

Chapter 4 Lesson 1: Understanding Stress

Introduction:

Everyone gets stressed—it is a basic fact of life. Too much stress, however, can have profound negative effects on your health, including hypertension, stroke, and heart attack. At this Web site, you can learn more about what causes stress, how stress affects your body, and how to get your stress level under control.

Links to Explore:

Teens and Stress

http://library.thinkquest.org/13561/english/def_stress.htm

Directions:

- Click on the link and go to the Teens and Stress Web site.
 - Click on each of the following links in the box, and read the pages that pop up:
 - The results
 - Teen stress
 - Physical
 - After reading all the pages, answer the following questions:
1. Explain the difference between stress and stressors.
 2. List five symptoms of stress.
 3. Name five sources of stress that are specific to teens.
 4. What does the site call “the number one way to prevent a lot of stress”?
 5. What is stress tolerance?
 6. What substances can worsen overstress?
 7. Identify three ways to reduce your stress load.

Answers:

1. Stressors are pressure from the outside, such as divorce, death, or isolation. Stress is your response to those situations.
2. Any five of the following:
 - Increased heart rate
 - Rapid breathing
 - Stammering
 - Headaches
 - Stomachaches
 - Chest pains
 - Diarrhea
 - Sweating
 - Sleeplessness
 - Alcohol and drug addiction
4. Any five of the following:
 - Problems at home
 - Problems at school
 - High competition for jobs
 - Education choices
 - Living at home while feeling old enough to be on your own
 - Financial pressures
 - Dysfunctional families
 - Blended families
4. Keeping the lines of communication open with parents, peers, or other people you trust
5. The amount of stress you can handle before your “happy messengers” (serotonin, noradrenalin, and dopamine) begin to fail
6. Substances that can worsen overstress include:
 - Sugar
 - Alcohol
 - Tobacco
 - Caffeine
 - Illegal drugs
 - Prescription tranquilizers
7. Any three of the following:
 - Define your sleeping hours and stick to them.
 - Take a break to give your body a chance to heal itself.
 - Say "No" more often when others request your time.
 - Postpone major changes in your environment.
 - Take time off from work or school.
 - Start a stress-relieving diet.
 - Reduce your consumption of “happy messenger boosters” such as sugar and caffeine.

- Avoid environmental toxins and things that trigger your allergies.
- Exercise three times a week for twenty minutes or up to two hours.
- Avoid prescription medicines designed to force sleeping or tranquilizing.

Additional Links to Explore

Use the links below to gather additional information on the activity topic. When appropriate, have students extend their research to include important concepts contained in these Web sites.

The American Institute of Stress

<http://www.stress.org/>

Helping Teenagers with Stress

<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/66.htm>