



LESSON 5

Managing Stress at School and in the Workplace

Approximate
time required:

 60 min

LEARNING GOALS

- Increase understanding of how well-being strategies can support future goals.
- Improve understanding of when mental health concerns exceed those typical of transition and it is time to seek support.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Co-develop success criteria with students using the following questions: “How will we know we are achieving our learning goals? What will it look like/ sound like?”

For example:

- I can identify when I need to apply self-care strategies.
- I have a range of self-care tools to draw on in times of stress.

BIG IDEAS

- Different strategies may work at different times, so it’s important to have a few options available.
- When we don’t get a break from stress, it can impact our mental and physical health.
- When that starts to happen, it’s time to seek support.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Appreciate the diversity amongst students, each with different aspirations and goals, influenced by unique identities and lived experiences. Offer validation and support to empower students to explore their options without judgement or limitation. Help students to identify and build on their unique strengths.
- Remember that some students may experience more stress than others. For example, some students face more daily stressors related to historic and current systemic oppression, marginalization, ableism and racism (e.g., microaggressions).
- Recognize that some sources of stress may be modifiable (e.g., learning difficulties, interpersonal conflict) while others may be more difficult to control (e.g., chronic medical condition, impact of poverty). This is when it may be particularly important for others to step in and offer support.
- Be prepared to connect students to additional support, if needed. Refer to the following resources for more information and take time to consider your school and board circle of support and service pathways. Know what to do and who to connect with if a student seems like they might be struggling.
- [One-Call Desk Reference](#) (smho-smso.ca)
- [Talking with Parents and Families about Mental Health](#) (smho-smso.ca)
- [Circle of Support and System Pathways – Flowchart](#) (smho-smso.ca)

MATERIALS/HANDOUTS

[Student Notebook](#)

- 5.1 – Personal Stress Management Plan
- 5.2 – Circle Back
- 5.3 – Wrap Up
- 5.4 – Resources

[PowerPoint Slides](#)

- Strategies for Personal Wellness

ADDITIONAL TEACHER REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

It is important to remember your own self-care!

- [Personal Resiliency Tips for Helpers Who Support Students](#)

Note: The content of this lesson was repurposed from the School Mental Health Ontario resource [MH LIT: Student Mental Health in Action Expansion Pack 2: The Challenges of Change: Navigating the Transition from Secondary School](#).



INTRODUCTION

 5 min

Slide 1 : Introduction

Slide 2 : We are learning...

- » to increase understanding of how well-being strategies can support future goals.
- » improve understanding of when to seek support

MINDS ON

 10 min

Warm up

Slide 3 : Activity

Teacher prompt: “The right amount of stress can be a helpful motivator and can actually fuel our performance, like on tests or in sports. If we are nervous, it means we care, and when we care, we work hard. When we manage our stress, we can perform at our best. Learning helpful habits for managing stress, helps us at school, at work, in sports, and in our relationships with others.”

Set a timer for 2 minutes then ask student to provide as many stress management strategies as they can.

Optional: You can use a *word cloud* option on *Mentimeter* or ask student to add their ideas on *Jamboard*.

Slide 4: Debrief

Teacher prompt: “How did you find having a limited time available to provide your answers?”

- » How did it make you feel?
 - Motivated?
 - Unmotivated?
 - Nothing in particular?
- » Did you have the impression that you would have had more ideas to share or that you weren't able to access all of your ideas because of the time constraints?
- » Other impressions?”

NOTE: This can be done as a class discuss, or as an anonymous online survey through *Mentimeter*, *Jamboard* or another platform.

Teacher prompt: “We all experience stress and will react differently to it. How we react can be influenced by different variables, such as dealing with many stressors at once, having difficulty managing emotions or the impression that you aren't able to face the situations that are causing the



stress.

The good news? It's possible to reduce and manage stress through simple daily strategies."

ACTION TASK (Consider self, others, careers)

 40 min

How can we manage stress?

Slide 5 : How can we manage stress?

Teacher prompt: "We can't always choose whether we experience stress, but we can choose how we get ready for it. Instead of reacting to it, we can be intentional about how we respond when it appears. That's what we're going to learn more about today. I would also encourage you to think about the people at school who can help you plan for your future, such as guidance staff. Reach out to them early and often! Reach out to other people in your life who are there to help, too, such as your parents/caregivers, mentors, Elders, coaches, and other trusted adults."

Slide 6 : Steps

Teacher prompt: "How can we get ready for and manage stress, so it works for us and helps us achieve our goals, instead of working against us? Here are some strategies that can help."

Share these three steps that students can use:

- » Step 1: anticipate and get ready for stress
- » Step 2: manage stress early when it appears
- » Step 3: seek support when you need it

Slide 7 : Notebook Personal Stress Management Plan

Teacher prompt: "Throughout our discussion, record your ideas and thoughts in your Personal Stress Management Plan. You may wish to reflect on moments when you have experienced stress in the past, how you managed it, and who and what supported you. You can also add new ideas you discover in this lesson. This will help you develop a personal list of strategies you can take away to use when you need it."

Slide 8 : Get Ready!

Teacher prompt: "What helps you be at your best?"

Remember: These stress management strategies are transferable to other contexts."

You can choose to read these questions to the class and ask students to offer their suggestions, then follow up with a discussion using the points offered in the next slide.

You can also offer some time when students can complete their plan individually.



Slide 9 : A few ideas

Educator note: A discussion guide about stress is available in Appendix A.

- » challenge your thinking
- » build healthy habits
- » know your supports

Slide 10 : Manage stress

You can choose to read these questions to the class and ask students to offer their suggestions, then follow up with a discussion using the points offered in the next slide.

You can also offer some time when students can complete their plan individually.

Slide 11 : A few ideas

Educator note: A discussion guide about stress is available in Appendix A.

- » identify and rely on your strengths
- » stay connected to others
- » be kind to yourself

Slide 12 : Quick strategy – square breathing

Teacher prompt: “Guided breathing exercises are an effective and useful tool to help us check-in with ourselves and manage our emotions. These types of interventions can help decrease how our body physically reacts to stress, and helps us calm our mind.

This breathing technique is a quick and easy strategy to use before a test, when starting a big assignment, before a free throw, or any time you feel somewhat anxious.”

Slide 13 : Quick strategy – secret calming

Teacher prompt:

“Find a word, saying or phrase that you can use when you need it.”

“You can also add this to your “square breathing” by saying your words during the 4 second pause.”

Slide 14 : Quick strategy - time management

Teacher prompt: “At times we can feel overwhelmed by many commitments and stressors. Sometimes one task feels so large that we begin to feel stressed about it.

When people manage their time effectively, it can reduce their stress by knowing what’s to be expected and by minimizing the need to rush, cram, or compromise on the quality of their work.

Here’s a trick! Breakdown difficult tasks into steps, this helps relieve stress.

Practice using time management skills by creating checklists and adding the items to your calendar. You can use your electronic devices or your day planner to organize your time and activities”.



Slide 15 : Seek support

Educator note: A discussion guide about stress is available in Appendix A.

- » How would you know what you are feeling was more than the usual stress?
- » How would you know it was time to reach out for support?
- » How could you normalize reaching out for support?

You can choose to read these questions to the class and ask students to offer their suggestions, then follow up with a discussion using the points offered in **appendix A**.

You can also offer some time when students can complete their plan individually.

Slide 16 : Transferable knowledge!

You can provide a reminder that the feedback strategies learned in lesson 2 can be used as a help-seeking approach.

Slide 17 : Resources

Remind students that if they are feeling unwell (e.g., overwhelmed, anxious, sad), they can talk to a teacher or another trusted adult. There are people who work in our school, and in the community, who are there to help you find ways to feel better.

CONSOLIDATION**Slide 18 : Notebook circle back**

Teacher prompt: “As there is no single way to relax and refresh, remember that you already have a variety of personal and cultural practices. However, it is important to have a few extra strategies available, as different situations may require different techniques.

Take a few moments and revisit your lesson 1 “Message of Hope”. In light of everything you’ve learned throughout the S4L unit, is there anything you would like to add or modify from your original message?”

WRAP UP**Slide 19 : Wrap up**

Teacher prompt: “As this is the last lesson in the S4L unit, I’d like you to take a moment to reflect on the following consolidation question. If you wish, you can your thoughts to your notebook.

In the changing world of work, as responsibilities for workers’ health and safety shift, what can you do to look after your own physical, mental, and emotional health in the workplace?”



Appendix A

Transition Stress Discussion Guide

STEP	PROMPTS	DISCUSSION POINTS
Get Ready	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What helps you be at your best, so you are better able to manage challenges? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenge your thinking (remember lesson 4): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how you view and interpret stress. Anticipate and plan for stress that you might have at school or at work. Try to see it as a natural reaction that can be helpful. Re-evaluate and reframe your ideas of what you find stressful at school or at work. Build healthy habits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop healthy habits now that will support you (e.g., eating, sleeping, exercise, wellness strategies). Prioritize what you can. Know your boundaries and give yourself permission to say “no” when you need to. Try to set reasonable expectations for yourself. Know your supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a circle of social support. Strive for balanced relationships rather than those that are one-sided. Know the resources available to you (even before you might need them).



STEP	PROMPTS	DISCUSSION POINTS
Manage Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you tell you are starting to get stressed so you can begin using strategies early? • What helps you manage stress when it appears? • How have you managed stress in the past? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and rely on your strengths. Try to focus on them when managing stress rather than focusing on weaknesses. • While it can be tempting to use unhealthy coping strategies when we are stressed, they don't help in the long run. • Make sure you have some strategies available that aren't place-based and can be practised anywhere (e.g., breathing, journaling, music). • Make time for your strategies regularly. • Use routine. Try to keep some familiar routines in place while you create new ones. Creating new routines can take time and having something predictable around us while this happens can be comforting. • Stay connected to others. We sometimes retreat when we are stressed, but it can help to share our stress with others. Identify who the most important people in your life are and find ways to stay connected. At the same time, be proactive about adding new people to your support network. Although it's important to stay connected, it's okay to stay away from people who create a stressful environment for you, when you can. • Focus on the things you can control. This will help balance out the new, more unknown things that come along with change. • Give yourself a break when you need one, including a break from social media. When we use it, we tend to compare the low points of our own lives to the high points of everyone else's, which doesn't help our stress level. • Be kind to yourself and remind yourself it takes time to get used to new things. You are in unknown territory and so you won't have all the answers. And that's okay! Give yourself permission to go slowly and take the time you need to get used to the changes occurring. Remind yourself it's a time of learning, growth, and personal development. The way you talk to yourself about change can influence how you feel about it.



STEP	PROMPTS	DISCUSSION POINTS
Seek Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you know what you are feeling was more than the usual stress? • How would you know it was time to reach out for support? • How could you normalize reaching out for support? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While stress is part of everyday life and it can be healthy, we aren't meant to experience it all the time. We are meant to deal with it and then have a chance to recover. When we experience stress that lasts a long time, it can lead to mental and physical health problems, or it can make existing mental or physical health problems worse. • If you feel stressed all the time, you have felt that way for a long time (two weeks or more), and it is getting in the way of what you need to do and your enjoyment of your life, it is probably time to reach out for support. • You can use the same strategies to seek feedback provided in lesson 2 to reach out. • Don't wait for a crisis to seek support. Know your potential resources and use them if you need to. • Accessing support doesn't mean you don't belong at school or at the job you are in, you won't be successful, you will have to go home, or you have let anyone down including yourself! It's a healthy way to help yourself be successful. • Remind yourself how good it can feel to help others. Many people will welcome the opportunity to help you when they can.

