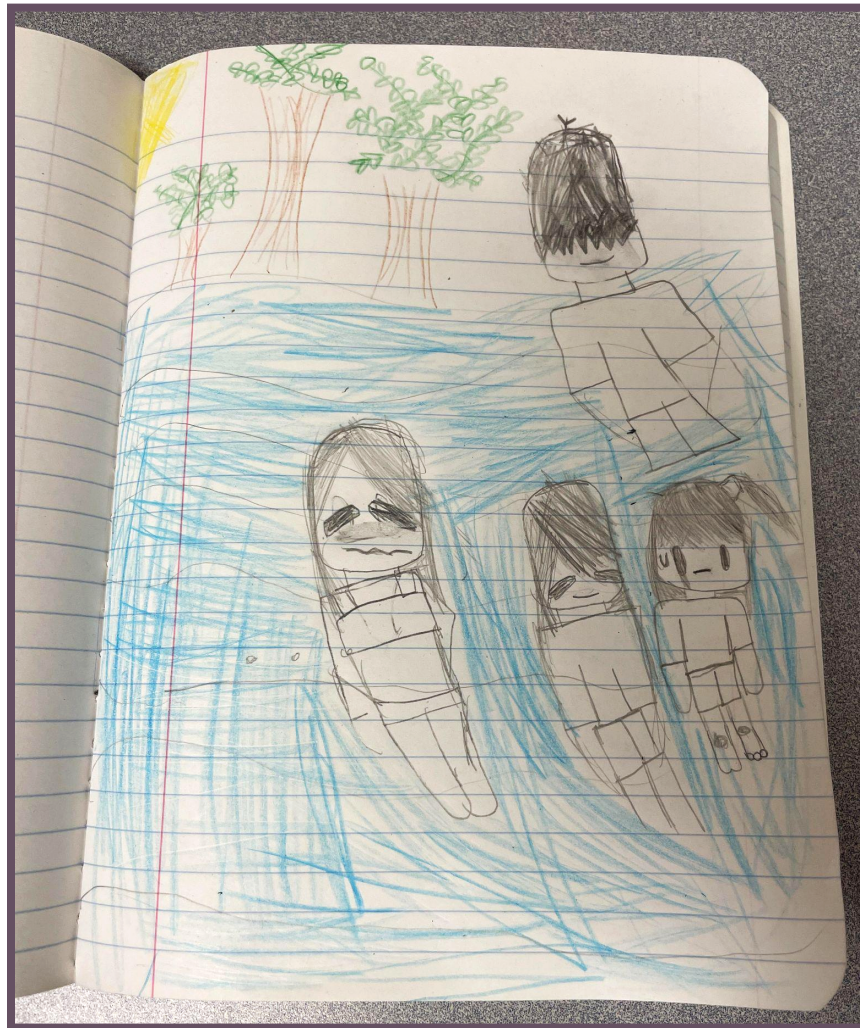
### \*Note

- ★ It can sometimes be helpful for you to share ideas, and they can choose whether they want to add them to their list if they run out of ideas. However, first, encourage them to come up with their own ideas.
- ★ Here is a short list to get you started:
  - Take a deep breath
  - Various breathing technique
    - Box or square breathing: Inhale for a count of four, hold for a count of four, exhale for a count of four, and pause for a count of four. Repeat. Use two fingers to draw an imaginative square in the air.
    - Hot cocoa breathing: Pretend you're smelling a delicious cup of hot cocoa. Then, blow on a cup of hot cocoa to cool it down. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and then exhale slowly and gently through pursed lips, as if you're blowing on the hot cocoa.
    - Figure 8 breathing: Visualize the shape of the number 8. As you inhale, trace the top loop of the 8, and as you exhale, trace the bottom loop. Repeat.
    - Five finger breathing: For each finger on one hand, trace up as you inhale and down as you exhale. Start with the thumb, then move to the index finger, and so on until you've traced all five fingers.
  - Count to ten
  - Talk to an adult
  - Go for a walk
  - Play with a pet
  - Meditate
  - Color or draw
  - Read
  - Journal
  - Exercise
  - Listen to music
  - Think about a happy place
  - Squeeze your muscles and relax them ([Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#))
  - Enjoy nature ([Savoring](#))
  - Have a healthy snack
  - Get a drink of water ([Distress Tolerance](#))
  - Hug someone
  - Play a game
  - Use a fidget toy
  - Laugh
  - Ask for help
  - Feel free to add your favorite coping skills to this list!



**Activity: Creating A Calm Place**

In this activity, students will craft their own personal [calm places](#). These are the spaces that help us find peace and serenity, whether it's a soothing beach, our cozy bedroom, or the shade under a special tree. Students will use their imagination and artistic skills to bring these places to life on paper, guiding them to visualize, create, and maintain a tangible representation of our calm spaces. This artwork will serve as a comforting reminder whenever they need a moment of peace.

**Example: Picture 14**

This student chose to draw a picture of her and her closest friends at the lake. Her calm place is near water surrounded by her loved ones. In addition to drawing a photo, she was able to take a moment, close her eyes, and embrace the warm and loving feelings that arise when she visits this place in her mind. After coming to the school social worker's office upset, she recognized that this activity helped her find a place of peace and contentment.

**Supplies**

- ★ Coloring supplies
- ★ Paper



*Instructions*

- ★ Hand out supplies.
- ★ Instruct students to think of a place that helps them feel calm and at peace (e.g., the beach, their bedroom, under a special tree).
- ★ If they are comfortable, have them close their eyes for a moment and reflect on this space, considering how it makes them feel.
- ★ Assist them in engaging their senses by asking them to imagine what they see, hear, feel, and smell in this place.
- ★ Next, guide them to draw this peaceful place on their paper.
- ★ Encourage them to use this artwork as a physical reminder, suggesting they can close their eyes and imagine their calm place whenever needed.

**Activity: Bouncing Balloons**

In this activity, students will experience the metaphorical representation of stressors through balloons, while practicing mindfulness, teamwork, and self-awareness. By engaging in the task of keeping the balloons in the air, students will gain valuable insights into [stress management](#), the impact of multiple stressors, and the significance of having a support network to navigate life's challenges effectively.

*Supplies*

- ★ Balloons
- ★ *\*Note:* Be mindful of students who may have latex allergies.

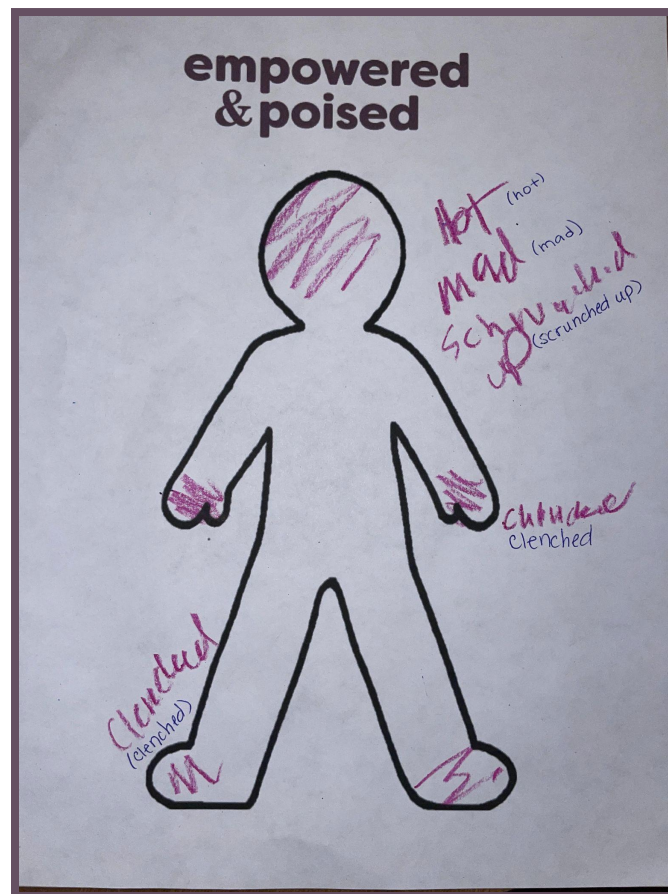
*Instructions*

- ★ Before beginning the activity, inflate a few balloons. Let the students know that each balloon represents a stressor.
- ★ Have students try to keep the balloons in the air without letting them fall to the ground.
- ★ Begin with one balloon and gradually add more balloons to each group to make it more challenging.
- ★ Have the students count the number of times they bounce (or touch) the balloons to keep them in the air.
- ★ At the end, ask students if it was easier to manage one stressor (balloon) or multiple stressors at a time.
- ★ Share that when we only have to “juggle” one thing in our life, it is easier to manage than when we have a lot going on simultaneously, such as school, family, sports, and extracurricular activities.
- ★ You can also try this activity with smaller or larger groups to help students consider how the size of their support circle can impact their ability to manage stressors.

**Activity: Anger ID**

In this activity, students will explore the mind-body connection by identifying where anger manifests in their bodies. By coloring in a body outline to represent their **anger**<sup>22</sup> areas, students will gain valuable insights into their emotional responses. Sharing their findings with the group can foster a sense of understanding and acceptance that each person experiences anger uniquely. This activity empowers students to use their bodily cues as a reminder to tap into their coping skills, enabling them to manage anger effectively before it becomes too overwhelming.

*\*Note:* Throughout this activity, promote open and respectful communication, emphasizing that there is no right or wrong way to experience anger in the body. It is essential to create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their feelings and insights with their peers.

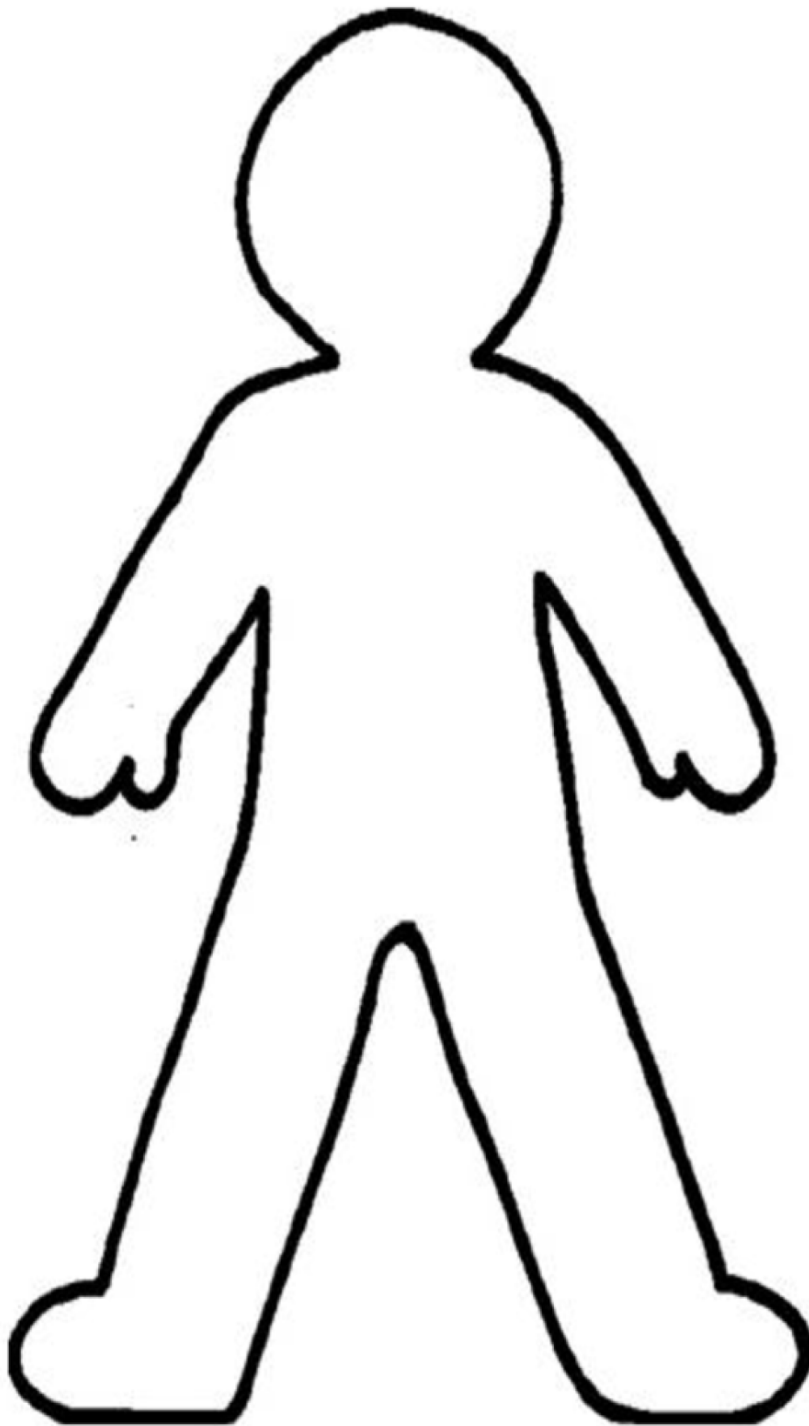
**Example: Picture 15**

This student colored in areas of the body to identify where anger physically arises. For example, fists and toes are clenched, the face is scrunched, and the student is feeling hot. The student also noted that the emotion arising is "mad." Body awareness is an extremely important skill in helping individuals to regulate their emotions.

**Supplies**

- ★ Printed copies of the body outline or paper
- ★ Coloring supplies

<sup>22</sup> Anger management may be an essential strategy for reducing school-based violence.





*Instructions*

- ★ Hand out supplies.
- ★ Explain to students that the body and mind are interconnected. This activity will help them identify where anger shows up in their bodies.
- ★ If you're using plain paper, ask students to draw an outline of a human body on the paper.
- ★ Next, have students color the areas on the body outline where they experience anger (e.g., stomach, hands, head, etc.).
- ★ Optionally, invite students to write down what they feel in each colored area (e.g., stomach hurts - stomach area, fists clench - hand area, head hurts - head area).
- ★ Finally, encourage students to share their activity with the group. Remind them that we all experience emotions differently, so if their pictures aren't the same, that's totally okay!
- ★ Explain to students that when they begin to feel the anger in their bodies, this can serve as a cue to tap into their coping skills before the anger becomes too overwhelming.