

Intermediate – Learn to deal with stress

Aim: To help students recognise the symptoms of stress and deal with them.

Lead-in: Write the following things on the board:

- *embarrassing moments*
- *speaking in public*
- *arguing with friends*
- *homework and exams*
- *being late*
- *extra activities*
- *the news*

Put students into pairs to think about how stressful these situations are for them personally and why. Ask them to rate them on a scale from 1–10 as to how stressful they are to them (1 = *least stressful*; 10 = *most stressful*).

When students have finished, ask different pairs to tell you how they rated the different situations and write the various numbers on the board. A picture will start to form about what students find most stressful.

Pick one of those things (e.g., *exams*) and discuss with students the kinds of things they feel before, during, or after exams. You might need to ask some questions to get started. Say: *Have you ever had a really bad headache the day of the exam? What other things have you felt?* Encourage answers like *tired, stomach aches, can't sleep, bad dreams, don't feel like eating, feeling hot and cold*, etc.

Ask students to write down one thing they do that always makes them happy no matter how worried or stressed or upset they are. Find out from the class the different things they have written and write them on the board. Filter what students respond with and gradually build up a list of possible stress relievers.

Depending on the list compiled, write on the board the following in addition to students' points and explain that they are potential stress relievers: *playing computer games, eating chocolate, watching TV, crying, breaking things, etc.* Ask students whether they think these are good or bad stress relievers. Ask them to explain why or why not.

Choose A Scenario: Ask students to work in pairs and choose one of the three scenarios (A–C). For Text C, you will probably need to pre-teach *rash* (a red mark on the face or body, usually caused by an allergy, illness or stress).

First, students should identify the root of the problem, i.e., what is causing the stress and why. Then, they should put the symptoms into categories (mental or physical symptoms). Lastly, encourage students to think of solutions to relieve stress which fit the scenario. They should keep referring to the Reflection Point to make sure they cover all solutions.

Reflection Point: Point out to students that often we don't realise when we are stressed – we just feel bad. It's a good idea to listen to your body, which is why it's important to eat well, exercise, and do things that make us feel good. This will help to keep the symptoms of stress under control.

Class discussion: Put pairs together who chose the same scenario so that they can compare the advice they gave to their friend. Ask students, *did you all give the same advice? Did you think all the advice is good advice?*

Ask students the following questions:

- Why do you think some people get stressed in some situations and others don't?
- Imagine any of these scenarios happened to you, would you feel stressed?
- Why do you think physical activities and things that make you happy make stress go away?

Work alone: Ask students to choose a second scenario and work individually. Tell them to follow the steps given in section 2. Go around the class monitoring students and providing help as needed.

When students have finished, invite volunteers to stand up and say which scenario they chose and present their advice. Encourage the other students to listen to their classmates' advice and judge whether or not the advice students give is helpful.

SKILLS FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

Extension: Encourage students to think of one area of school/work life that makes them stressed and think of ways to deal with it using the things they have learned in the lesson.