Stress Management

Bonus Presentation

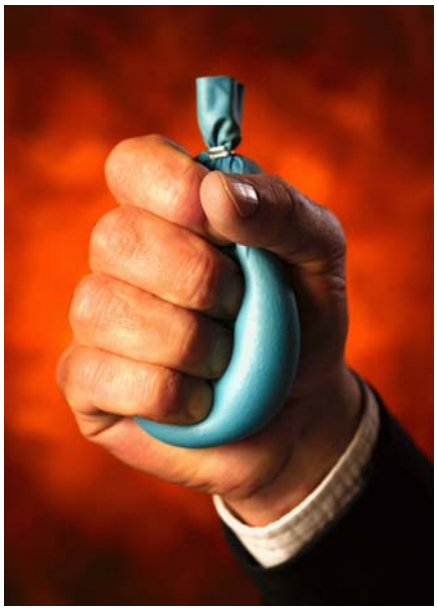
Introduction to the Stress Management PowerPoint presentation:

Stress is a regular part of nearly everyone's life. Without some stress, it would be difficult to get motivated to do anything. Positive stress, called eustress (pronounced "YOU-stress"), is the kind of stress that motivates and forces individuals to learn and grow. Unfortunately, not all stress is good stress. Negative stress, called distress, wears a person down and depletes his or her energy and zest for life.

Long-term stress can be especially difficult on a person's health, and not just their mental health. Slide #12 discusses some potentially significant physical health problems that may arise as a result of long-term stress. The remaining slides in the presentation provide a number of suggestions on ways to relax and reduce the stress levels in your life and in your classroom. Try the suggested enhancement activity at the conclusion of the presentation, it's a great way to get rid of tension and relax.

Suggested Enhancement Activities:

- Jacobson's progressive relaxation technique has been used by anxious athletes to reduce muscle tension for years. It can also be used by non-athletes to help manage stress and muscle tension caused by stress. A copy of Jacobson's progressive relaxation method can be found on the Participant Materials CD. Have participants sit or recline in a comfortable position and, if possible, dim the room lights. You may choose to play relaxing music or just close the door so that the room is quiet. Read Jacobson's progressive relaxation method out loud to participants. Make sure that you allow enough time for participants to follow each instruction before moving on to the next. This should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.



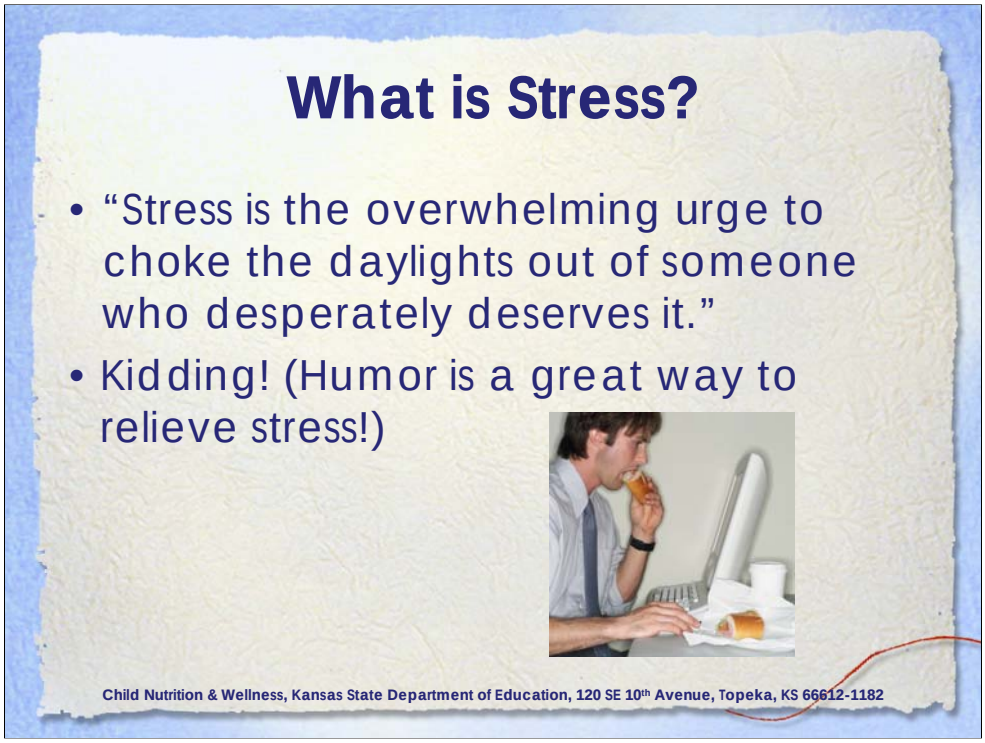
Messages to send to participants about Stress Management:

- People who own dogs actually stay young longer. Dogs are a great exercise-promoting, stress-reducer, but since owning a dog isn't for everyone, remember this bit of advice from William Osler, a turn-of-the-century physician: "Walk your dog. Even if you don't have one."
- "Rich or poor, living beyond your means can be one of the most troubling day-to-day stresses. All that worrying about money can make you old. Learn how to plan your finances so you don't live beyond your means. Reducing financial stresses can reduce your RealAge® by as much as eight years." From RealAge® Are You As Young As You Can Be? Michael F. Roizen, M.D.
- "Almost all of us are juggling too many commitments that can cause age-inducing stress. You can prevent the needless aging be learning to manage your day-to-day stresses and to develop safety networks that you can rely on when a major stress-inducing event occurs." From RealAge® Are You As Young As You Can Be? Michael F. Roizen, M.D.
- Become a lifelong learner! Keeping your mind active helps to keep your body young. Your mind, like a muscle, needs to be exercised. By regularly 'exercising' your brain, you can make your RealAge® more than 2.5 years younger!
- Different types of stress affect people in different ways; not everyone is stressed by the same things. "Often type-A personalities, those who are always pushing themselves to run, run, run, become more stressed when they try to stop type-A behaviors. Relaxing or "letting go" makes them anxious." (From RealAge® Are You As Young As You Can Be? Michael F. Roizen, M.D.) Find out what causes stress in your life, and then take steps to manage or prevent those stresses from occurring.
- "People who live with others, who have lots of friends, and who stay involved in social activities love longer, happier lives. During nonstressful times, living with three or more people or having many close friends can make you two years younger than those who don't have this support network. During extremely stressful times, it can keep you as much as thirty years younger." From RealAge® Are You As Young As You Can Be? Michael F. Roizen, M.D.

Stress and Stress Management

"Reality is the leading cause of stress among those in touch with it."

Lily Tomlin



This slide is animated to reveal only one bullet per click of the mouse

•(title) While I'm sure that we've all experienced stress, it is sometimes hard to define it. What is stress to you? (wait for responses)

•(click to reveal the 2 bullets) I'll let you read this definition on your own. I'm sure that sometimes this may be how you feel when you're stressed, but obviously this is not the true definition of the term stress. And by-the-way, humor is a GREAT way to help reduce your stress levels, but we'll get to that in a minute.

The Real Definition:

- Stress is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it.
  - Can be external or internal.
  - May affect a person physically, mentally and/or emotionally.

•The real definition of stress is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it. Now this definition is very vague, in fact they even use the word "nonspecific" in the definition. Stress can come from internal or external sources and may affect a person physically, mentally and/or emotionally.

How Do You Respond to Stress?

- Are your responses positive or negative?

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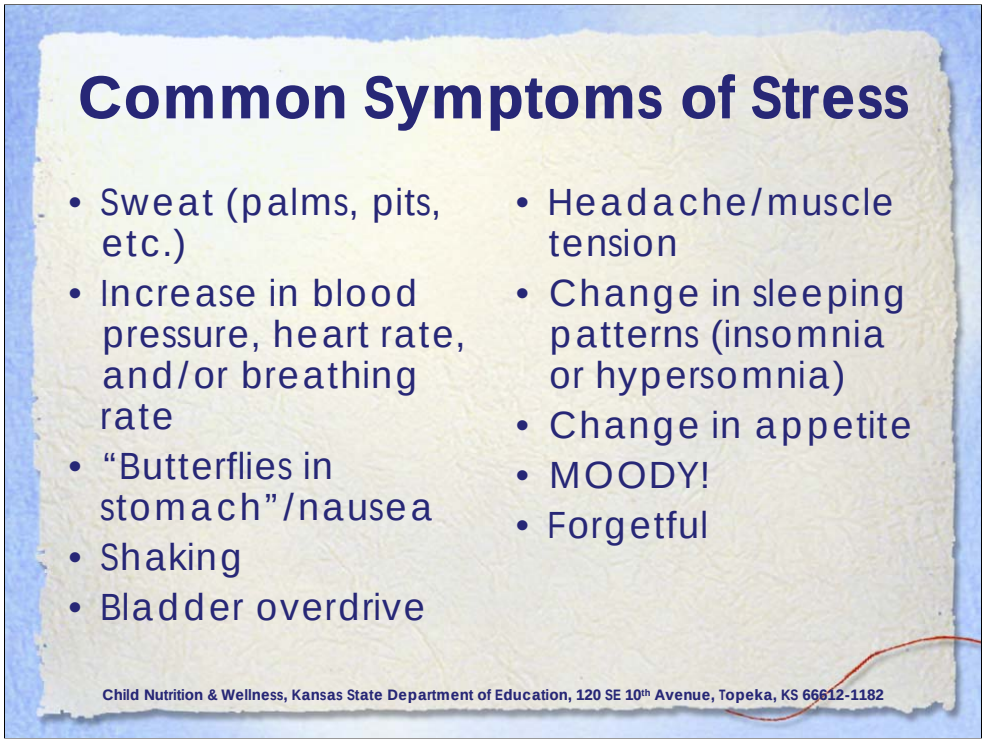
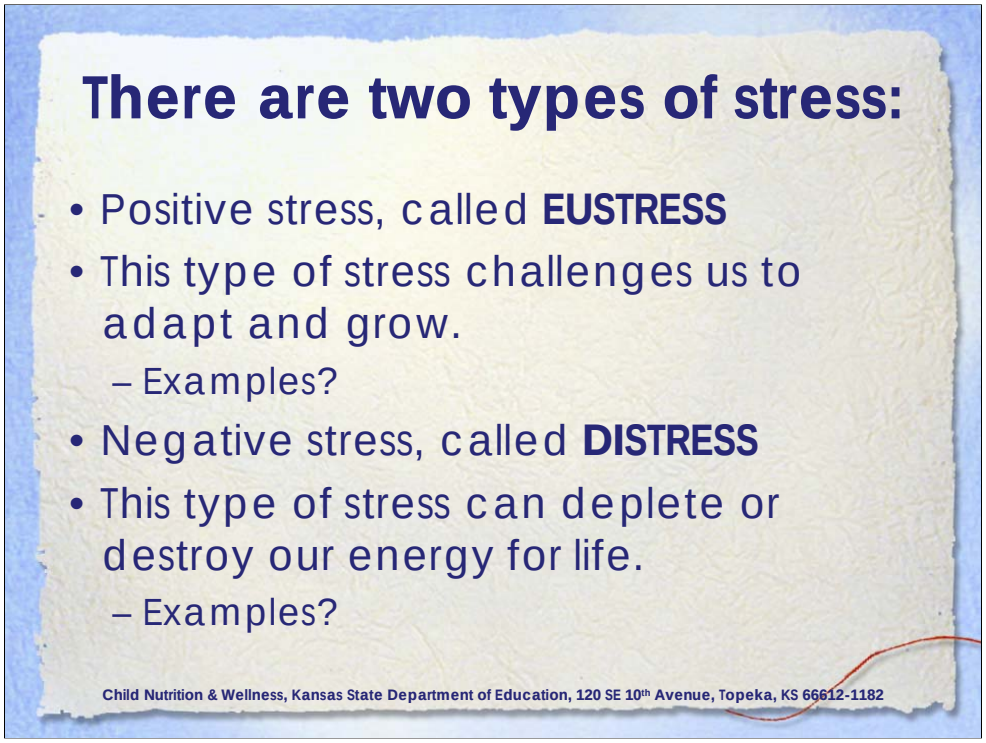
•How do you respond to stress? (wait for responses… these may include sleeping more or less, eating more or less, being moody, angry or on-edge, etc.)



Some of the most common symptoms of short-term stress include sweating, an increase in blood pressure, heart rate or breathing rate, that feeling of butterflies in your stomach or nausea, shaking, or what we'll call "bladder overdrive." You or someone you know may have experienced this symptom, when nervousness and stress seem to create a 'perfect storm' that leaves you dashing to the restroom frequently. These kinds of symptoms often accompany stressful situations like a big presentation or meeting, your wedding or a even relative's funeral.

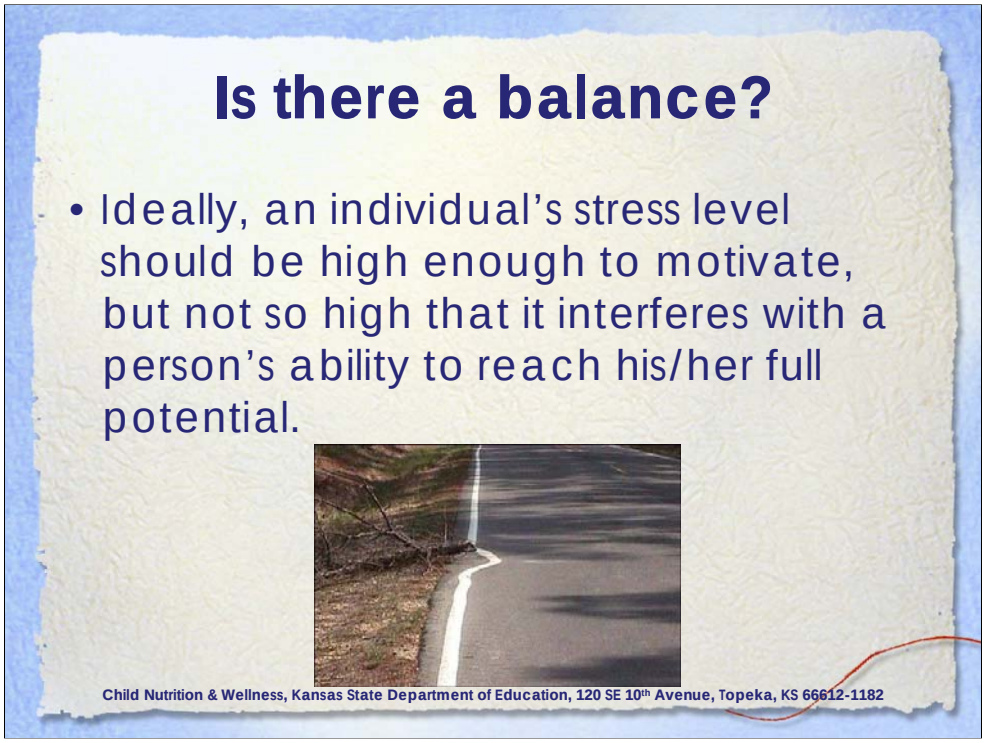
Stress that lasts a little longer can produce symptoms like headaches or muscle tension (one often the result of the other), a change in your sleeping pattern in which you can't sleep or you seem to sleep all the time and still seem tired, a change in your appetite (causing you to eat more or less than usual), moodiness or forgetfulness.



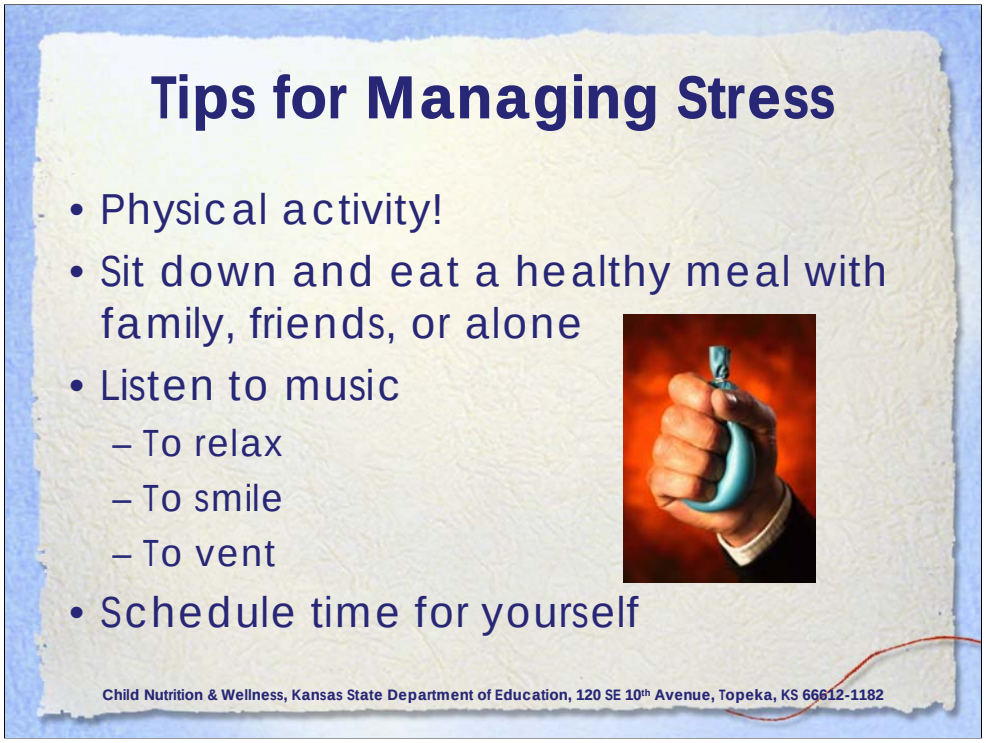
There are two types of stress. The first is called eustress (pronounced like YOU-STRESS). This is a positive stress that challenges us to learn and grow. Can you think of any examples of eustress? (wait for responses). Often times, school work falls into the category of eustress: the stress is a positive one in which we are challenged to improve, grow and learn (this is true for school kindergarten through college). Other examples include starting a new job, planning a wedding, having a child, and moving to a new town.

Negative stress is called distress. This stress can actually wear you down and deplete your energy and zest for life. Can you think of any examples of distress? (wait for responses) This may include a divorce, a death of a close friend or family member, losing a job or hating the one you have, being in an abusive relationship.

Keep in mind that sometimes, an event can be both a positive and a negative stress. You may learn and grow, but at the same time feel drained and exhausted. One of the biggest examples of this is in being the caretaker for a sick family member. It may be a parent, spouse, or child. This type of stress can be especially difficult as it often doesn't have a clear end-point.



Ideally, your stress level should strike a balance between the positive and negative stresses. An individual's stress level should be high enough to motivate them, but not so high that it interferes with a person's ability to reach his or her full potential. Without some stress in life, it is difficult to be motivated to get anything done, but too much stress can really cut into a person's ability to do things well… or to get things accomplished at all. Stress can spill over from one situation to another… stress at work may affect the way you act around your family and friends and vice-versa. In order to find this balance, there are a number of tips in the next few slides to help you manage the stress you currently have, and to prevent new stresses from entering your life.



There are a number of different things that you can do to help manage the stress in your life.

•The first is to get regular, physical activity. Physical activity attacks stress in a number of different ways: it can help you work out aggression or help you to have some time to relax and regroup, it helps energize you by revving up your metabolism, and releases natural 'feel good' hormones called endorphins into your bloodstream. You may have heard of a "runner's high" where some runners experience the effects of these hormones part-way through their workout. There are some reports that state that moderate physical activity, and the resulting release of endorphins, can help treat mild to moderate depression!

•Sit down and eat a healthy meal with your family, friends or even alone, because let's face it: sometimes it's the family or friends that causes the stress in the first place! By stopping to eat, you're giving yourself some time to regroup. Spending time with people you love can also be a great way to relax and reduce your stress levels. And all of your body's systems can benefit from a healthy, nutritious meal. During times of stress, your body revs up to meet the challenges it faces; by taking care of your body with healthy meals and regular physical activity, your body is better prepared to deal with the stress that it encounters.

•Listen to music. Many people find music to be therapeutic in all kinds of situations. There is music out there that is specifically marketed as "relaxation" music.

> •Some people de-stress with calm, soothing music or sounds (classical music, nature sounds, slow or calm music, or even chanting can have a relaxing effect).
>
> •Others prefer to listen to happy, upbeat music to de-stress (things like dance music, techno, and pop).
>
> •Still others prefer music that has a harder, more aggressive feel to help unwind from a frustrating day (heavy metal, hard rock or rap). Whatever you prefer, music provides everyone with an almost-limitless source of stress management help.

•Schedule time for yourself. Nearly every successful person in business says that their first rule is to pay themselves first. The same principle applies here. Make time for yourself every day. If this means scheduling time, then schedule time. This time could be spent alone, with friends or family, but it is focused around things that YOU ENJOY doing. Whether this is reading a book, hiking on a trail, gardening, playing sports, painting, or playing computer games, the point here is to remember to do things that you enjoy doing.

More Stress Management Tips:

- Alone time
- Spiritual help/support
- De-clutter your life

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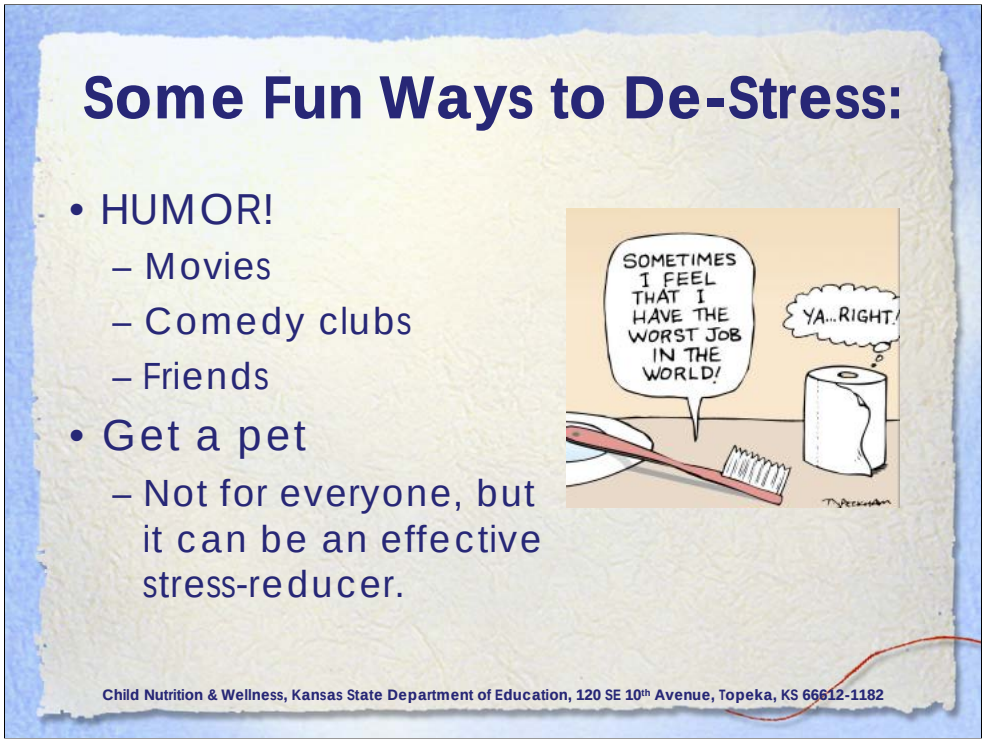
•For some of us, simply spending a little bit of time alone can be the best de-stressor around. The commotion of a busy day working with a classroom of children combined with a busy evening full of family plans can quickly wear down anyone. Take a little time each day to be by yourself. Some ideas to make "alone time" a reality include taking a walk during your break time or over lunch, taking a less-busy route to or from work (a longer commute with less traffic may make the perfect opportunity to unwind), or stopping at the library on your way home for a few minutes of quiet time.

•Spiritual help and/or support can be a great way to relieve stress as well as to benefit a person's overall health. Whether a person chooses to pray or meditate alone, do so with a group, or participate in a religious or spiritual service, the emotional support found with others as well as within ones-self can do wonders in reducing stress.

•De-clutter your life. Get rid of things like junk mail, piles of receipts and other papers from your home and work. Take an afternoon (or maybe a weekend) to sort through all of those piles. Determine whether or not something is worth keeping, trashing, shredding or recycling and then DO IT! Often, seeing these papers and other things just piling up can lead to feelings of guilt: "I really SHOULD do this" or "I NEED to do that." Take care of it and then keep up with it so that your house, desk and mind are free of unwanted clutter.



•Humor is one of the best relaxation vehicles around. There are so many different ways to inject humor into your day that the only limits to using humor lie with you. Go see or rent a funny movie, visit a local comedy club or watch a stand-up routine on television, visit with a funny friend. Keep in mind that there is quite a wide range when it comes to a person's sense of humor; keep an open mind, but if you're looking for a fun way to relax and de-stress, make sure that you do it with someone who shares your own taste for 'funny.'

•Get a pet! Okay, this one isn't for everyone, especially people who are away a lot, but pets have been found to help their owners relax. Some say that their pets provide them with unconditional love and that that is enough for them to be able to relax when they get home after a difficult day. Additionally, pets that require outdoor exercise help you de-stress in a second way: by encouraging you to be more physically active. Not ready for a big commitment? Even gazing at a fish tank can be relaxing… try adding some hardy, low-maintenance fish to your home's décor.

Put things into perspective…

- "How much will this matter in a week… in a year… in 5 years?"
- "Is this worth getting upset about?"
- Step back and look at the 'bigger picture.'

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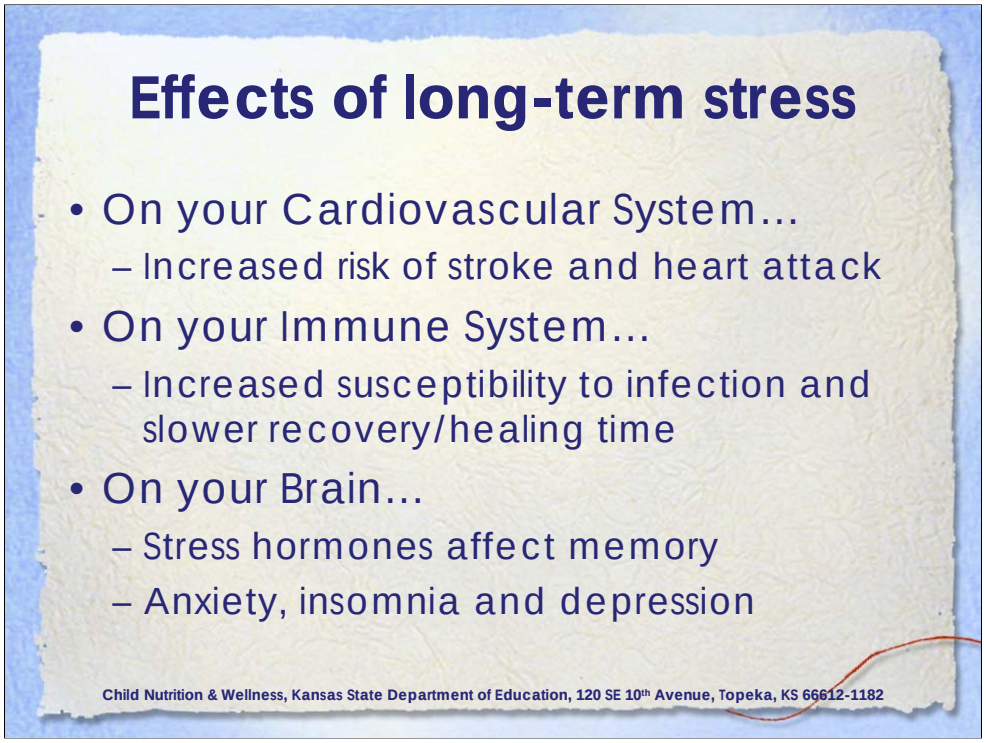
Another way to help manage your stress levels is to put things into perspective. Ask yourself, "how much will this matter next week? Next year? In 5 years?" "Is this worth getting upset about?" Obviously, some things DO matter, and ARE worth getting upset about, but most of what you're worrying about and stressing over is probably not going to fall into this category. Take a minute to step back and look at the 'bigger picture.' Don't get so lost in the details of things that you forget what you're working toward. Taking the time to put things into perspective is also a great way to prioritize things

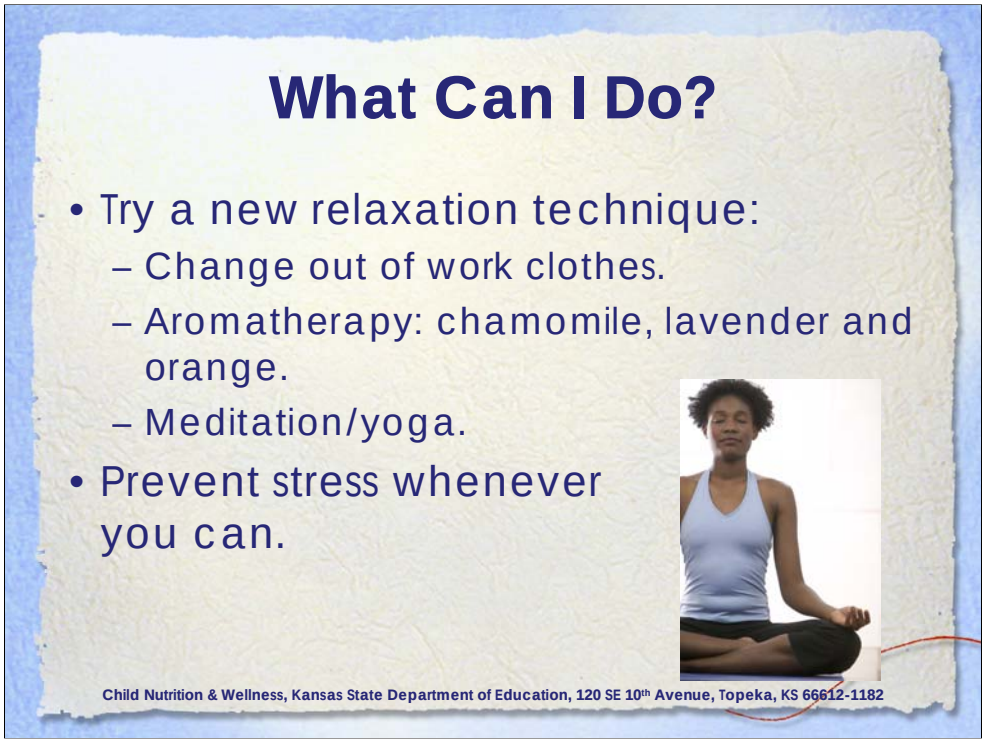


Why is it so important to prevent and manage stress levels? Stress is more than just an uncomfortable inconvenience. We've already discussed how in the short-term, stress can lead to upset stomachs, headaches, and trouble sleeping, but it's important to mention that over time, stress that is unresolved can lead to a number of significant health problems.

•We've already discussed how stress can lead to an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing rate. An elevated heart rate combined with hypertension (high blood pressure) can, over time, increase a person's risk for stroke and heart attack.

•While initially, your immune system revs up to deal with whatever stress your body encounters, over time, long-term stress can run down a person's immune system leaving them more susceptible to disease. In addition, it takes a longer time to recover from illness or heal from injury when the immune system is depleted.

•Stress hormones have a considerable effect on the brain. The release of stress hormones can affect an individual's memory and can even cause neurons in the brain to atrophy and die. Stress-related anxiety can lead to insomnia and even depression.

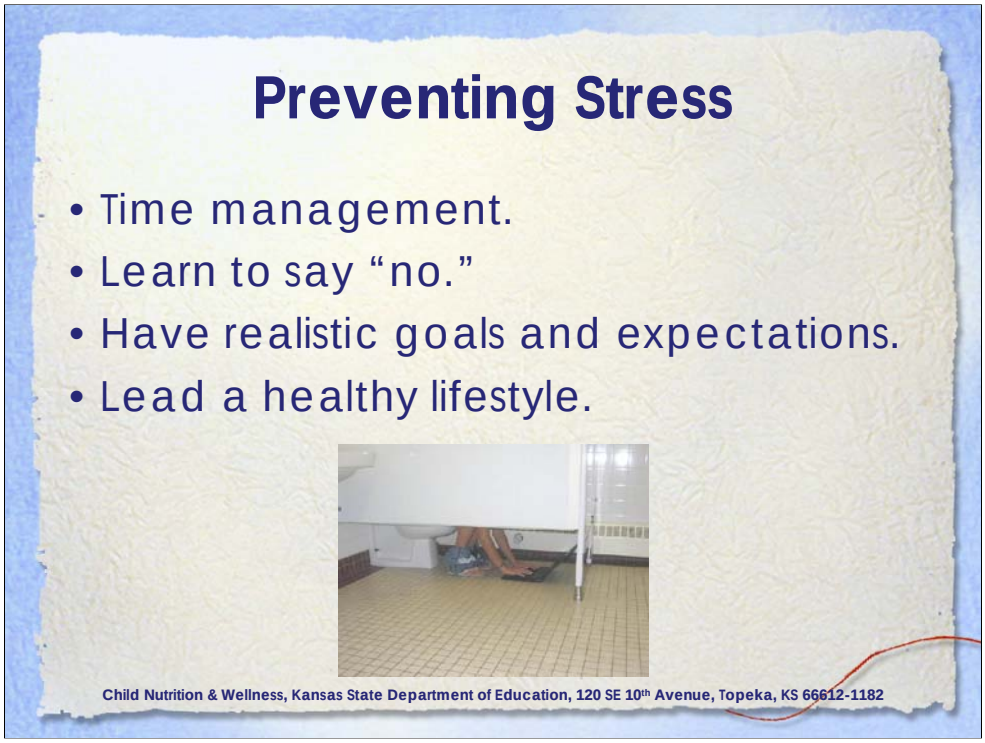


So with all these stress-reducing tips, you may be asking yourself "What can I do to manage my stress?"

•The goal here is, obviously, to reduce your current stress levels. Try a technique mentioned in this presentation that you've not tried before. Need more ideas? Here are a few stress-reducing quick-fixes:

- •Change out of your work clothes as soon as you get home. This helps you 'shed' the stresses of work and begin to unwind at home.
- •Light a candle or soak in a bath infused with essential oils. Aromatherapy is an alternative health practice that uses essential oils to stimulate the senses and elicit a specific response. A number of essential oils are associated with relaxation, including: chamomile, lavender and orange essential oils.
- •Try meditation or yoga (meditation combined with stretching and strengthening exercises) as a way to relax, regroup and recharge.

•Even though stress seems to be an inevitable part of daily life, one of the best things that you can do is to prevent stress whenever and wherever you can.



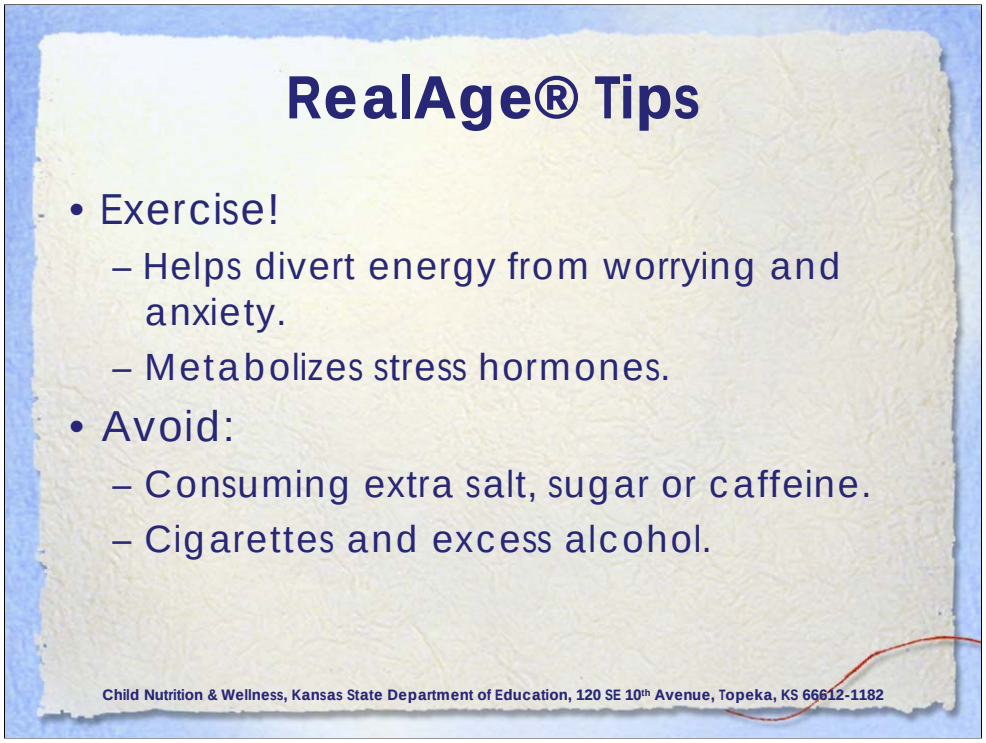
There are a number of ways that you can prevent stress:

•The first mentioned here is probably one of the most common suggestions, but also one of the most overlooked: time management. People often become slaves to a schedule and find that nearly every minute of a workday (and much of the time before and after) is 'booked' with meetings and activities. Manage your time so that you have time to prepare for important meetings and activities, you have time for yourself, time for your family and friends, etc. Prioritize and make your schedule accordingly.

•Inevitably, you encounter situations where you will be asked to do things that you don't want to do. Learn to say "no" to help prevent some sources of stress. Now, of course there will be times where you will be required to do things, but keep in mind that you don't have to be a part of everything. Pick the things that are of greatest value to you personally, or that provide the greatest benefits to your students, and graciously decline everything else. It can be incredibly fulfilling to volunteer your time for a cause or organization that you support, but those benefits are quickly lost if you find yourself running from one committee, organization, and activity after another.

•Have realistic goals and expectations in your career as well as in your personal life. It's great to be driven, but always striving for 'more' leaves you missing the present. There are innumerable factors that can influence a person's goals and expectations. Everyday life can change even the most well-thought-out plans, so be realistic and don't beat yourself up if things don't initially go as you'd expected. Adjust your goals to reflect your new situation and move on.

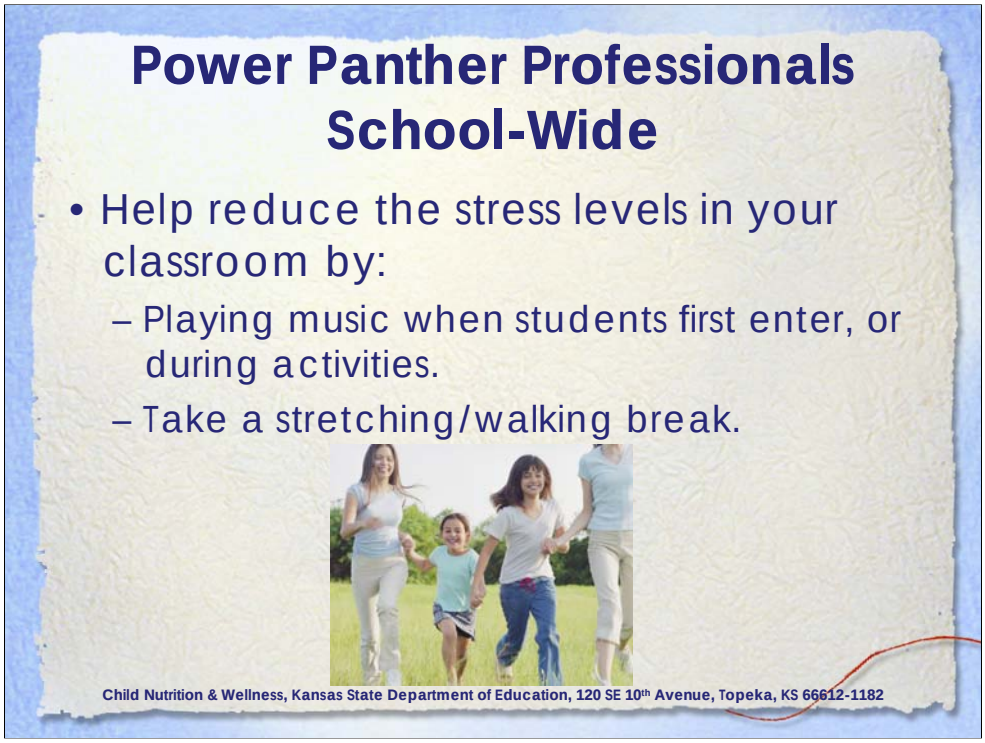
•Lead a healthy lifestyle. Nourish your body with healthy food, be physically active, drink plenty of water, and get enough sleep. A healthy lifestyle leads to a healthier body. When you feel good, you are better prepared for whatever life throws at you and are better able to react to and diffuse stressful situations.



There are a number of suggestions from RealAge® to help reduce and manage your stress levels.

•Their biggest recommendation is to exercise. As we mentioned before, exercise is a great way to let out aggression and extra energy as well as have some time to yourself. Exercise produces 'feel good' hormones into your bloodstream providing a natural boost to your overall mood. In addition, it actually helps your body to metabolize stress hormones, helping you feel more calm and relaxed faster.

•RealAge® also recommends avoiding many of the food 'vices' that many of us turn to when stress seems overwhelming: excess salt, sugar and caffeine. In addition, cigarette smoking and excess alcohol can actually elevate stress levels, so these should also be avoided.



Adults aren't the only ones who can feel overwhelmed by stress. Children, especially students, can experience significant stress in their lives. Pressures from parents, teachers, coaches and peers all find their ways into children's lives. To make your classroom a healthier learning environment for students, try applying some of the stress-management techniques to your classroom.

•Try playing music when students first come into the classroom, or during activities (perhaps group activities) where it won't be a distraction. Music can be soothing, and a great way to alleviate anxiety or tension that may come at the beginning of another school day.

•Take a stretching break or a short walking break. Giving students a short break and a chance to work out some of their stress may help them focus better when the break is over.

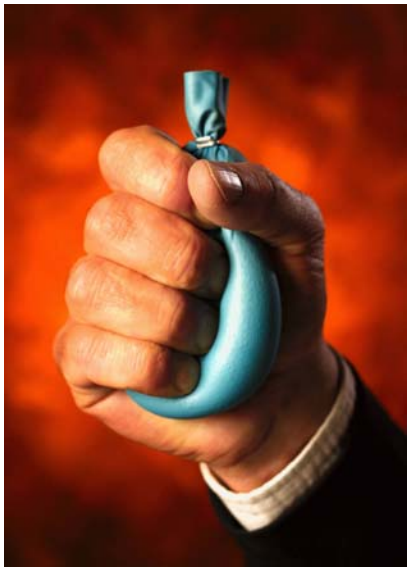
Jacobson's Progressive Relaxation

From: "Principles of Athletic Training 10th Edition" Arnheim D.D. & Prentice W.E.

Beginning instructions:

1. Get into a position that is relaxed and comfortable.
2. Breathe in and out easily and allow yourself to relax as much as possible.
3. Make yourself aware of your total body and the tensions that your muscles might have within them.

Arm relaxation:



1. Clench your right fist. Increase the grip more and more until you feel the tension created in your hand and forearm.
2. Slowly open your fist and allow the tension to flow out slowly until there is no tension left in your hand and forearm.
3. Feel how soft and relaxed the hand and forearm are, and contrast this feeling with the left hand.
4. Repeat this procedure with the left hand, gripping hard and bringing the tension into the fist and forearm.
5. Bend your right elbow and bring tension into the right biceps, tensing it as hard as you possibly can and observing the tightness of the muscle.
6. Relax and straighten the arm, allowing the tension to flow out.
7. Repeat the tension and relaxation technique with the left biceps.

The head:

1. Wrinkle your forehead as hard as you can and hold that tension for five seconds or longer.
2. Relax and allow the forehead and face to completely smooth out.
3. Frown and feel the tension that comes in between the eyes and eyebrows.
4. Let go to a completely blank expression. Feel the tension flow out of your face.
5. Squint your eyes tighter and tighter, feeling the tension creep into the eyes.
6. Relax and gently allow your eyes to be closed without tension.
7. Clench your jaw, bite down hard, harder. Notice the tension in your jaw.
8. Relax. When you are relaxed, allow your lips to be slightly parted and your face to be completely without expression, without wrinkles or tension.
9. Stick your tongue up against the roof of your mouth as hard as possible, feeling the tension in the tongue and the mouth. Hold that tension.
10. Relax, allowing the face and the mouth to be completely relaxed. Allow the tongue to be suspended lightly in the mouth. Relax.
11. Form an O with your lips. Purse the lips hard together so that you feel the tension around the lips only.
12. Relax, allowing the tension to leave around the lips. Allow your lips to be slightly parted, and allow tension to be completely gone from the face.

The neck and shoulders

1. Press your head back against the mat or chair and feel the tension come into the neck region. Hold that tension. Be aware of it, sense it.
2. Slowly allow the tension to leave, decreasing the amount of pressure applied until the tension has completely gone and there is as much relaxation as possible.
3. Bring your head forward so that your chin is pressing against your chest and tension is brought into the throat and back of the neck. Hold that tension.
4. Slowly return to the beginning position and feel the tension leave the neck. Relax completely.
5. Shrug your shoulders upward, raising your shoulders as far as you can toward your ears, hunching your head between your shoulders. Feel the tension creep into your shoulders. Hold that tension.
6. Slowly let the tension leave by returning the shoulders to their original position. Allow the tension to completely leave the neck and shoulder region. Have a sense of bringing the muscles to zero, where they are completely at ease and without strain.

Respiration and the trunk

1. When the body is completely relaxed and you have a sense of heaviness, allow tension to move to your respiration. Fill the lungs completely and hold your breath for five seconds, feeling the tension come into the chest and upper back muscles.
2. Exhale slowly, allowing the air to go out slowly as you feel the tension being released slowly.
3. While your breath is coming slowly and easily, sense the contrast of the breath holding to the breath that is coming freely and gently.
4. Tighten the abdominal muscles by pressing downward on the stomach. Note the tension that comes into the abdominal region, the respiratory center, and the back region.
5. Relax the abdominal area and feel the tension leave the trunk region.
6. Slightly arch the back against the mat or back of the chair. This should be done without hyperextending or straining. Feel the tension that creeps into and along the spine. Hold that tension.
7. Gradually allow the body to sink back into its original position. Feel the tension leave the long muscles of the back.
8. Flatten the lower back by rolling the hips forward. Feel the tension come into the lower back by rolling the hips forward. Hold that tension. Try to isolate that tension from all other parts of your body.
9. Gradually return to the original position, and feel the tension leave the body. Be aware of any tension that might have crept into body regions that you have already relaxed. Allow your mind to scan your body; go back over the areas that you have released from tension and become aware of whether any tension has returned.

The buttocks and thighs

1. Tense your buttocks for five seconds. Try to isolate just the contraction of the buttocks region.
2. Slowly allow the buttocks to return to their normal state, relaxing completely.
3. Contract your thighs by straightening your knees. Hold that contraction, feeling the tension, isolating the tension just to that region, focusing just on the thigh region.
4. Slowly allow the tension to leave the region, bringing the entire body to a relaxed state, especially the thighs.
5. To bring the tension to the back of the thighs, press your heels as hard as you can against the floor or mat, slightly bending the knees; bring the tension to the hamstring region and the back of the thighs. Hold this tension, study it, concentrate on it. Try to isolate the tension from other tensions that might have crept into the body.
6. Relax. Allow the tension to flow out. Return your legs to the original position, and let go of all the tensions of the body.

The lower legs and feet

1. With the legs fully extended, point your feet downward as hard as possible, bringing tension into both calves. Hold that tension. Hold it as hard as you can without cramping.
2. Slowly allow the foot to return to a neutral position, and allow relaxation to occur within the calf muscle. Bring it to zero, if possible – no tension.
3. Curl the toes of the feet downward as hard as you can without pointing the food downward, isolating the tension just in the bottoms of the feet and toes. Hold that tension. Isolate the tension, if possible, from the calves. Hold it, feel the tension on the bottoms of your feet.
4. Slowly relax and allow the tension to release from the foot as the toes straighten out.
5. Curl the toes backward toward the kneecaps and bring the foot back into dorsiflexion [heel pointed at the ground, toes pointed up at the sky] so that you feel the tension in the tops of the toes, the tops of the feet, and the shin. Hold that tension. Be aware of it, study the tension.
6. After five seconds or longer, return to a neutral state where the foot is completely relaxed and the toes have returned to their normal position. Feel the tension leave your body.