

Lesson:
**Stress Balloon (adapted
from TKF)**

Length of lesson:
25 Minutes

Materials:

- **Balloons, at least one per participant**
- **“Joleen’s day” story**

Discussion Summary:

Stress is necessary, often helping us escape danger, perform under pressure, and motivating us to do our best. But too much stress, that feeling of being overloaded with too many things to do and not enough time to do them, can cause us to feel angry or agitated, withdrawn or depressed. Stress is both a mental and physical condition, commonly leading to a headache, heart beating fast, tense muscles, stomach ache or indigestion, and sweaty palms. Along with their rapidly changing bodies, minds, and emotions, young people deal with stress due to school, friendships, parents/guardians, siblings, home life, relationships, money, extracurricular activities, and uncertainty about the future. Noting the range of stressors acting upon them, it is important to teach young people how to manage stress in healthy ways. Teaching stress relief skills can help them avoid conflicts with others, self-harming behaviors, and violence.

Discussion Questions:

- **What are some things that stress you out?**
- **How can you handle those stressful situations?**

1. Explain that stress is a normal emotion and is part of being human. Tell participants that we may feel stressed if we are tired, have a test coming up, have a lot of things to do, or if we are having an argument with a friend. Stress can make us feel worried, nervous, angry, sad, or a combination of emotions. Being stressed out can cause us to be unfocused, out of control, or can lead us to make decisions such as giving up, ditching responsibility, or doing something dangerous like taking drugs or acting violent. Tell participants that everyone has different things that make them feel stressed, these are called stressors.

2. Have each participant say one thing that makes them stressed.

3. Explain that many things in life are stressful and that it is OK to be stressed. What matters is how we deal with our stress or anger or frustration.

4. Explain that the balloons represent their hearts and all the pain, hurt, anger, and stress that can be found inside of them. Explain that when we

feel stressed our hearts are filling up like this balloon. Demonstrate by blowing into the balloon a little bit.

5. Each added stressor, or thing that stresses us out, is more air into our balloon. Blow into the balloon again.
6. Ask: as things happen to us that are difficult for us or make us feel bad (blow into the balloon a little more), what is happening to the balloon? (it is getting bigger)
7. Ask: what happens when our balloon is full and we try to add more air? (it pops)
8. Explain that we need to release some stress or anger from our lives so we don't pop or respond in an unhealthy way. Release air from the balloon.
9. Tell students: Listen to the story about Joleen's day. Joleen's day is full of stress; however she has found ways to relieve her stress so she does not "pop." As you listen to the story, blow air into your balloon when Joleen feels stress and release air as Joleen relieves her stress."
10. Hand out a balloon to each student. Read "Joleen's Day."
11. Ask students to discuss: What kinds of things filled Joleen's balloon? What did Joleen do to release air out of her a balloon? What else could Joleen could have done to release air out of her balloon? What do you do to release air out of your balloon?
12. Have students do the balloon activity with their own stress. This can be done one at a time with the whole group, in pairs, or in small groups.
13. Ask students to discuss: What kinds of things did you put inside your balloon? How did it feel to put those in your balloon? How are you affected by the feelings you keep inside? What kinds of things helped you release your balloon? How did it feel to release your balloon? How can you better take care of yourself so you will have less stress?
14. Explain that sometimes our stress is too difficult to manage by ourselves. Ask: "who can we go to that can help us to relieve our stress? (ex: teacher, counselor, parent). Remind students this should be someone they can trust with their feelings and emotions.
15. Ask the students to give their balloon to someone they can trust, like giving their heart to someone, in exchange for that person being there for them when they need them.

Stress balloon: "JOLEEN'S DAY"

Joleen woke up in the morning to her mother yelling at her* to get out of bed. She was very tired and not ready to get up, so she ignored her and stayed in bed. Her mother came into the room and pulled her covers off. She felt very angry*. When Joleen's mother left the room, she sat up and took three slow, deep breaths~. Then she got dressed and headed to the kitchen for breakfast. Her little brother was eating the last of her favorite cereal*. She saw a box of a new kind of cereal she had never tried. She decided to try it and really liked it~. Now she had a new favorite cereal. After breakfast, Joleen finished getting ready for school and started to walk to school. Her friends had already left and she had to walk with the new girl in school that she did not know very well*. Then Joleen began to talk to the girl and she was nice~. Joleen got to school early so she got to play before school~. But then a mean boy came up to Joleen and began to tease her and laugh at her*. Once again, Joleen took three deep breaths~. She then asked the boy to leave her alone, but the boy would not *. So Joleen walked away and found some other kids to play with~. Then the bell rang and school started. In class, Joleen realized she forgot to do her homework*. She had to stay in at recess to finish her work*. Then the teacher gave her a snack for being good and finishing everything~. After school, Joleen's mom was late to pick her up*. Then when they got home she had lots of chores to do before she was allowed to play*. Then her mom was yelling at her because she did not finish her homework from earlier*. She was feeling frustrated so she went outside when she was allowed and went for a walk around her block~. Once she was calmer, she came in and finished her homework. She felt good that she completed it~. Then Joleen had a very good dinner~. After dinner, she got ready for bed and went to sleep, ready for her next day.

*Stressful situations (blow air into the balloon)

~Coping skills used/positive things (let air out of the balloon)