

Be CALM Mini-Lesson

What's Stressful? What to Do About It?



Objectives

1. To identify things that are stressing you out
2. To name or choose at least 2 healthy coping strategies you can try when you experience uncomfortable feelings, body sensations, or thoughts
3. To practice one mindfulness exercise that you can try for calming down or taking control of your feelings or thoughts

What to do

1. On your paper, write a list of things that have been stressing you out over the past two weeks. Your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations can tune you into things that are bothering you. Go to page 3 to see a list of these.
2. For each thing you identified that has been stressful, write one coping strategy you can try. Write your sentences in this format:

*If (**your stressor**), then I will (**copied strategy**).*

Try to do this without looking at the list of coping strategies.

Here are some examples:

If I start thinking about never being able to see my friends, then I will reach out to a friend and ask if they want to talk or FaceTime.

If I am feeling worried that I am not going to pass, then I will send an email to my teacher to express my concern and ask if I will still pass.

If you get stuck and need ideas for things you can do, check out this list of healthy coping strategies:

- Write about it
- Draw
- Dance
- Listen to music
- Reach out to a friend or trusted adult
- Read something entertaining
- Play a game
- Do a mindfulness exercise (Try the Stop, Breathe, Think app)
- Make something (craft, cooking, baking)
- Press the Pause & take 3 deep breaths
- Ask for more information
- Exercise
- Watch something funny
- Do yoga or stretch
- Eat a healthy snack slowly
- Remind yourself that this is not going to last forever and you are not alone in how you are feeling
- Do something nice for a family member or write a kind note to someone

4. When you notice you are having a hard time, try the coping strategy.

Go to the next page



Mindfulness exercise

We can't make these stressors go away, but we can change how we respond to them. Watch this video from the website www.changetochill.org that explains this point:

Two Arrows Explainer: <https://youtu.be/FUge6f-AzuE>

In the video, the student shifted her attention to something in her control to help her calm her down – her breath – when something bad happened. This helped her to stay in control of her emotions.

Mindfulness is an exercise you can try for shifting your attention away from the thing that is upsetting you to something that is more calming, like your breath or the feeling of your feet on the floor. This can help you to calm down or to relax. In this exercise, you will focus your attention on the sensations on the bottoms of your feet. You can listen to this exercise, which is a practice adapted from the work of Dr. Nirbhay Singh and included in *The Self-Compassion Workbook for Teens* (Bluth, 2018), here:

<https://insighttimer.com/karenbluth/guided-meditations/soles-of-the-feet-for-teens>

If you don't have access to the internet right now, no problem. You can read and do the exercise. Try reading a sentence and then doing what it says before moving on. It is called *Soles of the Feet*, and here it is:

You may take your shoes off for this practice if you wish.

Standing up, notice the feelings of your feet on the floor. Notice the whole bottom of the foot – the toes, the heel, and if the middle part of your foot, the instep, is touching the floor or your shoe's insole.

What does it feel like on the bottom of your feet? Does the floor or your shoe feel hard, or is it cushiony? Does it feel cold or warm against your feet?

Now, very slowly, lean forward just a tiny bit. How does this change what you're feeling on the bottoms of your feet? Really take time to notice any changes in sensations.

Very slowly, lean back a tiny bit – just a fraction of an inch. Do you notice anything different happening on the bottoms of your feet?

Repeat this a few times, slowly rocking forward just a bit, and backward just a bit. What's going on with the bottoms of your feet?

Now lean to the right just a tiny bit. Again, notice any changes in sensations on the bottoms of your feet.

And now lean toward the left a tiny bit. Any changes going on down at the soles of your feet?

Repeat this slowly a few times – leaning just a bit to the right and then to the left, back and forth. What's happening with the bottoms of your feet?

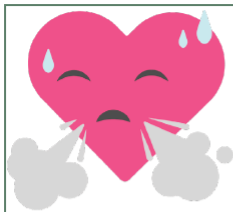
Now make little circles with your knees, feeling the changing sensations in the soles of the feet.

Come back to center, keeping your attention on the soles of your feet.

You might take a minute to notice how amazing it is that the small surface area of the feet supports the entire body. And maybe take moment to just appreciate your feet, feeling thankful for all the third work they do all day long.

Signs that you may be stressed

Body Sensations:



Racing Heartbeat

- Rapid heartbeat
- Trouble breathing
- Nausea / queasiness
- Dizziness
- Sweaty palms
- Dry mouth



Headache

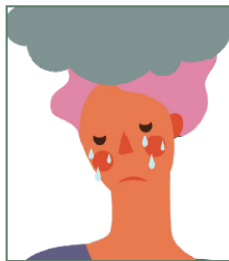
- Cold hands
- Chest pains
- Hard to swallow
- Headache
- Stomachache
- Difficulty sleeping



Diminished Appetite

- Crave certain foods
- Diminished appetite
- Shaking

Feelings:



Depressed

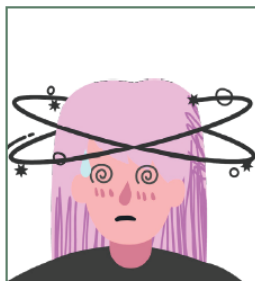
- Anger
- Worry
- Overwhelmed
- Frustrated
- Overcommitted
- Depressed
- Lost or confused



Anger

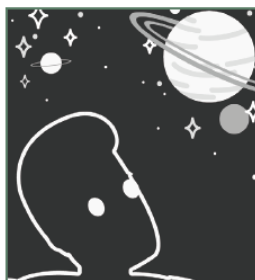
- Out of control
- Unhappy
- Freaking out
- Nervous
- Wound up

Thoughts:



Difficulty Focusing

- Blanking out or spacing out on things
- Trouble concentrating
- Constantly thinking about something
- Difficulty focusing on anything
- Having too much to think about



Spacing Out

- Trouble thinking clearly
- Having bad thoughts
- Overthinking things



Bad thoughts