



STRESS MANAGEMENT KIT

This kit provides you with healthy coping skills designed to help you feel unstoppable even during times of stress.

Let's start with a few questions. You can answer aloud, to yourself, or on paper.

What is stress?

How do you feel when you're stressed? How does it make your body feel?

What are some things that stress you out?

What are some healthy ways to manage stress?

What are some unhealthy ways people manage their stress?

Stress is a reaction to pressure. Stress can make us feel tense or nervous. Stress triggers our body into producing adrenaline, which is why our heartrate may go up or our breathing may get quicker when we are stressed. Stress can actually be a good thing sometimes! It can be a burst of energy that helps motivate us to complete things. However, too much stress can leave us feeling tired and overwhelmed. It's important to identify our stressors so we can be more prepared to handle them. As well, it is important to have healthy ways to manage our stress!

What happens when we “Flip the Lid”?

Imagine that your hand is your brain. Everyone raise your hand, as you are able. Now fold your thumb in towards your palm. That is going to represent the limbic part of your brain, or your “downstairs” brain. This is the emotional part of the brain! It is the part of the brain that controls your “fight or flight” instincts. Now fold your fingers over your thumb to make a fist. Your fingers represent the cortex part of your brain, or your “upstairs” brain. This is the thinking part of the brain! This part of your brain helps you make decisions and problem solve.

Sometimes, when we get really stressed or anxious, we can actually “flip the lid”! Unfold your top fingers to expose your thumb. That's what happens! Our thinking part of the brain is out of the picture and we are left with only the emotional part of the brain. It is extremely difficult to make good decisions when you aren't using your upstairs, thinking brain. When we are controlled by our downstairs brain, we can accidentally say or do something we don't really mean.

So, we are going to learn several different ways we can calm ourselves back down after we have “flipped the lid”, that way we can make better decisions!



COPING SKILLS

The methods a person uses to deal with stressful situations.

Square Breathing: *Square breathing is a way of breathing that calms the body and mind. When your breath slows down and is controlled, your body gets the signal to relax, so your heart and your mind will slow back down too.*

Imagine your breath is a square, and remember a square is made up of four equal sides. Each side of the square is a different part of the breathing practice.

1. Inhale for 1..2..3..4, that's one side
2. Hold for 1..2..3..4, that's another side
3. Exhale for 1..2..3..4, that's the third side
4. Hold for 1..2..3..4, that's the final side.....Repeat!

5, 4, 3, 2, 1: *a grounding technique that uses the 5 senses.*

Our thoughts can contribute to the way we feel. When we are anxious or stressed, our thoughts tend to be overwhelming. This exercise can help calm your mind by focusing on the present.

1. Look around the room and notice 5 different things you can see
2. Listen carefully and take note of 4 things you can hear
3. Run your hands over 3 things around you and notice how they feel
4. Take a few deep breathes in through your nose and notice 2 different smells
5. Focus on your mouth and see if there is 1 thing you can taste

Peace Begins with Me: a quick meditation

Make the "A OK" symbol with your hands. Now say 'Peace Begins With Me' as you touch each finger to your thumb starting with the pointer finger then the middle, ring, and pinky. Say it 5 times out loud, then close your eyes and say it 5 times silently.



Secret Garden Meditation

Close your eyes and imagine that a magic carpet is soaring in through the clouds to pick you up. You see it getting closer and closer and it stops right in front of you. You hop on. What does your magic carpet look like, what does it feel like? Your magic carpet begins to fly up into the sky. You feel the wind in your hair as it soars up above the school. It's taking you to a very special place. As you journey through the sky, you begin to see something in the distance. It's your secret garden. Your magic carpet starts lowering you down and you know that you've arrived. You hop off your magic carpet and begin to look around.

What do you see? What does your garden look like? How do you feel here? What does it sound like? What do you smell? Are you there alone or with someone else?

Take a moment to relax here and enjoy the peace and quiet in your secret garden. You feel so safe and cozy here.

Now your magic carpet is coming back to pick you up. As it lands to pick you up you're not sad because you know you can come back to your secret garden whenever you'd like. You hop on and your magic carpet takes you up into the sky and you make your journey back to the school. You land safe & sound back at Girl Connect. You roll over onto your left side and gently and slowly sit up and begin to open your eyes.

A Quiet Place Meditation

Close your eyes, be very still and imagine there is a tiny space right in the middle of your head. A tiny space where there is no noise and no movement. It is completely silent here.

This is your own secret place, which you may come to whenever you like. Nobody can come in because the door is right inside your mind and they wouldn't be able to find it. It's a place that only you may come to when you want to be alone and quiet. It's your private place.

Can you open the door inside your mind and step into this quiet space? It feels lovely sitting here in the quiet. It is so calm and quiet inside your mind.

As you stay there enjoying the peace and quiet, take in a deep breath. As you breathe in, breathe in a feeling of peace and as you breathe out, breathe out a feeling of peace. Breathe in peace, breathe out peace. You feel so safe and cozy here.

Just allow all your thoughts to slow gently down while you enjoy the peace and quiet. Repeat to yourself – I am quiet, I am quiet, I am quiet. Stay for as long as you wish feeling peaceful and safe. Feel quiet. Feel calm. Feel silent. Feel still. Feel quiet, feel quiet, feel quiet.



CRAFTS FOR COPING

Stress balls: *Stress balls help relieve muscle tension due to stress.*

Materials needed:

Balloon, Funnel, Corn Starch OR Flour OR Rice, Permanent Marker (optional)

Steps:

1. Stretch the balloon so it will be easier to work with
2. Stick a funnel into the neck of the balloon
3. Slowly fill the balloon with corn starch, flour, or rice. If it clogs, push down with a pencil or pen.
4. Once full enough, pinch out any excess air and tie the neck of the balloon tightly.
5. Decorate your stress ball with permanent marker if you'd like.

Sliding bead bracelets: *Sliding bead bracelets help provide a physical outlet for stress or anxiety.*

Materials needed:

Yarn, Beads, Tape, Scissors

Steps:

1. First cut a length of yarn that is 3 ft long and fold it in half.
2. Tie a knot on the end where the two strings are attached and create a loop
3. Make the loop slightly bigger than a bead, but no smaller. A bead must be able to pass through the loop to fasten the bracelet.
4. Wrap a piece of tape tightly around the ends of the two strings (like a shoestring). This will help beads pass through more easily
5. Now insert one end of the string from left to right through the bead. And then insert the other end of the string from right to left through the same bead.
6. Slide the bead down until it reaches the knot
7. Repeat with other beads
8. Make sure to leave a little space so you can slide the beads back and forth.
9. Tie a bead onto the end so that your bracelet fits you comfortably and put the bead you tied on through the original loop tied to fasten the bracelet.