



384-002

1000

SP-1

THE
STRESS
connection

The Stress Connection

—Kid's Guide—

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This educational material has been prepared for 4-H use by the Michigan Cooperative Extension Service through a grant from National 4-H Council funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. A National 4-H Health Advisory Panel served in an advisory capacity.

Author—Judy Ann Goth-Owens
Graphics—Sue Metros

Michigan Project Coordinators: Leah B. Hoopfer, Program Leader, Michigan 4-H—Youth Programs, and Donna Manczak, Health Education Specialist, Department of Community Health Science, Michigan State University.

This material is published by National 4-H Council, 7100 Connecticut Avenue, Chevy Chase, Md. 20815.

Programs and educational materials of National 4-H Council; SEA-Extension, United States Department of Agriculture; and all Cooperative Extension Services of the State Land-Grant Universities are available to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin or handicap. All are equal opportunity employers.

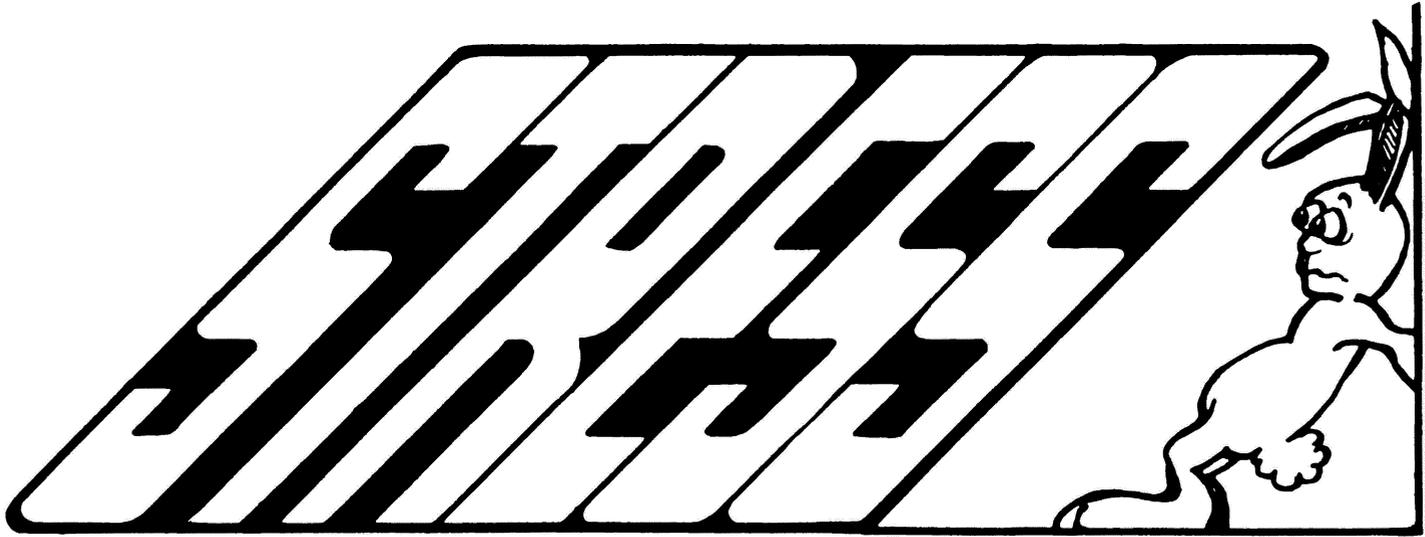


©National 4-H Council 1981

LD
 5655
 A762
 no.384-002
 VPI
 Spec

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3	Exercises—Make a Pie	21
WHAT IS STRESS	4	Territorial Privacy	21
Exercise—What Are Fears?	4	School Stress	21
Stress Overload	5	Exercises—Personal Privacy	22
Exercise—Are Things Sometimes		Feelings about My Body	22
Just “Too Much”?	6	Looking at Body Images	23
Stress Underload	6	Design a New Body	23
Exercise—Habits and Routines	7	WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT	
Change as a Cause of Stress	7	THE STRESS IN YOUR LIFE?	24
Exercise—Life Changes	8	Ways People Sometimes Cope	24
Different People View Situations Differently ..	8	Exercises—Withdrawal and	
Exercise—What Are Worries?	9	Emotional Outbursts	25
Ways People Respond to Stress?	10	“Somethings...” and “But...”	26
HOW CAN YOU TELL IF		Coping With Stress	27
YOU ARE UNDER STRESS	12	Exercises—Stress Safety Valves	27
Exercises—Generate a List of		Who’s Problem Is It?	28
Stress Symptoms	12	Assertiveness	29
How Do You React?	12	Feelings... Nothing More Than	31
Psychosomatic Illnesses:		Your Self-Esteem	33
Are They Really All in the Mind?	13	A Way to Make a Change	35
Exercise—My Personal Stress Symptoms ...	14	Teaching Muscles to Work for You	36
Daily Stress Log	15	The Relaxation Response	36
WHAT CAUSES STRESS FOR KIDS?	17	As You Get Ready to R... E... L... A... X ..	37
Looking at Pressures You Feel	17	Exercises—Diaphragmatic Breathing	38
Exercise—Who Influences You?	17	Deep Muscle Relaxation	39
Stress From Friends	18	Autogenic Relaxation	40
Exercises—Belonging	19	Quick Relaxation Techniques ...	40
Is It Worth It To Be In?	19	Imagery and Fantasy	41
Stress From Parents	20	Exercises—Sensory Awareness	42
		Getting in Touch	42
		SUGGESTED READINGS	43



Introduction

The Stress Connection can help you become aware of the impact of stress on your life and help you increase your skills in coping with stress. Stress is a term that is often associated with the harried businessperson or the risk-taking race car driver. You may think that stress has little to do with your life. But, have you ever tried out for a team, taken a test, competed for an award, or changed schools? All of these events may produce stress for you.

You have probably been in many stress-producing situations, but perhaps you didn't think of them in terms of "stress." Stresses are demands on your mind and body. Learning to deal with these demands is what The Stress Connection is all about.

The Stress Connection is a series of activities designed to help you:

- ... develop an understanding of stress as a factor influencing the quality of your life.
- ... learn to appreciate your mind and body as parts of a system that work together.
- ... develop an awareness of your personal stress symptoms.
- ... identify situations that are stress-producing for you.
- ... increase your skills in changing stress-producing situations.
- ... learn some specific techniques for coping with stress.

The Stress Connection is written so that you can do many of the activities, checklists and inventories on your own. You will find, however, that you may learn more about yourself and how you can best deal with your life stress if you work on The Stress Connection in a group. Many of the activities are de-

signed for group discussion. Most participants find that they learn more about themselves when they can share with others.

You decide what you share with others. The Stress Connection is yours. You may wish to keep your responses private. *You do not have to turn anything in or show anything you do in this booklet to anyone else.* It's more important that you share with the group how you feel while you are doing an activity and what you learn as a result of the activity.

The Stress Connection Kid's Guide is one part of the Stress Connection series. Also included are a slide-tape production for kids and adults and a Leader's Guide. The Leader's Guide is a booklet for adults that will help them deal with the stress in their lives and help them build skills to aid kids in coping with stress.

There are many ways you and your group can choose to use The Stress Connection. Here are some examples:

- The group may decide to cover The Stress Connection material in four or five group sessions.
- You and/or the group may choose certain experiences from the Stress Connection that you would want to do together.
- You may want to do an exercise or two each week in your group.
- You may want to spend a long period of time with the group and do most of the exercises as a day-long workshop.
- You may want to go through The Stress Connection individually.

There may be other ways you can think of to adapt this booklet to meet the needs of you and your group, but however you connect with The Stress Connection, you're bound for learning and fun.

What is Stress?



Stress is the body's physical and emotional reaction to circumstances that frighten, irritate, confuse, endanger, or excite us.

Stress isn't all bad; it's really very necessary in life. The body mobilizes its defenses and protects itself against danger. Each time the body senses danger or the unknown, the nervous system reacts by getting ready for "fight or flight." This "fight or flight" response is inborn and present in all organisms. Perhaps you have noticed the following stress responses in yourself:

- The **muscles** are ready to physically respond for fight, flight (getting away in a hurry), or other action.
- The **heart** beats faster, pumping more blood each minute to the brain, lungs, and muscles. This means more food and oxygen are needed for energy to reach these organs in a crisis.
- **Breathing** becomes quicker as more oxygen is obtained for energy, and as carbon dioxide, the waste product of energy production, is disposed of.
- **Digestion** slows, since body energy becomes available for moving rather than being used for digestion.
- The **pupils** dilate. The dark centers of the eyes widen, sharpening the ability to see.
- Great **emotion** is experienced—anger, fear, excitement, happiness. Nerve impulses from the brain and other parts of the nervous system signal

the glands. The pituitary and other glands pour out chemical messengers called hormones which influence emotions.

- Greater strength or endurance seems to be experienced.

The effects of a normal amount of stress can give us that extra burst of energy we need to finish the last mile of our jog or they can make us mentally more alert to pass an important exam.

Thousands of years ago, this stress response was absolutely vital for survival. Our early ancestors lived in a brutal world where instantaneous, unthinking responses helped them "fight or flee" concrete dangers like saber-toothed tigers or forest fires. Today, this same body response works well when we are faced with similar stressful situations such as running from a vicious dog or avoiding being hit by a car.

Most of our changes and threats today, however, are much less clear-cut than saber-toothed tigers were. Our threats include things such as tests, conflicts with parents, and relationships with friends. Our bodies respond in the same chemical way they reacted to the saber-toothed tiger long ago—our muscles tense, our hearts pound, we breathe faster—but the fight never comes. Although our bodies are supercharged, there is usually no direct way to "fight or flee" the situation. These prolonged effects of stress can become cumulative and do real damage to our bodies.

WHAT ARE FEARS?

Description

This exercise will help you take a look at what makes you feel fearful and will help you take a look at how you react to fear.

Procedure

1. Are you afraid of some things or are you afraid to do certain things? Make a list of these things.

2. As you look over your list of fears you may notice that some of your fears concern physical events or situations—these physical fears are ones like fear of rattlesnakes, fear of thunderstorms, etc. On the other hand, some of your fears may be associated with social or emotional situations. For example, you may be afraid to go to a party where you don't know everyone, or you may be afraid to give a speech in front of your class.

Which of the fears you listed above are physical and which are social-emotional? Some of your fears may fit into both categories. There are no right or wrong answers.

Physical Fears	Social-Emotional Fears

3. Ask yourself, "How do I usually respond to fear—through fight or flight? Why?"

4. Answer for yourself, "Can I overcome my physical fears? My social-emotional fears?"

STRESS OVERLOAD

It is important for all of us to find our own best level of stress—a level of stress that keeps us active and interested in life. This level shouldn't overwhelm us so much that we can't think straight or "underwhelm" us so much that we get bored and fall asleep in the middle of a conversation.

A stress overload or "distress" is too much stress for us to deal with without making us feel tense, insecure, or frustrated. Signs that tell us we might be moving into stress overload are nervousness, a pounding heart, rapid breathing, and an inability to slow down.

We might also be heading into stress overload when we find we want to yell at those around us or when we feel like completely closing ourselves off to others. These behaviors and physical symptoms can give us a clue that we are experiencing too much stress.



ARE THINGS SOMETIMES JUST "TOO MUCH"?

Description

The exercise will help you explore your own reactions to stress overload.

Procedure

Read through the following statements and check those that apply to you. Remember that this is a checklist for you to use in determining your level of stress. There are no right answers, and you do not have to share your responses with anyone else.

- _____ 1. I often feel tense, anxious, upset.
- _____ 2. I have a "nervous stomach."
- _____ 3. People in my family often make me feel upset.
- _____ 4. People at school often make me feel nervous.
- _____ 5. I get headaches a lot.
- _____ 6. I often have trouble sleeping.
- _____ 7. I worry about school, even at night and on weekends.
- _____ 8. I find myself eating a lot when I get nervous.
- _____ 9. I find myself smoking a lot when I get nervous.

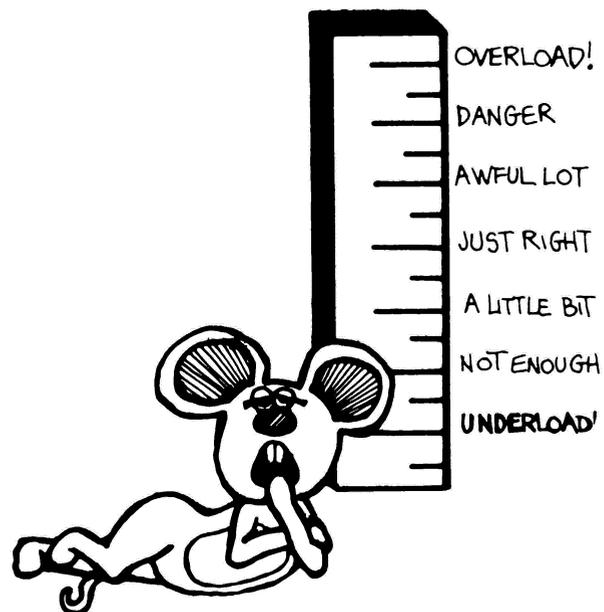
- _____ 10. I have trouble concentrating on things because I'm worrying about something else.
- _____ 11. I take medicine to relax.
- _____ 12. I have a lot of things that have to be done by certain times at school or at home.
- _____ 13. I have trouble finding time to relax.
- _____ 14. When I do have time to relax, I can't relax because I feel guilty that I'm not doing my homework or other chores.

If you checked six or more items, your tension level is probably quite high. If you checked two to five items, your tension level is probably average. If you checked one item or less, your tension level is below average—lucky you!

STRESS UNDERLOAD

Stress underload or "boredom" or "indifference" is a lack of interest in things generally found to be interesting or exciting. The absence of stress is a form of stress itself. Common signs of stress underload are fatigue, sleeplessness, inability to concentrate, and feelings of hopelessness.

Most people think stressful situations have a lot of pressures or worries associated with them. But boredom can be very stressful, too. People need a certain amount of stress to keep them active and interested in life. This activity will help you find out if you are in a rut—maybe even without knowing it!



Read through the following sentences and decide if they are true or false for you. Add up the number of trues and falses you circled, and look at the scoring paragraph at the end of this activity.

HABITS AND ROUTINES

Description

This activity will help you find out if you are in a rut—maybe even without knowing it!

Procedure

Read through the following sentences and decide if they are true or false for **you**. Add up the number of trues and falses you circled, and look at the scoring paragraph at the end of this activity.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. When I hang out with my friends, we usually end up doing the same thing (such as going to a movie, going roller-skating, going to a school dance, etc.). | T | F |
| 2. I usually do the same things every day when I come home from school. | T | F |
| 3. I am a clock watcher. | T | F |
| 4. If I have free time, I usually end up watching TV, because I can't think of anything else to do. | T | F |
| 5. If I really want to do something but I can't get any of my friends to do it with me, I usually don't do it. | T | F |
| 6. I am proud that I am very organized. | T | F |
| 7. I spend my allowance/savings on clothes that will last—I don't buy really trendy or flashy clothes. | T | F |
| 8. I feel really crabby or tired a lot. | T | F |
| 9. I try to be really efficient and get my work done at school and in study hall. | T | F |
| 10. My old friends are my best friends. | T | F |
| 11. I like some of my habits and won't give them up. | T | F |

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12. I finish what I start, even if I get bored. | T | F |
| 13. I plan my weekends ahead of time. | T | F |
| 14. I am pretty much interested in the same things I was interested in a couple of years ago. | T | F |

Habits and routines give us security, so they are an important part of our lives.

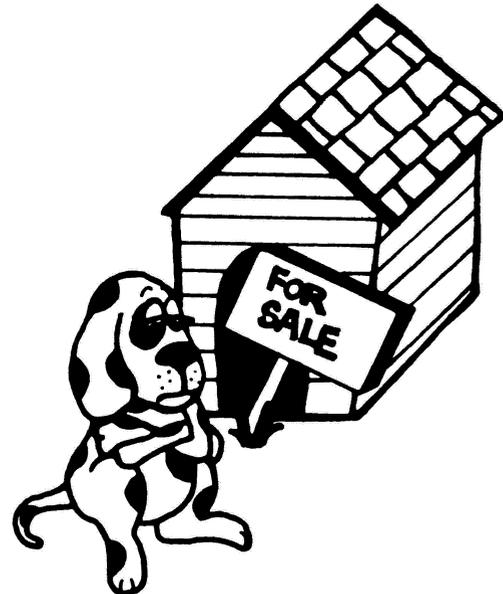
But if you found most of your answers were true, you might be in a rut. It could help to change your life a little. You might want to try new things and new ways of doing things to develop a better balance between things you do as habits or routines and those things that are a little new and different.

If most of your answers were *false*, you may also be in a rut—from not having enough habits! You might try planning ahead for things you want to do, or you might try developing some new habits. This can help you feel you have more control over your life.

The right balance of habits and “letting it happen” is different for each person, so only you can decide what is the best mix for you!

CHANGE AS A CAUSE OF STRESS

Stress is a challenge that makes special demands on both your body and your mind. It is the body's physical and emotional response to any demand placed on it. One of the big demands on our bodies is CHANGE—family changes, school changes, changes that come from growing up, and changes that come about as a result of personal loss, illness, or injury.



The demands that produce stress are known as stressors. Stressors may be in the form of life changes, emotional conflicts, physical injury, fear, or any other demand on the mind-body system. For example, changing schools, trying out for a team, parents getting a divorce, and holidays all can be stressors. Any out of the ordinary experience, *pleasant or unpleasant*, that changes our lives and requires more than routine adjustment can cause stress. The greater the cause of stress, the greater the demand for readjustment.

LIFE CHANGES

Description

This exercise is designed to help you become aware of some of the events in your life that can contribute to your level of stress.

Procedure

Read through the following list of possible life changes. Check the ones that have applied to you within the last year. You may want to add something that was a change for you but isn't listed.

- _____ Death of parent
- _____ Divorce of parent
- _____ Parents separated
- _____ Death of a close family member
- _____ Death of a boy/girl friend
- _____ Personal injury or illness
- _____ Failed a class at school
- _____ Gained a new family member (new brother or sister; grandparent moved in)
- _____ Changed to a different school
- _____ Change of health in family
- _____ Arguments with parents
- _____ Outstanding personal achievement
- _____ Brother or sister left home
- _____ Began menstruation

- _____ Argument with best friend
- _____ Moved to a new house
- _____ Moved to a new city
- _____ Had trouble with a teacher
- _____ Vacation
- _____ Started a new job

Any one of the above changes is probably stressful. If you checked several, you may be experiencing a stress overload. How have you handled these events so far?



DIFFERENT PEOPLE VIEW SITUATIONS DIFFERENTLY

An event or situation that is stressful for you may not be stressful for someone else. On the other hand, your parent or friend may consider an event to be highly stressful, while that same event may only be a minor inconvenience for you.

Whether or not a person views an event as stressful usually depends on the following things:

1. The Meaning of the Situation for Us OR "A Problem or Not?"

The things that are most important to people are things that people value. For example, a per-

son may value independence, having lots of friends, and being good at basketball (among other values). Trying out for the basketball team is likely to be more stressful for the person who has spent years practicing and preparing for basketball than for the person who decides to try out on the spur of the moment. The things that are the most important to a person are likely to be a source of stress, since there is more at stake.

Our *values, interests, and goals* all play a part in determining how stressful a situation is.

2. The Resources We Have to Cope with a Crisis OR “What Do I Have to Help Me Get Through This?”

Money can be a resource, but so can things, time, friends, family members, and a state of health. These can all be useful to a person who is faced with a stressful event. Other important resources for coping with stress may include communication, and decision-making and problem-solving skills. These are resources that we can develop and learn to use more effectively.

Our *resources and skills* help us cope with stressful situations.

3. Our Past Experiences with Stress OR “How Full is My Success Bank?”

The more success one has had in dealing with stressful situations in the past, the more confident one is likely to feel about handling new stressful situations. A person who had a successful experience making new friends after moving to a new town is likely to find changing schools less stressful than a person who hasn't successfully experienced that kind of change. People who feel good about themselves are more likely to think that there is something they can do to handle new situations.

Our *self-esteem* level can influence our ability to handle stress.

4. How Much in Control of the Situation We Feel OR “Do or Done Unto?”

We can more easily deal with a situation that is stressful if we feel like we have some control over the outcome. A situation over which we have no control is one that makes us feel like there is no use in trying. For example, a person who wants to go to the movies with friends but doesn't have any money may feel like there's nothing he/she can do about the problem. This situation is likely to be stressful until the person discovers and thinks through the options and actions that are possible. The less helpless you feel in a situation, the less stressful the situation is likely to be.

Our *feeling of control* is important in determining which events will be stressful for us.

WHAT ARE WORRIES?

Description

This exercise is designed to help you become more aware of how stress factors change with age.

Procedure

1. Make a list of things that create teenage worries and adult worries. You may wish to brainstorm these with your group.

Teenage Worries

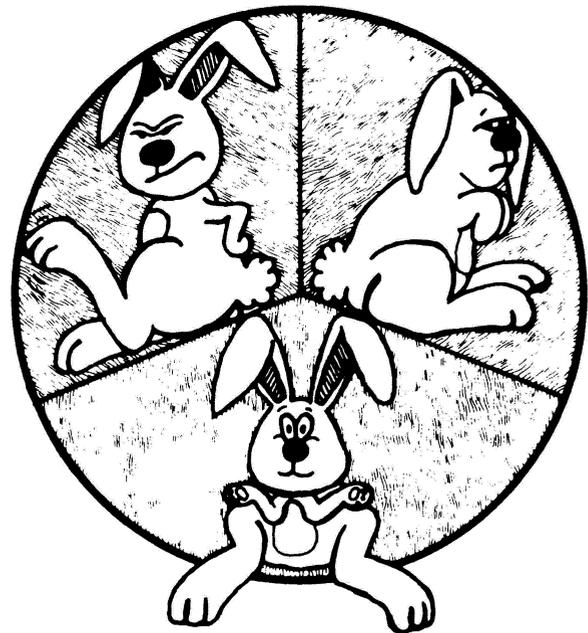
Adult Worries

2. Do the above lists differ? If so, how do they differ? Why?

3. Go home and ask an adult to describe two events in his/her life that generally cause stress.

4. Next, ask a child between 6 and 10 years of age what really bothers him/her.

5. Discuss your findings with the group. Does everyone experience stress? How do stress factors change with age? Do babies undergo stress? Elderly people? Are there stress factors common to all age groups?



WAYS PEOPLE RESPOND TO STRESS

Making the basketball team, failing a test, and winning the election for student council can all be stressful. Our bodies create excess energy so that we will be able to defend ourselves from the change or meet the challenge the change creates.

The problem is what we can do with this excess energy. If we don't find a way to get rid of it, we feel TENSE or ANXIOUS.

When people feel TENSE or ANXIOUS, they try to find some way to get rid of the excess energy. They usually try one of several ways:

- 1. They act out how they feel (become aggressive)**—They yell at their younger brother or sister, kick the dog, throw the textbook on the floor, rip up the notebook paper, or (add aggressive acts you or members of your group have seen acted out).

- 2. They leave (withdraw from) the situation that is upsetting**—They might daydream about getting even, leave the room, make a sandwich to eat, eat three pieces of cake, think about being rich and famous, or (add ways of withdrawing that you or members of your group have seen acted out).

- 3. They make do with (adapt to) the situation**—They grin and bear it, take more babysitting jobs to get more money, talk to friends about what's going on, or (add some ways of adapting to situations that you or members of your group have observed.)

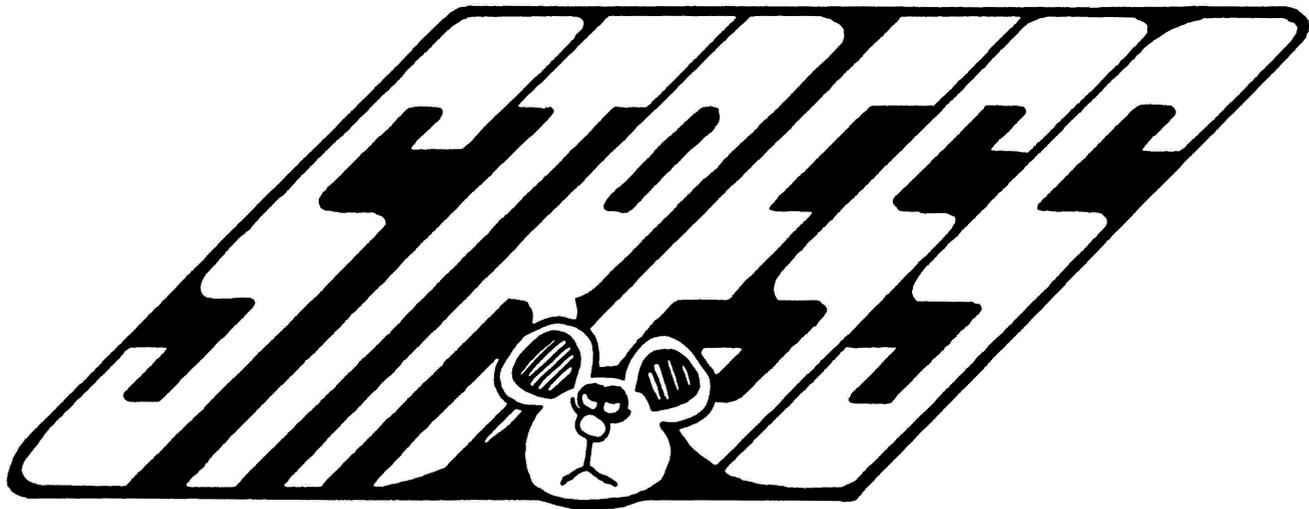
How do you usually handle situations that are upsetting? Does this work for you?

We've been talking about getting rid of excess energy, but people do need some excess energy to keep them active, on their toes, and interested in life. Without it, we can become dull, lifeless, bored, or depressed. Excess energy can actually be used creatively—to change a bad situation into a good one, to give us an extra boost so we can reach a goal, or to expand our imaginations.

Can you think of ways you could use your excess energy creatively?

It is important for all of us to find our own *best (optimal) level of stress*—a level of stress that keeps us active and interested in life, but doesn't overwhelm us so much that we can't think straight or underwhelm us so much we get bored and fall asleep in the middle of a conversation! Because each person is different, this *OPTIMAL LEVEL OF STRESS* is different for each person. Only you can determine how much stress is comfortable for you.

How Can You Tell If You Are Under Stress?



How can you tell if you or someone you know is experiencing a stress overload? The answer may seem obvious—you know that you're under stress when you worry a lot. So you may answer that question by saying that your mind tells you when you're under stress. But, your body also sends you messages when you are under stress.

Actually the mind and body are not separate; they function as one unit. The mind has an effect on the body and the body has an effect on the mind. For example, do you ever blush when you are embarrassed or get clammy hands when you are nervous? These are normal reactions to certain situations, and for the most part, they are beyond your control. Your mind and body are influencing each other.

GENERATE A LIST OF STRESS SYMPTOMS

Description

This is an exercise to help you become aware of some physical and behavioral symptoms of stress.

Procedure

1. Have the group generate a list of body reactions to

- stress. This should be a brainstorming session to allow as many ideas as possible to be generated.
2. Talk about your favorite symptoms in the group.
 - Are you always aware when they are happening to you?
 - Can you stop them from happening?
 - Do the symptoms themselves ever contribute to further stress?

HOW DO YOU REACT?

Description

This is a checklist exercise to help you realize how you react to stressful situations.

Procedure

Read each question and answer by choosing a, b, or c. There are no right or wrong answers. Use the checklist to get in touch with how you react.

How do you react when:

1. You are called on to lead a group discussion in class. Are you:
 - a. calm?
 - b. nervous?
 - c. glad?
2. Your mom keeps you waiting for an hour—when

- she was supposed to pick you up right after practice. Do you:
- become really mad?
 - read a paperback or magazine you carry “just in case?”
 - calmly tell your mom you don’t like to wait?
- You are taking an exam. Do you feel:
 - self confident?
 - worried?
 - sick to your stomach?
 - You made a comment in a class discussion. The girl sitting next to you tells you your idea is crazy. Are you:
 - really embarrassed?
 - amused?
 - angry?
 - Your dad tells you that you have made a terrible mistake. Would you:
 - ask how you could change it?
 - defend what you did?
 - You and your best friend have a fight. She/he says, “That’s the last time I’ll talk to you!” Do you answer:
 - “That’s just fine with me!”
 - “Don’t say that! You don’t really mean it, do you?”
 - “I’ll call you up when you cool down.”
 - The person you are really crazy about has just asked you to go to the movies. Are you:
 - frantic because the large zit on your chin looks bigger?
 - worried about finding something to talk about?
 - so happy you float on air?
 - You just made the goal that tied the score. Are you:
 - upset because you only got one point instead of two?
 - worried that you might not be able to do it again?
 - excited because now your team might win?

PSYCHOSOMATIC ILLNESSES: ARE THEY REALLY ALL IN THE MIND?

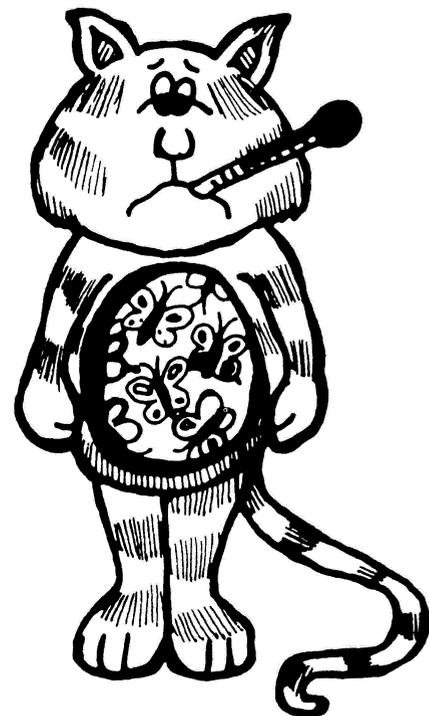
You have probably heard the word “psychosomatic” before. It means “mind-body.” “Psyche” means mind and “soma” means body. It is used to describe the effect your mind can have on your body and vice versa.

Often when people are under stress, their bodies react to the excess energy and tension they have created. People can develop headaches, stomach-

aches, blushing, a sore neck, etc., when they are under stress. Doctors call these reactions psychosomatic illnesses. The pain people experience from these illnesses is not “all in their heads;” the pain or other feeling is very real because the body is undergoing a definite physical reaction to the stress.

Once people experience a psychosomatic illness, it is hard to treat without a doctor’s help. A doctor can take a careful history of the symptom and give a complete examination. The doctor may order special tests. If no serious organic disease is found, the doctor may suggest that the person change daily activities, follow a different diet, or take medications. All these will help the body heal the damage caused by the stress experienced. The doctor may also suggest the person talk with a helping professional to find ways to cope with stress.

Psychosomatic illness won’t go away if “you just don’t worry” or if “you just forget about it.” They aren’t “just all in your head”—the body is undergoing some physical changes that could be serious. Having a psychosomatic illness is nothing to be ashamed of—it only means that the person is faced with stress he/she hasn’t learned to cope with, and the body is sending messages to take it easy. A doctor can be a best friend at a time like this—follow his/her advice! Parents and friends can also help sort out our feelings and help us learn to cope with the stress.

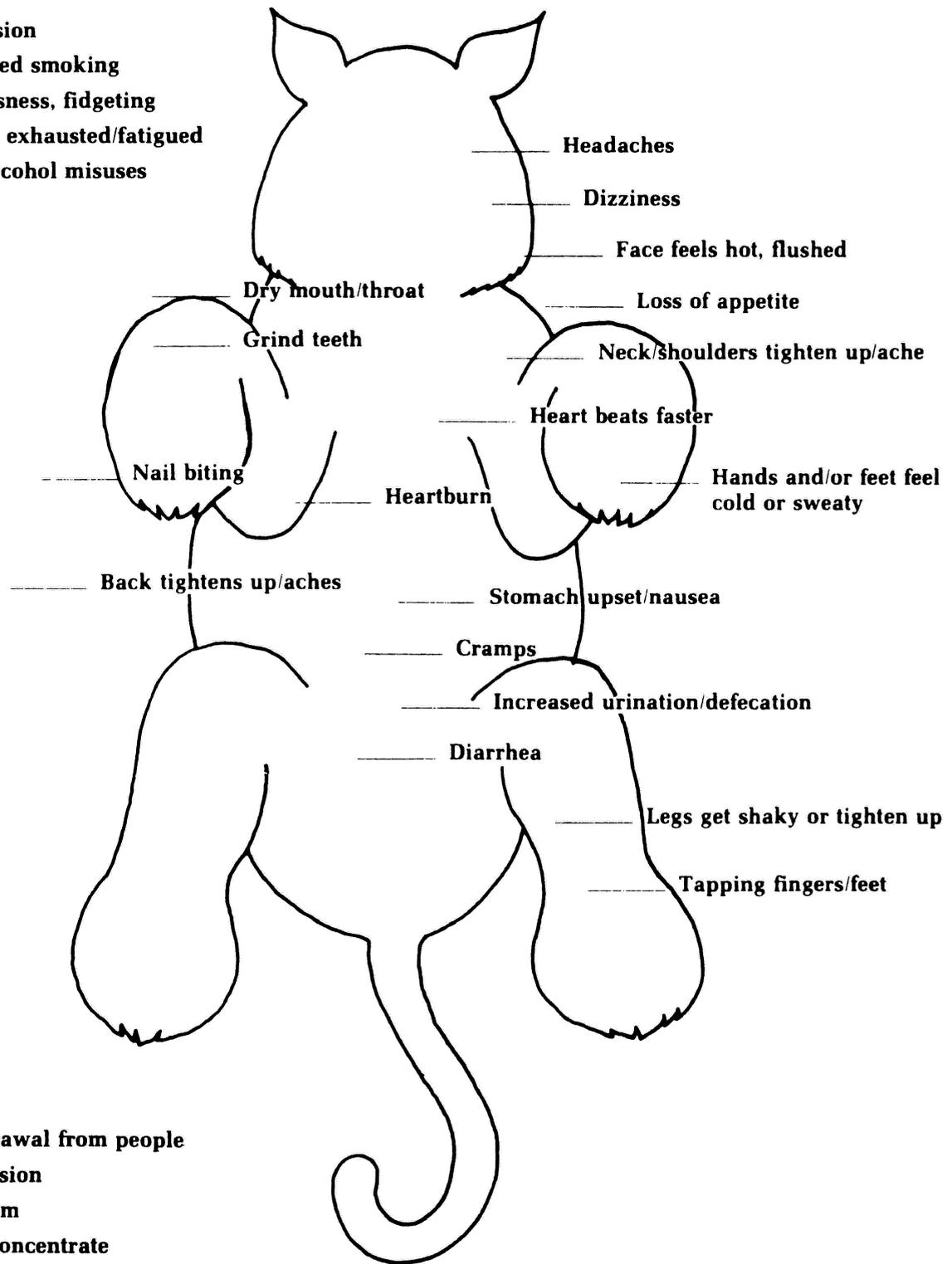


MY PERSONAL STRESS SYMPTOMS

When I feel under a lot of stress and pressure, which of the following responses do I notice?
Place a check "✓" before those items which apply

and occur frequently or regularly.
Place an "X" before those that occur only occasionally.

- _____ Crying
- _____ Depression
- _____ Increased smoking
- _____ Restlessness, fidgeting
- _____ Feeling exhausted/fatigued
- _____ Drug/alcohol misuses



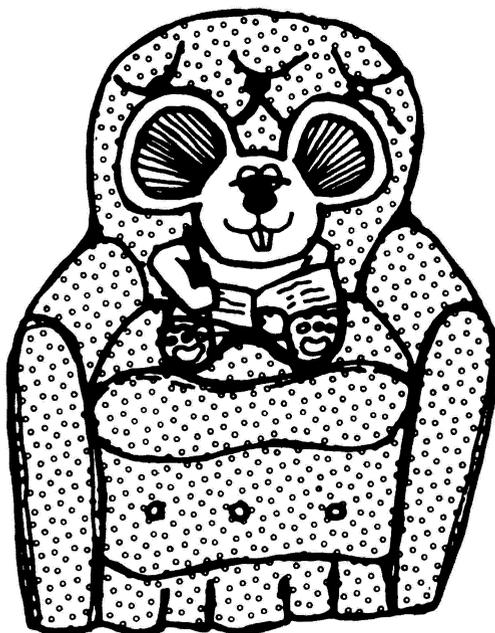
- _____ Withdrawal from people
- _____ Aggression
- _____ Boredom
- _____ Can't concentrate
- _____ Sleep or go to bed to escape
- _____ Inability to sleep

DAILY STRESS LOG

This log will help you look at what stresses are in your daily life. Many times teens aren't aware of exactly what makes them feel "tense." This kind of log can help you see exactly what you were doing in those stressful times.

It helps a lot to keep a log for more than a day—that way you might see patterns of stress that wouldn't show up in just one day. Try to keep track for a week if you can.

This is a sample log filled out by a teenager who goes to junior high in a medium-sized town. Can you see any stress patterns? Does your log look like this?



DAILY STRESS LOG

Activity	Time	What It Felt Like
Getting ready to go to school. Couldn't find algebra book—almost late for the bus.	7:00	Felt hurried, mad at myself, because I couldn't find math book.
Sitting on bus. Talking with friends.	7:30	Worried about math test.
Taking test in math class.	8:30	Really scared. I want to get a good grade, but I just don't do good in math.
Playing volleyball in gym.	9:45	Felt really good to run around and play volleyball. Our team won!

Taking part in small group discussion in history class.	11:00	I always hate small group. Sally always takes over and I feel really dumb—I never talk much.
Lunch	12:15	Ate lunch at our table with my friends. Talked about the dance after the basketball game. Tom kept looking at me—I got really nervous.
English class	1:00	BORING, BORING! Almost fell asleep.
Band practice	2:00	Tryouts for 1st chair for clarinet. I practiced so hard! My stomach got all queasy and my hands got sweaty when it was my turn. I goofed up the first time, but Mr. Bowen let me play it over. I can't stand the wait till Monday to see if I got 1st chair.
Home Ec.	2:30	We're doing sewing, but I worried about band while I worked on my skirt. Put the zipper in wrong and had to take it out. Felt really frustrated. Glad when class was over.
School Variety Show Rehearsal	3:15	Practiced with other band people for our part in the show. I really like to play this kind of music.
Supper with family	5:30	Tried to talk mom and dad into letting me stay until the dance is over after the basketball game. Dad said no—he would be at the door to pick me up at 10:30 p.m. and I'd better be there or else. I get so mad at him—he treats me like a baby!
Basketball game	7:00	Sat with my friends and had a good time. Sue and Cindy tried to talk me into staying at the dance till it ends—they say my dad is being too strict. They also say everybody else will stay. I get worried I'll look like a baby if I go home when Dad says. Tom comes over and asks if I am going to the dance. I get really nervous!

What Causes Stress For Kids?

LOOKING AT PRESSURES YOU FEEL

Description

This activity gives kids a chance to examine the sources of pressures and to begin to explore some options for dealing with these pressures.

Procedure

1. Everyone in the group should make a list of the pressures he/she feels.
2. For each pressure write down:
 - What you would like to happen as a result of any possible solution you might try.
 - All the things that will help you reach your goals.
 - All the things that might get in the way of success.
 - How you could eliminate or neutralize the things that might get in the way of success.
3. Using this information, choose the best course of action for handling each pressure.

Conclusion

As a follow-up activity, you may want to write down the actual results and discuss them with the group. Remember that it may take time to get the best results. It may also be necessary to consider other solutions to achieve the desired results.

WHO INFLUENCES YOU?

Following is a list of people. Circle the people you believe have the most influence on you (in one way or another).

- A special friend your age
- A favorite rock and roll singer
- Your next-door neighbor
- A favorite teacher
- The star of a favorite TV show
- The head cheerleader
- The school football star
- Someone you know who is in his/her early twenties
- A political figure you admire
- Your minister, priest, or rabbi
- Who else? Write them down.

Some of these people may have a positive influence on you; others may have a negative influence. People who influence you in a positive way bring out the best in you because they expect you to be your best self.

Yet there are probably others who influence you in a negative way. These people may bring out the worst in you. As a result of their influence, you may look down on yourself or feel taken advantage of.

Look back over your list and decide which people on the list have a positive influence on you most of the time and which ones usually have a negative influence on you. If you think of more people, add them to your list.

One of the strongest influences on people is pressure. Pressure isn't always bad, but sometimes you may feel as if you are in a non-win position. You don't know whether or not to do what the person wants. If you do, you may be going against yourself. On the other hand, if you don't, you may lose that friendship. It seems like either way you lose.

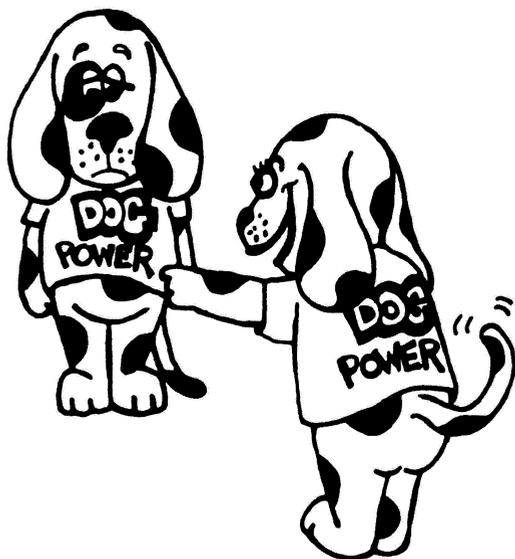
Can you remember a time when someone pressured you to be somebody other than yourself or to do something you knew wasn't right?

If so, how did you feel? _____

What did you do? _____

The people you know can influence you in different areas of your life. Read through each question below and consider that part of your life and who counts the most. Rate each person on a scale of 1 to 6. A rank of 1 is for the person who influences you the most; a rank of 6 is for the person who influences you the least in that area.

	<u>Self</u>	<u>Brothers/ Sisters</u>	<u>Parents/ Guardians</u>	<u>Best Friend</u>	<u>Other Friends</u>	<u>Other Adults</u>
How you dress	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
How hard you work at school	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
What kind of career you want	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
How you fix your hair	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
What you do in your free time	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Whether you play sports	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Who your friends are	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
How you spend your allowance/earnings	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
What things you do after school	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Who seems to be the most important to you?	_____					



STRESS FROM FRIENDS

Here are some things kids worry about concerning their friends. Do any of these sound familiar to you?

- Trying to make new friends.
- Being accepted by kids at school.
- Wondering how to tell your best friend that you don't like the kids he/she has started hanging around with.
- Friends expecting you to do what they want to do.
- Fighting with a friend.

How can you cope? Sometimes it's hard to remember who you are, who you want to be, and who your friends want you to be—especially when you are going through a lot of changes. Sometimes you have to rely on what you believe in and act on it—

even though your friends might not understand. In the long run you'll feel more comfortable with yourself if you do.

Sometimes teens wonder if they are being real or phony. It's hard to know who you really are when many changes are happening. Good talks with friends can help you discover what you want for yourself and how you relate to other people.

It can be really upsetting when you don't understand what someone is trying to tell you by their words or behavior. For example, if your friend starts laughing when he/she sees your new T-shirt, is it because the shirt looks ridiculous or because he/she has a new one just like it or because he/she enjoys the picture on the shirt? If you can get clear on what the other person means, then you can decide what to do about it. Even if you can't or choose not to change the situation, it's easier to cope with these sorts of situations if you know what is really going on.

BELONGING

One of the best feelings for most people is the feeling of belonging, yet practically everyone has felt left out or pushed out by other people at least once. Think back to some situations you have experienced in your life. Write down the situation in one column and write your feelings about it in the other.

Situation	How You Felt About It
A time when you included someone:	
A time when you were included:	

Situation	How You Felt About It
A time when you were left out or excluded:	
A time when you excluded someone:	

IS IT WORTH IT TO BE IN?

What would you do to be included in a group? Imagine you want to do something with a group that's very important to you and you've planned on for a long time.

Fill out the checklist by answering the following questions about yourself.

Yes No Maybe

In order to be a part of this group,
I would:

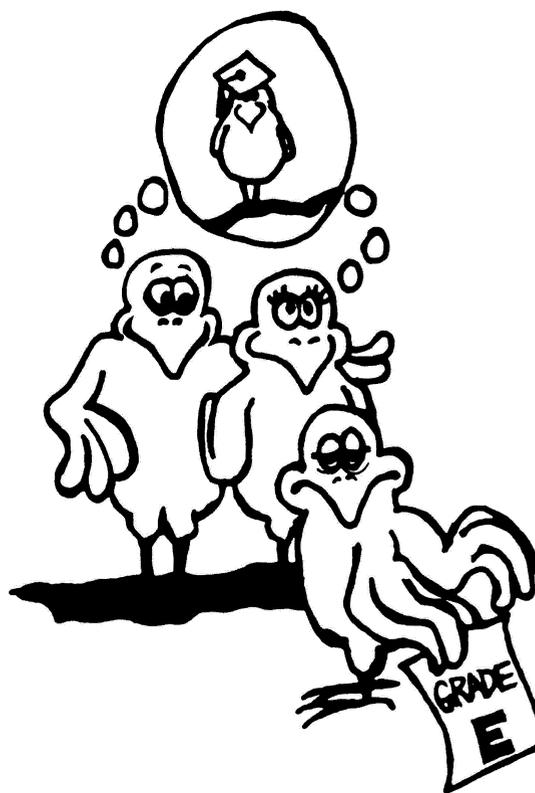
- Risk giving up friends I have now. ___ ___ ___
- Do something I think is wrong. ___ ___ ___
- Do something I know is against the law. ___ ___ ___
- Drink alcohol. ___ ___ ___
- Try drugs. ___ ___ ___
- Do something that might harm me physically. ___ ___ ___
- Do something that would cost me a lot of money. ___ ___ ___
- Do something that might interfere with my schoolwork. ___ ___ ___
- Become a snob. ___ ___ ___
- Do something my parents would not approve of. ___ ___ ___
- Do something against my religion. ___ ___ ___

As you look over your list, see where you answered “yes” or “maybe.” Ask yourself about where your values were when you made these check marks.

STRESS FROM PARENTS

Following are things teens worry about where their parents are concerned.

- My dad making me do a lot of work on the weekend.
- My mom loading lots of responsibility on me.
- My folks telling me how to live my life.
- Failing a test and getting yelled at.
- My mom always complaining about what I do or don't do.
- When my parents refuse to see things my way and don't remember how they felt when they were my age.



Ways to Cope

Sometimes it may seem that you aren't really sure who you are. You are growing and changing so fast that your parents' understanding of what you are capable of doing on your own may not have caught up with you yet.

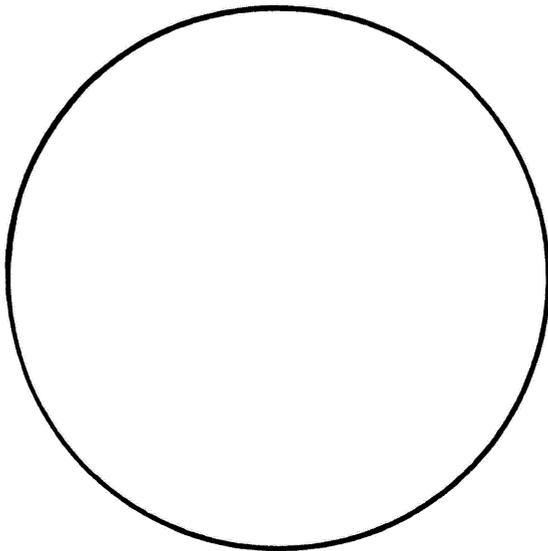
It might help to demonstrate your capabilities at home, while your parents' ideas of you catch up to reality.

It may seem as though your parents are overreacting at times. Although all families are different, you might get a clearer picture if you check out your values and your interactions with your parents with those your friends have. You might find it helpful to talk to a helping professional to get a good picture of the situation.

It may help to remember that as you change, your parents' roles change too. These changes can be stressful for them. Parents have all sorts of problems and stresses that can effect how they relate to you.

When you are worried about something and don't want your parents to know about it or help you, it can add to the tension in your family. You are involved with other people, especially your family, and when something affects you, it has an impact on them. They can't understand if they don't know what's going on. It might help to talk to them. You might be surprised at the results.

MAKE A PIE



1. Divide the circle into pie-shaped slices. Have the size of each slice represent the relative importance of each part of your life that influences you. Include the following sections:
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Television
 - School
 - Teacher
 - Reading
 - Movies
 - Relatives
2. Do some areas influence or pressure you more than you would like? What changes would you like to make? List them.

TERRITORIAL PRIVACY

Description

This activity shows you some ways to consider your own feelings about privacy—particularly regarding environmental design.

Materials

Paper and pencil

Procedure

1. Everyone in the group should walk around the room and find the space they like best. They should take their time and experiment with several spots until they find one they particularly

like. They should sit down, relax, and let their minds wander freely.

After awhile, each person should join with three other people and the four should choose a common meeting space that they all find comfortable. Everyone can talk about their favorite space—what they like or don't like about it; how they feel; what they can do in their space; how they'd feel if someone entered their space uninvited; and what type of person (no names!) they might want to invite to share their space.

2. Prepare a diagram or a drawing showing how you would design your own private space—a home, a room, an apartment, etc. What kinds of thoughts would you have in this space? What kinds of feelings? How would you share (or not share) this space with others?
3. For one day, keep a list of people and things that invade your private places by placing a P by the ones that please you and an I by the ones that irritate you. Then write why you were pleased or irritated next to the P or I. Next to the I's situation, write how you might keep from being irritated or how you could try to accept the situation. You might wish to compare this list with that of a friend.

SCHOOL STRESS

Here are some typical things kids worry about regarding school.

- Trying really hard, then failing.
- Sports, because I'm really not very good.



- Speaking up in class—I get really nervous.
- Having enough time to study and practice for band.
- Parents expecting too much of me.

How can you cope with some of these stresses at school? One thing that can contribute to this kind of stress is putting things off. If you have something to do that you really don't like to do—like studying for a test—get it over with. Putting it off won't make it go away.

Do you feel like you have too much to do and too little time to do it in? People who are feeling good about themselves and life in general like to have a lot of things to do. But there might be times when you don't feel on top of the world. It's important to know that sometimes you'll be able to do a lot and sometimes not as much. It helps to be flexible, so you can have time to do what's important to you.

Most people do fail some time in some way. That's human. Failing often happens when you want to do something you aren't able to do—like making the team, being in the school play, or passing a test. You have the right and the freedom to try things and to succeed or fail on your own. You also have the right to try again.

If your grades aren't too great but you and your parent(s) think you should be getting good grades, testing or counseling might help by helping you find out what your skills and abilities are. If you and your parents know what you're good at, then you can start planning realistically, rather than wishing you were different.

PERSONAL PRIVACY

Description

This activity can help you begin to look at how much privacy you have—and whether you need more or less privacy. It can also help you explore your own experiences with being alone.

Procedure

1. Many times people under stress feel that they don't have enough privacy at home and school. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following:
 - ___ I have a special time to go for a walk.
 - ___ I take time to reflect.
 - ___ I like to listen to music very much.
 - ___ I often daydream, fantasize, or meditate to help me relax.
 - ___ I have a special place where I can be alone.
 - ___ Noise around the house doesn't bother me.
 - ___ No one bothers me while I am dressing.

- ___ People accept me as I am.
- ___ I like to work on my hobbies by myself.
- ___ When I am alone I like to read.
- ___ I prefer sports that I can do alone, rather than team sports.
- ___ I am just as happy when I am alone as I am when I am with my friends.
- ___ I like to explore my environment by myself and discover new places and things I've never seen.

2. Check the feelings that you most often experience when you are alone:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| ___ lonely | ___ sad |
| ___ happy | ___ relaxed |
| ___ excited | ___ miserable |
| ___ envious | ___ calm |
| ___ left out | ___ jealous |
| ___ tired | ___ content |
| ___ depressed | ___ angry |

3. Check the things that you agree with:

- ___ I wish I had more time to be alone.
- ___ I don't want to be alone so much.
- ___ I want to spend more time with my friends.
- ___ I need a place where I can be by myself.
- ___ My family doesn't leave me alone enough.
- ___ I am happy with life just the way it is.
- ___ Sometimes I just want to get away from people for awhile.
- ___ I wish I could do things with my friends more than I do.

Conclusion

Share with the group something new that you learned about yourself from this activity.

FEELINGS ABOUT MY BODY

Description

This activity gives you a chance to rate various parts or aspects of your body.

Procedure

1. Rate each part of your body using the following rating scale.
 - 1—Am really happy with it.
 - 2—Am satisfied with it.
 - 3—No feelings either way
 - 4—Don't like but can tolerate it
 - 5—Am unhappy with it and would like to change it
- ___ Face ___ Complexion ___ Hair

- | | | |
|-----------|----------------|---------------------|
| ___ Nose | ___ Feet | ___ Buttocks |
| ___ Eyes | ___ Weight | ___ Hips |
| ___ Neck | ___ Height | ___ Ears |
| ___ Chest | ___ Body build | ___ Posture |
| ___ Arms | ___ Thighs | ___ Back |
| ___ Hands | ___ Body hair | ___ Ankles |
| ___ Knees | ___ Stomach | ___ Overall
body |
| ___ Legs | ___ Waist | |

2. Look over your list and see if you can find one part of your body you are particularly concerned about. How would you like to view it?

Conclusion

You may want to have this be a private activity, but you may want to share what you learned about yourself with the group.

LOOKING AT BODY IMAGES

Description

These activities give you a chance to explore some of the factors that may influence how you feel about your body.

Materials

1. Magazines—particularly fashion magazines for both men and women
2. Large paper for gluing pictures on
3. Glue or paste
4. Paper and pencil

Procedure

1. Make a collection of advertisements that emphasize the human body or parts of it. Choose ads that “change you for the better,” “make you more desirable,” etc. Full-page color ads are preferable.
2. Write three possible endings to the following phrases:
“The most important thing about a woman’s ap-

pearance is. . . .”

“The most important thing about a man’s appearance is. . . .”

Put these papers aside temporarily and, looking at the ads, think about and discuss what each ad says about the human body and what human emotions or desires the ad appeals to. Then discuss how the advertiser has tried to put across the image of the “correct” physical characteristics of males and females, and whether or not the advertisements are really accurate in their descriptions of what the product can do for the buyer.

3. Get out your original papers and compare them with what you have been discussing about the advertisements. Has your thinking about “body images” changed?
4. Next, close your eyes and think of someone you like. Does he or she match your written statements or the advertisers’ images? (Do not answer aloud.)
5. Finally, discuss in small groups the things that influence your concept of what the human body should be like? Talk about how you are or are not influenced by parents, teachers, the community, books, advertisements, the media, peers, and your own experiences.

DESIGN A NEW BODY

Description

This activity gives you a chance to be creative and design a body to your own specifications.

Materials

1. Paper for drawing
2. Pencils, crayons, chalk or markers
3. Modeling clay (optional)

Procedure

1. Close your eyes and concentrate on your ears; feel the lobes, the curves, the insides, and the backs of your ears. Cover one ear, then both. What do you hear? What do you experience? Uncover your ears and listen to the sounds.
2. Imagine what it would be like if your ears were on your elbows, on your knees, on your back, or on the top of your head.
3. What would you change if you could redesign the human body? How would the body look? Draw a picture of your new body, or make a small model to show what it would look like.

What Can You Do About the Stress in Your Life?



WAYS PEOPLE SOMETIMES COPE

It is important to remember that some stress is vital to keep us active, alert, and interested in life. It can actually be used creatively—to change a bad situation into a better one, to give us an extra boost to accomplish a desired goal, or to expand our imaginations and abilities to create and grow. Without some change or stress, we are likely to become dull, lifeless, and bored.

It would be unrealistic to rid ourselves of all stress. The optimal level of stress is a balance between stress-overload and stress-underload. This balance gives us the energy to remain interested in life, but at the same time, it doesn't overwhelm us. Stress should be a healthy friend, rather than an overwhelming enemy.

How can you keep stress from being an overwhelming enemy in your life? The first thing you might want to do is pay attention to how you have been coping with stress.

When people are in stress, they cope with their extra energy in three different ways:

1. They may use up the energy through aggression.
2. They may block the creation of the energy through *withdrawal*.
3. They may use the energy productively through *adaptation*.

When energy is created, it must be used. Aggression is one way we can quickly use our excess stress energy. We may hit someone, yell threats, throw something, or put someone down. Aggression serves the simple purpose of quickly using up stress energy. It provides relief to the person. If aggression

is direct, we express it toward the person or thing causing our fear. If it is indirect, we express it toward anything or anyone who is handy. For example, we may be mad at our parents but act out aggressive behavior toward our brothers and sisters.

Withdrawal is another way we deal with stress. We may leave the place or the people who are threatening us. For example, some people walk out of the house during an argument. Another person may cut classes at school when he/she is failing. Some people mentally escape by daydreaming, sleeping, or watching television. Other people withdraw by using drugs like alcohol or pot. Physical and mental withdrawal may help to temporarily block out the threatening situation.

When people withdraw, they reduce the production of stress energy in their bodies. Sometimes people who withdraw too often end up with more problems and more stress.

When people act aggressively to relieve themselves of stress, they use up their stress energy. Sometimes people who are aggressive cause more trouble for themselves and therefore create more stress.

It is important to remember that the *feelings* that you have when you are under stress are hard to change. What's important is how you *act* on those feelings. If you are angry and frustrated because your parents won't let you go somewhere with your friends, you could pick on your little brother, or you could go out for a run. Both ways of behaving would probably use up your stress energy, but one has the potential of adding to the tension in your family, while the other could end up being good for you.

If you are overwhelmed by a lot of homework, you could act on that feeling by going out and getting drunk, or you could take a walk around the block and return to your work. Both of these ways of behaving may temporarily reduce the production of stress energy, but which one could end up creating more problems and stress?

In adapting to stress, we use our stress energy in productive ways and try to solve the problems causing the stress. In adapting to stress, one does not simply react to the excess energy with only aggression and withdrawal. Instead, one recognizes the sources of stress and chooses productive ways to use up the excess energy. We might change the way we think about a situation, or we may become assertive and work to change the situation itself.

Generate a list of methods you or people you know

use to reduce stress and tension (like using drugs or eating a lot).

drugs	_____
_____	_____
eating	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Classify each of these methods by placing *Ag* next to those that are aggressive, *W* next to those that indicate withdrawal, and *Ad* next to those methods that are adaptive.

WITHDRAWAL AND EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS

Description

You take a look at situations that cause withdrawal and/or emotional outbursts in yourself.



Procedure

1. Describe situations that cause you to withdraw emotionally.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

2. Describe situations that cause you to experience emotional outbursts.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

3. Is emotional withdrawal ever healthy? Is it ever unhealthy? In what situations is it healthy?

I meant to do my homework but _____

I meant to get along with my sister/brother but _____

4. Is an emotional outburst ever healthy? Is it ever unhealthy? In what situations is it healthy?

I meant to be on time for class but _____

I meant to listen in class but _____

I meant to keep my room clean but _____

I meant to help my mom but _____

“SOMETHINGS . . . ” AND “BUT . . . ”

Description

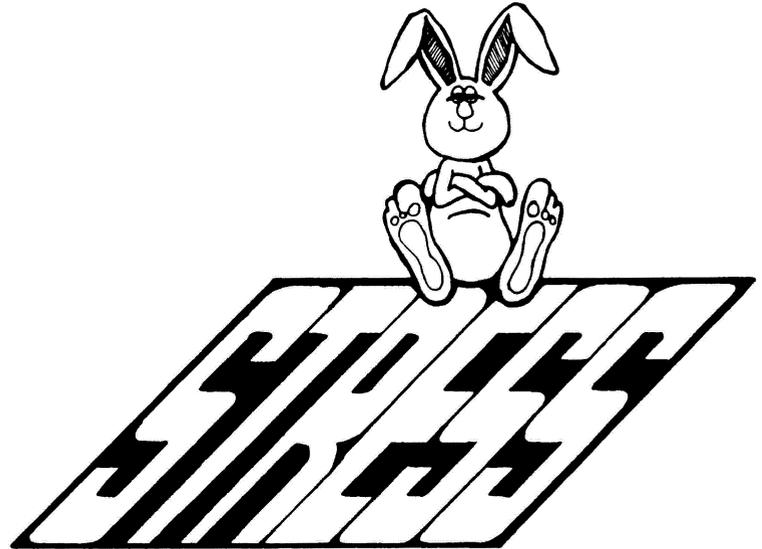
This activity helps you become aware of the “somethings” that may seem to get in the way when you try to solve a problem. Sometimes these “excuses” can be a form of withdrawal. By becoming aware of them, you can find a clue to ways you can change situations to make them less stressful.

Procedure

1. Read through and then complete the following sentences—in the way that most applies to you.

2. Can you think of any ways you might change these excuses?

3. Do you think that excuses can cause stress for you? Why?



COPING WITH STRESS

Adapting to the stress in your life is something that may take practice. You can learn new skills that will help you choose productive ways to use up your excess stress energy. You can learn how to become assertive and work to change a situation. You can learn to accept your feelings so they will not have as much power to hurt you. You can learn relaxation techniques that will help you teach your muscles to work for you.

There are three directions we are going to take to approach coping with stress:

1. Diversion activities can help you cope with stress by providing an appropriate escape when the going gets rough. These techniques do not get at the causes of stress, and they may not cause a physiological relief, but they can act as a safety valve in times of stress.
2. Relaxation techniques do not get at the causes of stress overload either. However, they are designed to provide a physiological release from body tension. The body has a chance to “refuel” itself. This relief of excess muscle tension can act as strong protection against the physical symptoms of stress.

3. Behavior changing exercises can cause meaningful changes in stress reduction by helping you begin to look closely at the reasons underlying your particularly stressful situations.

Let’s look at some of the positive ways of coping with stress. Not all techniques work well for everybody. Each person needs to find those techniques best suited to him/her. For everyone, most of these techniques need to be used regularly to be effective.

STRESS SAFETY VALVES

Sometimes you need a break from a stressful situation in order to return refreshed and ready to handle a problem.

Here are some diversions that can act as stress safety valves:

- Spend some time on yourself—take a long bubble bath or shower; pamper yourself.
- Take a walk—especially in the early morning.
- Listen to music.
- Talk or play with little kids.
- Care for your pet.
- Work on your favorite hobby or start one.
- Sing with a group of people.
- Bake or cook something special.
- Play a musical instrument.
- Try jogging, dancing, playing basketball or participating in some other activity that you enjoy.
- Watch the sun rise or set, or watch the night sky.
- Play just for fun—like “kick the can.”



- Smile at someone.
- Tackle one task at a time — make a list of what you want to do and then start with the first task.
- Talk to someone — when stress and tension are out of hand, find someone to talk to. Try to find someone to talk to who will listen and not give you his/her solutions; find someone who will provide a communicative environment in which you can explore your own alternatives. Talking with someone who is willing to listen may give you the perspective and confidence you need to cope with stress more effectively.

Generate three new safety valves for yourself. Choose some diversions you could use.

Go through the list of safety valves again. Write down any that you don't usually use but would like to try.

What safety valves do you already use?

As a group activity, brainstorm as many safety valves as you can. The more options you can think of, the more resources you will have for coping effectively with stress. Other people in the group can share activities with you that work for them.

Write your own prescription for stress.

Rx FOR STRESS

NAME: _____

TAKE: _____

TIMES A DAY UNTIL SYMPTOMS DISAPPEAR: _____

WHO'S PROBLEM IS IT?

Description

Before you can act on a stress situation, you have to decide exactly what the problem is and who has the problem.

Procedure

1. Describe a stress situation you have when dealing with your:

Teachers _____

Friends _____

Parents _____

What Does It Mean to be Aggressive, Submissive, or Assertive?

People act aggressively when they:

- intentionally attack, take advantage of, humiliate, hurt, or put down other people.
- behave as if others are not as important as they are.

People act submissively when they:

- allow or encourage others to take advantage of them.
- act as if other people are always more important by putting themselves down.

People act assertively when they:

- express themselves openly and honestly to communicate their wants and feelings without putting others down or discounting the wants or feelings of others.
- behave as if they believe that all people, including themselves, are equally important.

Let's take a look at some examples of aggressive, submissive, and assertive behaviors. How would you want someone to respond to you?

A neighbor comes uninvited to your door and wants to have coffee and chat. You are going out later and have a lot to do.

(Aggressive) You scowl and say, "You've got to be kidding. Can't you see I have a million things to do?"

(Submissive) You are afraid to offend him/her, so you say, "Sure, come on in." You end up late for your other appointment.

(Assertive) You say, "Gee I'd really like to visit with you, but I'm busy right now. Can we plan a time to get together later?"

You find that you have been short-changed after you leave the store.

(Aggressive) Loudly demand the correct change.

(Submissive) Forget about it and take the loss.

(Assertive) Catch the attention of the clerk, explain that you think there has been an error, and show your change.

How Do You Respond?

By now you probably get the idea and can think of times when you have acted aggressively, submissively, or assertively.

There may have been times when you:

- wanted to get rid of a door-to-door salesperson
- wanted to turn down someone's request to borrow something
- wanted to ask someone for something
- wanted to ask someone for a meeting or a date
- wanted to tell someone that their smoking or loud noise was disturbing you.

These are just a few examples. Think of some situations you have been in. Decide whether your own behavior was aggressive, submissive, or assertive. Looking back, *how could you have handled the situation more effectively* (if you behaved aggressively or submissively)?

The Situation	How Did I React?	How Did I Feel?

Group Activity

Generate a group feeling word list after everyone has had a few minutes to work on individual lists. Once the momentum gets going, it's surprising how many words can be generated by a group.

Take a look at your list of feeling words. How many of the feeling words have a "positive" meaning? _____ How many have a "negative" meaning? _____ (If you do this activity in a group, you will probably find that some people disagree on some words.)

Which feelings on your list are difficult for you to express?

Which feelings are easy for you to express?

Why might some feelings be harder for you to express than others?

What happens to those feelings that are hard to express?

Select from your list the five feelings that are the strongest and most powerful for you. Think about where in your body you experience that feeling. For example, you may experience anger in a clenched fist or a rigid neck, or you may feel hurt as a "choked-up" sensation in your throat.

Feeling	Where in Your Body Do You Experience It?
---------	--

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

How might locating the physical component of emotions help you become more aware of your own and others' feelings?

Ambivalent Feelings

Sometimes feelings come in pairs or threesomes. You may have experienced mixed feelings and been confused. Mixed feelings are ambivalent feelings. We often experience more than one feeling at a time, and sometimes our feelings do not agree. Frequently we experience positive and negative feelings about the same things. The result is often confusion and conflict—a sort of fight inside between feelings.

The best way to deal with ambivalent feelings is often to talk about each feeling separately. Then you can experience each one clearly. Think about a time when you felt two or more feelings at once about the same things. Perhaps you can remember a time when you came home from a trip, or you let someone borrow something, or you played a joke on someone. Take time to remember what happened and what your feelings were.

Accepting Feelings

You probably discovered when you were listing feeling words that there are many, many feelings. Although everybody feels them all, we each feel our feelings in our own unique ways. You share similar kinds of feelings with others, but what triggers those feelings and what you do about them are uniquely your own.

Complete the following sentences. As you write, remember that everyone experiences these feelings too. Feelings are not good or bad or right or wrong. They may be pleasant and unpleasant, but that's inevitable.

I feel happy when _____

I become angry when _____

I am sad when _____

I feel lonely when _____

I become frustrated when _____

I hate it when _____

I get excited when _____

Group Activity

In pairs, group members may find it interesting to compare responses, noticing differences and similarities. Remember, you don't have to share responses if you don't want to.

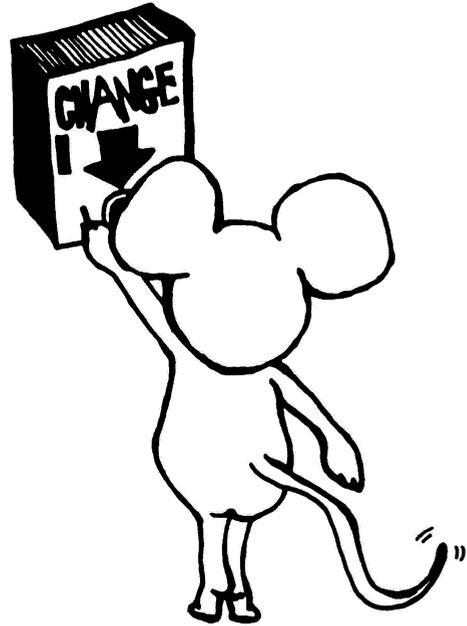
YOUR SELF-ESTEEM

How much you like or dislike yourself can influence how you view and handle stress. If you see yourself as helpless, inferior, and incapable of changing, then you will probably view more situations as threatening and stressful. You may also have little confidence in your ability to handle stress.

Your self-esteem refers to how much you like and dislike what you think you are. It's not an all-or-nothing idea but rather a continuum—from high to low and all places in between. Imagine self-esteem on a scale from 1 to 100. One is very low and 100 is very high. How would you rate your self-esteem?

Your self-esteem has been learned and developed as a result of your experiences. From the time you

As you look over your list, is there anything about it that surprises you? Is there anything you have discovered?



A WAY TO MAKE A CHANGE

Look over all your inventories and note one thing you are unhappy with and would like to change.

Describe the situation in terms of why you are unhappy with it.

How would you like to change this situation?

List all of the obstacles that you feel are causing this situation to remain a problem for you.

1. _____	4. _____
_____	_____
2. _____	5. _____
_____	_____
3. _____	6. _____
_____	_____

TEACHING YOUR MUSCLES TO WORK FOR YOU

Just as the mind can work to cause physical symptoms of stress, it can also be put to work to stimulate relaxation.

Our muscles act to express nearly every aspect of our physical and emotional life. Strong protection against physical symptoms of stress can be attained by relieving excess muscle tension.

Even when we are standing still our muscles are working. We may think that we are resting when we are not moving. This deception takes place because of the body's automatic act of balancing muscle tension in opposing muscles. States of anxiety or nervousness, or such slight body responses as bracing for something unexpected, stiffen the muscles causing an outbreak of muscle signals that are sent back to the brain. Those signals cause feelings of tension. The muscle systems respond with their balancing act and then adapt to the new condition of heightened tension. The problem is that our conscious awareness also adapts until we soon forget that we are tense.

We can *learn* not to engage in continuous physiological stress responding. The relaxation response is essentially the opposite of the stress response. The relaxation response counteracts stress and puts our physiology back within a normal range. It causes the heart to slow down, the muscles of the body to relax, the blood pressure to lower, the adrenal glands to stop secreting their powerful adrenalins, and the stomach to stop secreting strong acids.



The relaxation response is not what occurs when we try to relax by watching TV. This usually produces the stress reaction even though we call it relaxing. The relaxation response is achieved only under special circumstances, but it can be learned. However, learning to reverse a habitual response takes time and practice.

Periods of relaxation are helpful even if a person goes back into a stressful situation. You can reverse the stress build-up and cause the stress response to cease. The internal organs recover. They reverse their harmful effects. We then have a new reserve built up—one which will again be ready to deal with stress, but one which has not been pushed to the breaking limit of exhaustion.

THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

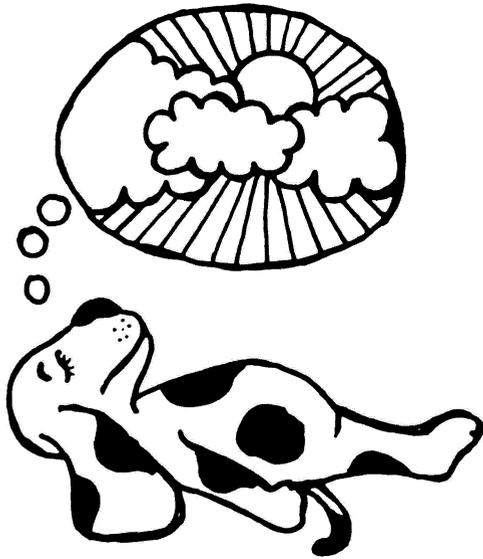
The relaxation response is a term used by Dr. Herbert Benson* to describe a physical state of reduced body tension. Although Dr. Benson has coined the term, the idea has been around for centuries. The essence of the relaxation response has been practiced through various methods including meditation. The attainment of the relaxation response is an important technique for counteracting the harmful effects of stress-overload on the body.

Learning to achieve the relaxation response is a skill. Learning a new skill takes *practice*. With practice, the response should come with little effort. Practice the technique once or twice a day. Since the digestive process seems to interfere with the elicitation of the relaxation response, do not practice within two hours after a meal.

Here are some suggestions for achieving the relaxation response. This procedure may be used as a relaxation technique in and of itself, and it may also be used as a set of guidelines for the relaxation exercises that follow (diaphragmatic breathing, deep muscle relaxation, autogenic relaxation, quick release techniques, and visual imagery).

1. *Find a quiet place.* Take the phone off the hook and let everyone know that you will be unavailable for about 15 minutes. It is probably unrealistic to expect to find a place that is totally free from distractions. Just try to eliminate as many as you can and ignore the rest.
2. *Assume a comfortable position.* The best position is flat on your back on the floor. Your eyes should

*For more information, see *The Relaxation Response* by Herbert Benson. New York. Avon Books, 1976. (\$1.95 paperback)



be closed and your arms should be loose at your sides. Uncross your feet and loosen any tight collars, belts, or footwear. Initially, lying flat on your back on the floor may seem uncomfortable, but you are urged to try it. Usually, after you start to relax you don't notice the hard floor and this position is really the best one for your body.

If you choose to sit in a chair, remember to uncross your legs and let your arms rest loosely at your sides.

3. *Maintain a passive attitude.* Do not worry about whether you are successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation. Maintain a passive attitude and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace. Do not try to work at relaxing. Disregard distracting thoughts and sounds for the time you have set aside.
4. *Concentrate on a pleasing phrase or image.* For some people a word formula such as "in" and

"out" or "one" works well. Other people find visual images such as cloud formations useful for this purpose. Repeat the word or image effortlessly.

5. *Breathe easily and naturally.* Breathe through your nose, with your mouth open slightly.
6. Keep your muscles loose, limp, and relaxed.

AS YOU GET READY TO R...E...L...A...X

The following relaxation exercises—diaphragmatic breathing, deep muscle, autogenic, quick release, and visual imagery—are best introduced by having another person read through the exercise while you experience them. This can be accomplished in a group by having everyone relax together, while the leader (or someone else) gives the instructions in a slow, relaxed manner. If you are not part of a group, you can have another person give you the instructions while you relax. Eventually as you learn which techniques work best for you, you will probably be able to go through the exercise without instruction. A popular method is to make tape recordings of the instructions to use during a relaxation session. You may want to tape another person, or make a tape yourself. Commercial tapes of relaxation exercises are also available. (See bibliography.)

Some Guidelines for Group Relaxation

1. Realize that the benefits of relaxation are not as dramatic as we would like them to be, but occur gradually over time.
2. Clothing should be comfortable and loose fitting.
3. The sounds are a natural part of the environment,



and as you relax, you will always be completely aware of everything that's going on, although you may not be particularly concerned about it. There is not much you can do to decrease sound, but keeping it at a minimum is helpful.

4. The light should be low. Looking up into bright light with closed eyes becomes annoying when one is relaxed.
5. It is important that the person relaxing does not feel that he/she will be bumped or touched while relaxing. The sense that someone is relaxing "too close" to another person is often disturbing.
6. Sometimes people fall asleep during these exercises. The person may feel embarrassed so it is best to remind the group that this may happen and that is okay. However, the goal of relaxation exercises is usually not to fall asleep. The goal is to relax and return refreshed.
7. Encourage group members to talk about their experiences with the exercises. The subjective feelings that accompany relaxation vary among individuals. Most people feel a sense of calm and feel very relaxed. Other descriptions involve feelings of pleasure, refreshment, and well-being. Some people notice relatively little change on a subjective level. Usually regardless of the subjective feelings, the psychological changes, such as decreased oxygen consumption, do take place. People may describe feelings of floating, tingling, cold, or warmth. These feelings and sensations are different for individuals, and it is important for people to feel reassured that they are normal.

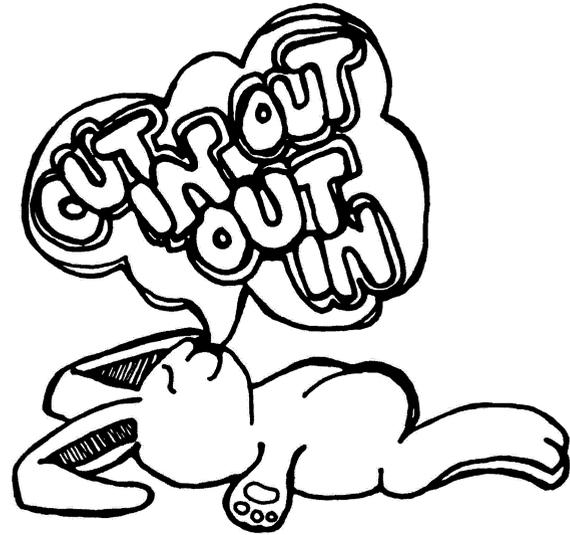
DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

Description

One way to achieve the relaxation response is through diaphragmatic breathing. The instructions for this technique include several variations. Adapt this exercise so it works best for you.

Procedure

1. Assume the relaxed position (eyes closed, passive attitude, comfortable position, quiet room).
2. Begin to focus on your breathing. Allow your breathing to become regular and natural as you inhale and exhale through your nose. Remember that breathing is a peaceful, natural process.
Each time you exhale, allow some tension to leave your body, and allow the relaxation to come in.
3. As you begin to feel more and more relaxed with



each breath, try one (or more) of the following vehicles to deepen your feeling of relaxation:

- Imagine the air that comes to you as a cloud. The cloud comes to you, fills you, and then leaves you.
- Imagine your lungs as a balloon (you may want to put your hand on your chest). As you inhale your lungs expand like a balloon, and as you exhale your lungs deflate.
- As you inhale say the word "in" to yourself. As you exhale say the word "out."

Try each of the above at different times to see which works best for you. For some people the visual images are more powerful, while for others the word formula (such as "in" and "out") works better.

Try to focus on one of these images or word formulas for several minutes. Tell yourself to relax more and more with each breath. You may discover that your mind will wander from the image or word from time to time. This is normal. Simply return to your word or image and continue to relax.

4. You may want to deepen your relaxation now by using one of the following methods:
 - Slowly count backward from 10 to 1. With each count allow yourself to feel heavier and more relaxed.
 - Imagine that you are on the top of a long, winding stairway. Picture yourself descending the steps. Feel a new wave of calm with each step that you take.
5. It is now important to return. You will now come back to the real world feeling calm yet alert. You will feel the benefits of this relaxation throughout

the day. Come back to the room slowly by counting from 1 to 5, gradually becoming more alert. At the count of 5 your eyes should open. Get up slowly.

Conclusion

Encourage group members to talk about the experience of this exercise. The subjective feelings that accompany relaxation vary among individuals. Most people feel a sense of calm and feel very relaxed. Other descriptions involve feelings of pleasure, refreshment, and well-being. Others notice relatively little change, especially the first few times. These reactions are all normal. The feelings and sensations are different for individuals, and it is important for people to feel reassured that this is normal.

DEEP MUSCLE RELAXATION

Description

This technique involves tensing specific muscle groups and then relaxing them. For each muscle group a method is described for creating tension and achieving relaxation.

Procedure

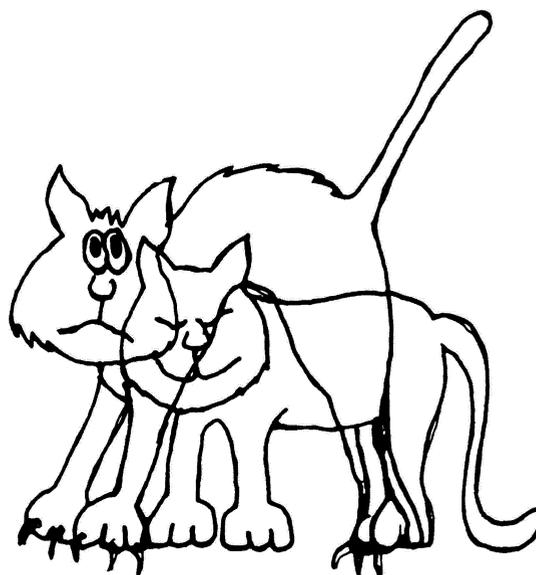
1. Assume the position for relaxation (eyes closed, lying on floor, quiet, passive attitude).
2. Go through the following for each muscle group twice.

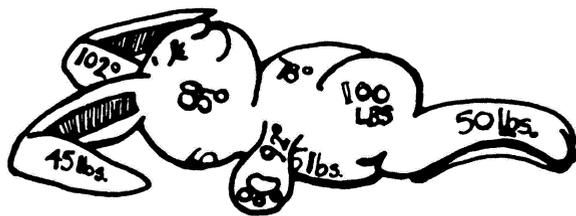
Muscle	Tensing Method
Forehead	Wrinkle your forehead. Try to make your eyebrows touch your hairline for five seconds. Relax.
Eyes and nose	Close your eyes as tightly as you can for five seconds. Relax.
Lips, cheeks, and jaw	Draw the corners of your mouth back and grimace for five seconds. Relax. Feel the warmth and calmness in your face.
Hands	Extend your arms in front of you. Clench your fists tightly for five seconds. Relax. Feel the warmth and calmness in your hands.
Forearms	Extend your arms out against an invisible wall and push forward with your hands for five seconds. Relax.
Upper arms	Bend your elbows. Tense your biceps for five seconds. Relax. Feel the tension leave your arms.

Muscle	Tensing Method
Shoulders	Shrug your shoulders up to your ears for five seconds. Relax.
Back	Arch your back off the floor for five seconds. Relax. Feel the anxiety and tension disappearing.
Stomach	Tighten your stomach muscles for five seconds. Relax.
Hips and buttocks	Tighten your hip and buttock muscles for five seconds. Relax.
Thighs	Tighten your thigh muscles by pressing your legs together as tightly as you can for five seconds. Relax.
Feet	Bend your ankles toward your body as far as you can for five seconds. Relax.
Toes	Curl your toes under as tightly as you can for five seconds. Relax.

Conclusion

Encourage group members to talk about the experience of this exercise. The subjective feelings that accompany relaxation vary among individuals. Most people feel a sense of calm and feel very relaxed. Other descriptions involve feelings of pleasure, refreshment, and well-being. Some others notice relatively little change, especially the first few times. These reactions are all normal. The feelings and sensations are different for individuals, and it is important for people to feel reassured that this is normal.





AUTOGENIC RELAXATION

Description

This technique involves the use of a word formula that acts as a reminder to each part of the body to relax.

Procedure

1. Assume the position for relaxation (quiet, eyes closed, lying on floor).
2. Although repeating the word formula may seem like a task, remember to maintain passive concentration.
3. Repeat the word formula in the sequence given below. This is done silently. Allow all your body parts to feel heavy, warm, and relaxed.

My right arm is heavy.

My right arm is heavy.

My left arm is heavy.

My left arm is heavy.

My arms are heavy and warm.

My arms are heavy and warm.

My arms are heavy and warm; warmth is flowing into my hands.

My arms are heavy and warm; warmth is flowing into my hands.

My legs are heavy.

My legs are heavy.

My legs are heavy and warm.

My legs are heavy and warm.

My breathing is calm and regular.

My breathing is calm and regular.

My body breathes me.

My body breathes me.

My breathing is calm and regular; I am at peace.

My breathing is calm and regular; I am at peace.

I am at peace.

I am at peace.

Conclusion

Encourage group members to discuss their experiences with this exercise. Different exercises work better for different people. Group members may want to explore for themselves the different impact each of the exercises experienced has had on them so far.

QUICK RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Description

As you become more experienced at eliciting the relaxation responses, some quick methods of relaxation may be useful. This exercise describes several "quick release" techniques.

Procedure

These exercises take less time than the preceding methods, BUT they are most effective only after you have practiced the longer techniques and have become acquainted with your own body and how it tenses and relaxes. As you become better at relaxation with practice, it will take less time to achieve the relaxation response. You will still want to continue a regular routine of 15 to 20 minutes of daily relaxation, but the following suggestions can be supplemental.

Here are some pointers for review about all the exercises that follow.

Position Get as comfortable as possible. Some of these exercises can be done while waiting in the doctor's office or at some other time when there's nothing to do but wait. It is not necessary always to lie down to do them.

Attitude Remain passive. Just watch your mind work. Whatever thoughts come to mind are okay. Do not work at it, just let it happen.

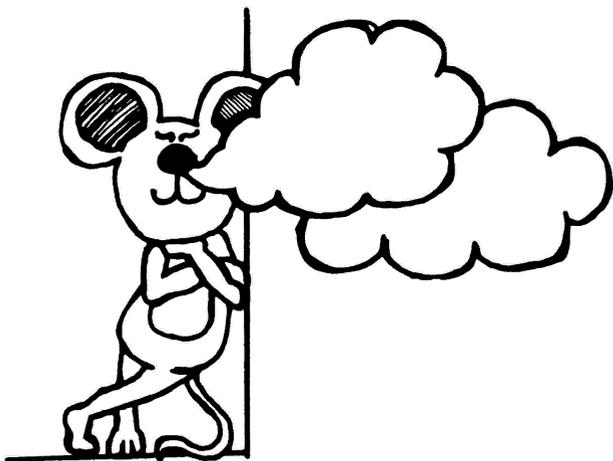
Sounds Sounds are a natural part of the environment—just take note of them and let them pass.

Breathing Focus inward on breathing as a natural, easy process.

1. Whole Body Tension

- a. Tense everything in your whole body, stay with that tension, and hold it as long as you can without feeling pain.

- b. Slowly release the tension and very gradually feel it leave your body.
 - c. Repeat three times.
 - d. Describe how this feels.
- 2. Imagine Air as a Cloud**
- a. Open your imagination and focus on your breathing.
 - b. As your breathing becomes calm and regular, imagine that the air comes to you as a cloud—it fills you and goes out. There may be a color of cloud that you can imagine.
 - c. Notice that your breathing becomes more regular as you relax.



- 3. Pick a Spot**
- a. With your head level and your body relaxed, pick a spot to focus on (eyes are open at this point).
 - b. When ready, count five breaths backward. With each breath allow your eyes to close gradually.
 - c. When you get to one, your eyes will be closed. Focus on the feeling of relaxation.
- 4. Counting 10 Breaths Back**
- a. Allow yourself to feel passive and indifferent, counting each breath slowly from 10 to 1.
 - b. With each count, allow yourself to feel heavier and more relaxed.
 - c. With each exhale, allow the tension to leave your body.
- 5. Shoulder Shrug**
- a. Try to raise your shoulders up to your ears.
 - b. Hold for the count of four, then drop your shoulders back to normal position.
 - c. Repeat as often as necessary.

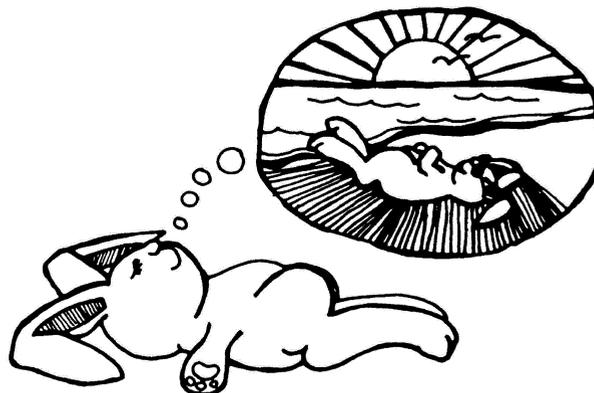
- d. Vary this by rotating your shoulders back, down, and around—first one way, then the other, then both at the same time.
- 6. Alternate Nostril Breathing**
- a. Block the left nostril with one hand and inhale deeply through your right nostril for five seconds.
 - b. Block both nostrils, holding your breath for five seconds.
 - c. Repeat, beginning this time by breathing through the left nostril.

IMAGERY AND FANTASY

We often think of daydreaming as a frivolous activity, generally a waste of time. Actually, taking a “mind vacation” can help you sharpen your awareness, provide you with a break from stressful routines, and give your body a chance to refuel. You can give yourself permission to engage in fantasy trips. You may want to set aside a certain time each day for relaxing. The fantasy trips can be combined with other types of relaxation such as diaphragmatic breathing or deep muscle relaxation. The fantasy trips can also be used by themselves at other times during the day when you take a break.

A Fantasy Vacation

Here are some suggestions for taking a mind vacation. Lie on the floor or sit relaxed in a chair with both feet on the ground. Close your eyes. Imagine yourself in a place you enjoy—a mountain meadow, a pleasant garden, a cabin by a lake, or a sunny beach. Picture yourself relaxing there. Enjoy the feel of the sun, the fresh breeze, the soft grass, or the sand underneath you. Enjoy the sounds, the wind in the



trees, the surf, and birds. Become aware of the fragrances. Try to experience all of your senses in the fantasy—sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

You may want to do something on your “vacation” that you enjoy like picking flowers, fishing, reading poetry, or gathering shells. Maybe someone you love will be with you. Spend about 10 or 15 minutes enjoying yourself, then slowly return from your vacation.

Another kind of mind vacation involves watching your thoughts. Ordinarily you are swept up by the thoughts, impressions, feelings, and experiences that constantly flow through your mind. For example, a memory may arise, and mentally you return to the scene. Try watching this stream of consciousness without being carried away by it or interfering with its flow. Let your thoughts continue, but act as a bystander rather than a participant. To achieve this inward glance, do nothing. Make no effort of your own. Imagine your thoughts as a stream. You watch the stream as an interested observer, but you refuse to become a part of the current.

There are lots of images that suggest relaxation. You may choose one of the ideas above or find a special place or idea that’s all your own. Once you have found a special place, you may want to go back again and again when you need to escape.

The next two exercises provide a more structured fantasy. They work best when read aloud by someone to you or to a group. However, you may want to use some of the images for your own private “vacations.”

SENSORY AWARENESS

Description

The exercise encourages you to use your imagination to experience your senses.

Procedure

1. The best environment for this activity is a comfortable room with carpeting and soft lighting. (This is preferable but not essential.)
2. Assume the position for relaxation (eyes closed, quiet, passive attitude).
3. Read the following to the group very slowly. Pause at least five seconds at the dots and at the end of each paragraph to allow time to focus on each image.

Allow yourself to feel as comfortable as you can . . . As you relax, begin to focus on your breathing . . . Continue to breath in a very natural, very regular way . . . As you inhale, picture your lungs expand-

ing like a balloon and contracting as you exhale . . . Allow yourself to feel more relaxed with each breath . . . Each time you exhale, imagine the tensions flowing from your body . . . Continue to focus on your breathing for a moment or two . . . (Pause for one or two minutes.)

As you continue to relax, imagine that it is a cool, crisp autumn day . . . You are walking through the woods . . . What colors do you see? . . . Look closely at the leaves . . . Someone has been burning leaves. Imagine the smell as you inhale . . . Someone you care about joins you on your walk through the woods . . . Silently the two of you continue . . . What do you hear? . . .

Now imagine that you are in the city . . . It is rainy at night . . . What do you see? . . . What do you hear? . . . What does it smell like? . . .

As you walk along through the city you see a gift you would like to buy for someone in a store window . . . Imagine yourself giving this gift to someone special . . . How does that person look when you present your gift? . . .

Now you are in a warm bubble bath . . . Your body floats in the warm, gentle water . . . Soft music is playing . . . The bubbles smell sweet like wildflowers . . . Your body floats and rocks as you relax . . .

As you leave your imaginary world, bring your thoughts and feelings back with you to this room . . . Slowly and gently open your eyes and join the group.

Conclusion

Stimulate discussion by asking the following questions:

1. How do you feel now?
2. What colors did you see and when?
3. What sounds did you hear and when?
4. What scents did you smell? If so, when did you smell them?
5. Did you have any other sensations?
6. Did you experience any emotions? If so, when?

GETTING IN TOUCH

Description

This is an exercise that is designed to bring you in touch with your feelings and your body. It may enrich your overall awareness and provide you with a new way of experiencing yourself.

Procedure

1. Assume the relaxation position (quiet atmosphere, eyes closed, comfortable position, passive attitude).

2. Read the following to the group very slowly. Pause at least five seconds at the dots and at the end of each paragraph to allow time to focus in on body feelings.

As you lie on the floor, allow your body to feel as relaxed and comfortable as possible . . . Spend some time now getting in touch with yourself . . . Just pay attention to you now, letting the rest of the world drift by for a short while. It will all still be there when you've finished relaxing . . . Begin by focusing first on your breathing, remember that it is a very natural, very relaxing process . . . Just breathe naturally, allowing yourself to become more relaxed with each breath that you take . . . Now as you inhale say the word "in" to yourself, and as you exhale say the word "out" to yourself. Continue breathing, saying the words "in" and "out" for a few moments . . . (Pause for one to two minutes.)

Now as your body begins to relax, think for a moment about your feelings . . . What kind of feelings have you experienced today? . . .

Often we experience our feelings in our bodies. Where in your body are your feelings located? . . . In your back, your throat, your neck, your stomach? . . . Pick a feeling you have often and imagine it in your body . . . where does it settle? . . . (Pause for one to two minutes.)

Try to imagine what your feeling looks like . . . Is it big or small? . . . Does it have a color or shape? . . . Do you want your feeling to stay with you or are you anxious for it to go away? . . .

Begin to let go of your feeling . . . Say good-bye to it . . . Think now about yourself in this room . . . Keep your eyes closed and imagine what this room will

look like when you open your eyes . . . Open your eyes now and slowly sit up when you feel ready.

Conclusion

Culminate this activity by asking the group:

1. What are some of the things that came into your awareness during the exercise?
2. Were you able to feel your emotions in your body? If so, where? How was it for you?
3. How do you feel now?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Benson, Herbert. *The Relaxation Response*, 1975, Avon Paperback.
- Blume, Judy. *It's Not the End of the World*, 1972, Bradbury Press.
- Burns, Marilyn. *The Book of Think*, 1977, Little, Brown and Company Paperback.
- Burns, Marilyn. *I Am Not A Short Adult*, 1977, Little, Brown and Company Paperback.
- Fluegelman, Andrew (Ed.). *The New Games Book*, 1976, Headlands Press Paperback.
- Gardner, Richard A. *The Boys and Girls Book About Divorce*, 1971, Aronson.
- Mayle, Peter. *What's Happening to Me*, 1975, Lyle Stuart.
- Simon, Sidney. *I AM Loveable and Capable*, 1973, Argus Communication.

Notes: