

Stress: Managing One Step At A Time



Alberta Education Health & Life Skills Programs of Studies Outcomes

The students will...

- R - 8.3 Evaluate the relationship between risk management and stress management; e.g., managing risks effectively reduces stress, managing stress can reduce impulsive behaviours.

Teacher Background

Stress and change are part of our lives. We all talk about stress, but we are not always clear about what it is. This is because stress comes from both the good and bad things that happen to us. If we did not feel any stress, we would not be motivated to do anything. Too much stress, however, can negatively impact our mental wellness. It also may put students at greater risk of becoming involved in risk-taking behaviours.

In junior high, students are becoming increasingly more responsible for their own use of time. Often, they are beginning to learn how to manage multiple tasks and expectations e.g., academic work, extra-curricular activities, family, friends and work.

Learning how to prioritize tasks and break them down into manageable steps is an important skill to learn for managing stress.

Objective

Help students manage stress by learning to break large tasks into smaller steps.

Materials

- Handout: *Sample Project To-Do List*
- Handout: *Project To-Do List*



Get Ready

Remind students that many projects or school assignments can initially seem overwhelming. Learning to break projects down into smaller tasks will help students complete the project and experience more positive feelings along the way.

Activity

The objective of this activity is to provide the students with a project that they will need to plan. The activity is broken into 2 parts. This allows students to experience what it is like to plan a project without help and how their experience may differ when they are provided with a planning tool to help them break the project down into smaller, more manageable, tasks.

Activity 1A: Year End Activity Day

- Working with a partner, instruct the students that they will be given 10 minutes to plan their grade 8 year-end activity day. Do not provide them with any further instruction or tools to help them plan. After the 10 minutes, ask one partner from each group to share with the class what plans were made and what their experience of planning was like.

Activity 1B: Steps To Planning

- Instruct the students that there are many tasks that they will need to complete throughout their lives (planning an event, writing a term paper, studying for final exams). Sometimes the projects will seem overwhelming. One way of dealing with the stress of such tasks is to break them down into smaller steps, resulting in a greater sense of control and accomplishment. Instead of looking at a task as one big goal, learn to divide projects into small, well-defined tasks.
- Provide students with handout *Sample Project To-Do List*. Highlight how the student used this planning tool to break down her project (psychology term paper) into manageable steps. Go over each step with the students, highlighting how tasks can be broken down into smaller and smaller steps.
- Hand out the blank template *Project To-Do List*. Working with their same partners, instruct students to use this template to plan their grade 8 year-end fun day. Provide them with the same time limitation (10 minutes). Follow up with a classroom discussion on how their experience of planning changed with the use of the planning tool. What did they notice? What changed for them? How can they apply this to other real-life projects?

Conclusion

Learning how to prioritize tasks and break them down into manageable steps is an important skill to learn. This helps to manage the stress of projects/tasks that everyone will need to complete throughout their lives.

Take Home Activity & Follow-up Classroom Discussion

Have students use the template *Project To-Do List* to plan an event/task/project that they will need to complete in the next few months.

Discuss the take home activity: What project did they choose to plan? How did they use the tool to break the project down into smaller tasks?

Assessment Strategy

- Students will be able to identify how breaking projects down into smaller tasks helps them manage their stress.
- Students will use the *Project To-Do List* to plan their own personal project.

References

AADAC. (2012). Grade 8 Lesson: Stress Management. Retrieved from: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/AddictionsSubstanceAbuse/if-tch-grade-8-stress-management.pdf>

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). (2011). *Coping with stress bingo*. Personal communication. Copied with permission.

Sample Project To-Do List

Project Overview: <i>Psychology Term Paper</i>	
Step: <i>Find a Topic</i>	
	Tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> talk to the professor<input type="checkbox"/> check my textbook<input type="checkbox"/> peruse the available books and journals at the library
Step: <i>Locate Research Materials</i>	
	Tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> use library databases to locate articles<input type="checkbox"/> check online databases<input type="checkbox"/> get articles (download, copy, order from interlibrary loan)
Step: <i>Research Paper</i>	
	Tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> read articles, taking notes as I go<input type="checkbox"/> determine if I need references<input type="checkbox"/> piece together an outline of my paper based on my notes

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Project To-Do List

Project Overview:	
Step:	
	Tasks: <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____
Step:	
	Tasks: <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____
Step:	
	Tasks: <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____

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