



United States
Department of
Agriculture

NIFA

National Institute
of Food
and Agriculture



[https://nifa.usda.gov/
program/4-h-positive-youth-
development](https://nifa.usda.gov/program/4-h-positive-youth-development)



National Aeronautics
and Space
Administration

EXPEDITIONARY
SKILLS **FOR LIFE**

A FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP FOR **STEM** EDUCATION

LESSON PLAN: ACTIVITY 1.3

LETTERING IN STRESS

LESSON DETAILS

AGE/GRADE LEVEL

Elementary School

LEARNER OUTCOMES

Youth will use calm and flexible approaches in dealing with unfamiliar situations and be able identify reasonable responses to the specific stress situation.

SUCCESS INDICATORS

Youth will be able to work with other groups to teach about stress management techniques. Youth will be able to identify and use personal stress management techniques.

LIFE SKILLS

Critical thinking, communication, creativity, flexibility, adaptability, initiative, leadership, self-direction, responsibility

NATIONAL STANDARDS

21st Century Skills / Life and Career Skills / FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY / develop thinking skills, content knowledge, and social and emotional competencies to navigate complex life and work environments

21st Century Skills / Content Knowledge / HEALTH LITERACY / Understanding preventive physical and mental health measures, including proper diet, nutrition, exercise, risk avoidance and stress reduction

PREP TIME

5 minutes

ACTIVITY TIME

1 hour 15 minutes (all activities combined)

MATERIALS LIST

- Stress balls (up to 5 per group)
- Index Cards (3-4 per youth)
- Tape (optional)
- Paper
- Writing utensils

SUGGESTED SPACE

Open space

SUGGESTED GROUP SIZE

5-8 per group, multiple groups can be formed

REFERENCES

The More the Merrier
[http://belmontwellness.com/
wp-content/uploads/stress-for-
success.pdf](http://belmontwellness.com/wp-content/uploads/stress-for-success.pdf)

The Story on Stress
[http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/stress.
html#](http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/stress.html#)

Kids Health in the Classroom
[https://classroom.kidshealth.org/
classroom/3to5/problems/emo-
tions/stress.pdf](https://classroom.kidshealth.org/classroom/3to5/problems/emotions/stress.pdf)

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever felt sick to your stomach during a test? Have you had days when you were so loaded down with homework that you had trouble sleeping? Have you ever been so worried about something that you ended up with a terrible headache? If so, then you know what it's like to feel stress.

Stress is what you feel when you are worried or uncomfortable about something. This worry in your mind can make your body feel bad. You may feel angry, frustrated, scared, or afraid — which can give you a stomachache or a headache. When you're stressed you may not feel like sleeping or eating, or you might sleep or eat too much. You also may feel cranky or have trouble paying attention at school and remembering things at home.

Good or normal stress might show up when you're called on in class or when you have to give a report. Have you ever gotten butterflies in your stomach or sweaty hands? Those can be signs of good stress — the kind of stress that can help you to get things done.

But bad stress can happen if the stressful feelings keep going over time. You may not feel well if your parents are fighting, if a family member is sick, if you're having problems at school, or if you're going through anything else that makes you upset every day. That kind of stress isn't going to help you, and it can actually make you sick.

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EXPEDITIONARY SKILLS FOR LIFE

LETTERING IN STRESS, CONTINUED

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The best way to keep stress away is to have a balanced life. That means making good decisions about how to spend your time. If you're only dealing with school stuff and have no time to play, you can get stressed. Make sure you keep your **SELF** in mind: **S**leep, **E**xercise, **L**eisure (something fun), and **F**ood.

If you take care of yourself and get enough sleep and food, and if you exercise and leave time for fun stuff, you'll probably be less stressed out!

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

ACTIVITY: STRESS BALL (30 MINUTES)

1. Have each group of 5 to 8 youth form a circle.
2. Give one stress ball to each group.
3. Let the youth know that they have two goals - to toss the ball in the same pattern each time, and to not let the ball drop to the ground.
4. Have the youth holding the stress ball underhand toss the ball to someone else in the group. Remind them that they need to remember who they tossed the ball to as the same order is to be followed each time.
5. Each youth tosses the ball to someone who has not yet had the ball. The last person tosses it to the original person.
6. Once the pattern is established, time how long it takes to toss the ball through the full pattern without the ball dropping. Then see if they can improve the time.
7. After they have done that a few times, increase the number of balls in each group—keeping each ball going in the same pattern and keeping all of the balls from dropping to the ground.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Was it difficult to remember who you needed to toss the ball to? Why or why not?
- Did anything become more difficult when more balls were added? Why or why not?
- If it became more difficult, what did you do to handle that pressure?

- What could you have done as group to better handle the pressure?

Point out that it was necessary for everyone to be present or mindful of the activity in order for it to be successful. Being mindful and present is also helpful in reducing stress during stressful events.

DEBRIEF ACTIVITY: INDEX CARD CASTLES (25 MINUTES)

1. Divide youth into groups of 4-6 per group
2. Give each group a stack of index cards and 2-3 writing utensils
3. Have groups set up close to each other
4. Ask youth to write down anything they learned today (one idea per card)
5. Give them 6-7 minutes to write, then have each group start building a castle out of their cards (tape can be provided but it is more challenging without tape)
6. If castles fall, encourage those groups to consider how they might make a stronger "base" to their structure.
7. After about 10 minutes of construction time, encourage groups to consider making their castles join each other creating a "village" (connecting castles can be done with blank cards)
8. Once the village is created ask a few of the youth to share one idea they listed on the cards and then ask how many others listed the same idea/ statement

APPLIED CHALLENGE

In pairs or small groups, have the youth come up with a list of 5 to 10 ideas that they can do to help manage their stress. Using these ideas, have them write a letter to themselves with their three favorite ideas listed in the letter. In 3 months, give these letters back to the youth to remind them of these ideas. Encourage them to practice these stress management ideas.

Example ideas:

- Eat healthy meals with plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Exercise or physical play every day



ACTIVITY 1.3: LEARNER ASSESSMENT

These questions are about things you learned during this activity. Please check the circle that best describes you.

Q1 I know when I am feeling stressed.

- Not at all like me
- A little like me
- Somewhat like me
- A lot like me

Q2 I know at least two ways to help myself calm down when I am feeling stressed..

- Not at all like me
- A little like me
- Somewhat like me
- A lot like me

Q3 I can tell someone when I need help to manage my stress.

- Not at all like me
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