

PURPOSE

To expand students' knowledge of the importance of effectively dealing with stress for the benefit of their health and for the benefit of those around them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

1. Understand what stress is.
2. Understand the difference between internal and external stressors and healthy and unhealthy ways of managing stress.
3. Understand that healthy responses to stress improve our health and build resilience.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- **Lesson 8 teenMEN** powerpoint
- **Entry Ticket Activity** (preparation needed)
- **Worksheet: When I feel stressed**
- **Case Study: Alex + Teacher's Answer Key**

VOCABULARY

- **Hormones:** Chemical signals that travel in the bloodstream, directing the activity of every system in the body.
- **Hormonal feedback:** When a hormone that has been produced in the body feeds back to the brain to either increase or decrease its own production.
- **Testosterone:** A hormone that stimulates the development of male characteristics.
- **Stress:** The body's response to physical, mental, or emotional pressure.
 - **Internal stressor:** Thoughts or behaviors that create stress.
 - **External stressor:** Stressors that come from external factors that you cannot control.

- **Conflict resolution:** the process that two or more parties use to find a peaceful solution to their dispute.
- **Scripts:** Things that we have practiced saying so that they come to mind easily when needed.

PREPARATION

- ☐ Print the **Entry Ticket Activity** and cut out the tickets. Give two or three tickets for each student.
- ☐ Print the **Worksheet: When I Feel Stressed** for each student.
- ☐ Print the **Case Study: Alex** as well as the **Answer Key**.

PROCEDURE

Note: If students did not finish presenting their ads in the previous class, this time can be used for their presentations and the Entry Ticket Activity can be skipped.

Step 1 (5 minutes): Entry Ticket Activity: True or False Cards

*Have students read their questions aloud and answer whether the statement is True or False. Review answers together, using the **Answer Key** provided in the materials.*

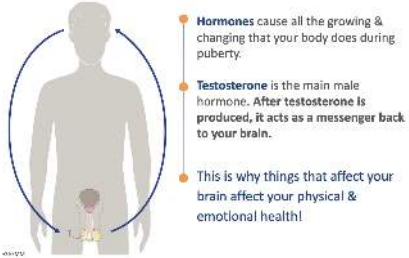


Step 2 (5 minutes): Stress & Hormones

Do you remember what controls the activity of every system in the body?

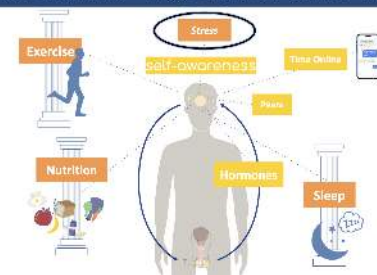
Yes, hormones! **Hormones** are directed by your brain and, as we have learned, hormones send **feedback** to the brain to make it want to act in certain ways.

The Brain & Health Habits



Hormones are affected by what you eat, how much sleep you get, whether you exercise, etc. In the previous class, we learned that self-awareness means recognizing how all of these things: nutrition, exercise, sleep (and lack of), peers and time online all play a big role in our emotional and physical health. The other thing that impacts hormones? *Click on the slide to circle the answer. Stress.*

Self-awareness: things that effect your hormones



Stress is the body's response to physical, mental, or emotional pressure. When our body is under stress, it can start to react in a variety of ways.

Self-awareness and Stress

VOCABULARY

stress | stres |

Noun

The body's response to



It's important to know that stress is something that happens to *everyone* and at all stages of life. Also, not all stress is bad! If there's a test coming up and we feel stressed about it, that can motivate us to study for the test. However, if we get too overwhelmed by our stress, we might put off studying for the test and then stay up way too late studying only the night before, which negatively impacts our sleep and performance on the test the next day. In this scenario, we made our stress worse, with *avoidance*. So, it's not necessarily stress that is the problem: it's what we do *when we are feeling stressed*.

Step 3 (5 minutes): Internal and External Stressors

How can we manage stress? The first thing to do is *recognize* the type of stress.

Self Awareness and Stress

There are two kinds of **Stress**.

1. INTERNAL STRESSORS

Thoughts or behaviors that create stress.

When our mindset or expectations is "all or nothing," this can cause us stress.

I'm a failure, because I'm not good at this. I'll never be good at ANYTHING!



Internal stressors are thoughts or behaviors that create stress. For example, when our mindset or expectation is “all or nothing,” this can cause us stress. If we think we either have to be *perfect* at public speaking or else we’re *a failure* at public speaking, we are going to feel stressed when the teacher announces that everyone has to give a presentation.

Self Awareness and Stress

There are two kinds of **Stress**.

2. EXTERNAL STRESSORS

Stress that comes from external factors you can't control.

When major life events happen like the death of a grandparent or a parent loses their job, this can cause us stress.



External stressors are stressors that we have little or no control over. These can include major life events, like the death of a grandparent or a parent losing their job. These kinds of stressors come from outside of ourselves, which is why they are called external. We can’t control external stressors; but we CAN choose how we respond.

Step 4 (10 minutes): Negative and Positive Ways of Dealing with Stress + Worksheet

There are negative and positive ways to respond to stress.

Self-Awareness and Stress

NEGATIVE responses to **Stress** avoid challenges and seek distraction

EXAMPLES

1. Criticizing yourself (negative self-talk)
2. Becoming aggressive or violent (yelling or name-calling or throwing something)
3. Eating too much or too little
4. Smoking
5. Drinking alcohol
6. Avoiding the family members or friends who actually want what's best for you



Negative coping responses to stress seek temporary distraction but actually make the stress and the situation worse. For example, both alcohol and smoking **increase stress hormones** in the body. So if you think they take the edge off - think again as, in reality, once the drugs wear off, your stress levels will be even higher than they were before. If you are going through a stressful time, talk to a trusted family member or adult.

Self-Awareness and Stress

NEGATIVE —

Self-Talk

POSITIVE ✓

I failed and embarrassed myself.

I'm proud of myself. It takes courage to try to be someone and I'm enjoying.

In a future so I will just pretend I don't care.

I am capable of changing my mind and I want to get healthier for me.

I've never done this before so I don't want to try and fail.

I've never done this before so this is an opportunity to challenge myself.



Negative self-talk can come easily when we're feeling down. However, it doesn't actually help. If a friend tried out for a team and didn't make it, you wouldn't say to them: "It just shows that you shouldn't have even tried." You'd say, "Yeah, but I heard the tryouts were really hard this year! I'll practice with you and then you should try out next year." Try to practice talking to yourself like you would talk to a friend.

Positive coping responses to stress build long-term resiliency.

Self-Awareness and Stress

POSITIVE responses to **Stress** build long-term resiliency

EXAMPLES

1. Exercising or getting outdoors to enjoy nature
2. Getting enough sleep
3. Eating healthy foods
4. Spending time with family members and friends who want what's best for you
5. Playing music
6. Volunteering
7. Making and following through with an action plan



The situation may be difficult, but by practicing healthy ways of dealing with stress, you are actually teaching your brain and your body how to stay calm despite the storm; practicing habits of resiliency will support your mental and physical health for your whole life. The top three positive ways to deal with stress are the three pillars of health! Exercise, nutrition and adequate sleep. Exercising, eating regularly and getting 8-10 hours of sleep helps keep our body more resilient to stress. Also, listening to or playing music, making something (art, learning a hobby) and being in nature are all activities that produce endorphins in the brain, which are mood-lifting and **stress-reducing hormones**.

We CAN help our body deal with stress.

- Look out for that negative self-talk and try to replace it with more positive statements. This helps us work on our mindset and those internal stressors.
- Make an action plan/to-do list. Whether it's chores at home or a big assignment coming up at school, break the project down into small steps. Write each step down on a piece of paper. Do one thing and then cross it off your list. This will calm your brain and give you the confidence that you can do it, one step at a time.

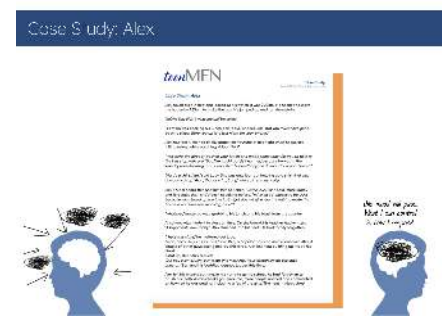
Remember: NOBODY gets there alone. EVERYBODY needs support, encouragement and help. Talk to a trusted family member about what you're thinking or feeling. Stress is a normal part of life. We are all going to have times in our lives where we are very stressed. It's important to remember when we are going through a difficult time that **it won't last forever**.



Hand out the **Worksheet: When I Feel Stressed** to each student. Give students time to write down their responses and then ask students if they'd like to share their responses.

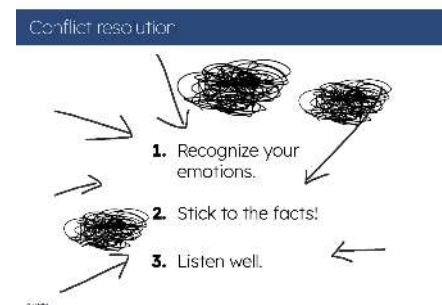
Step 5 (10 minutes): Case Study + Conflict Resolution

Let's read a Case Study to look at how stress can lead to conflict if we don't manage our stress in a healthy way.



Read the **Case Study: Alex** with students. Discuss the questions at the end of the text, using the **Teacher's Answer Key** provided in the lesson materials.

Alex didn't take any small steps to manage his stress in a healthy way. This led to conflicts at home and escalating at school. Whether it's with parents, siblings, teachers or even friends, it's a sign of maturity to be able to resolve conflicts positively.



1. **Recognize your emotions.** Try to name how you are feeling: are you sad, angry, disappointed, fearful or anxious? Naming your emotion is a better option than just ignoring it or saying *it doesn't matter*. Feel. Think. Act. When you can identify your emotions, you can communicate your needs without threatening or punishing others.

2. **Stick to the facts!** Don't bring up old problems that are not relevant to what is going on right now. Remain calm and be respectful when addressing the person with whom

you are in conflict. Be specific about what is bothering you or about what you need.

3. **Listen well.** Ask questions to the other person if you need to clarify what they are saying. Try to use your power of imagination to understand things from their view.

Scripts are things that we can practice saying, so that they come to mind easily in moments of conflict.

Scripts for conflicts with peers

You see two guys at school starting to shout and swear at each other, but they haven't started physically fighting yet.

“

Hey, guys, don't do this right now. Let's handle this later.

You see a couple of guys at school teasing a classmate, Evan, who doesn't have as many friends and struggles socially.

“

Hey, Evan. Can you help me? Mr. X asked me to carry these boxes to the cafeteria.

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*You see two guys at school starting to shout and swear at each other, but they haven't started physically fighting yet. **Possible script: “Hey guys, don't do this right now. Let's handle this later.”*** Sometimes delaying a conflict is enough for everyone to cool down and talk things through when everyone is feeling less emotional and upset.

*You see a couple of guys at school teasing another guy, Evan, who doesn't have as many friends and struggles socially. **Possible script: “Hey Evan. Can you help me? Mr. X asked me to carry these boxes over to the cafeteria.”*** This can be a mature way to step up and get Evan out of the situation, without escalating things for Evan or yourself.

Script for conflict with parents

You find yourself getting in an argument with a parent about the same thing, again.

“

Mom, could I talk to you about how many minutes I'm allowed on screens every day? I feel like we always fight about it.

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*You find yourself getting into an argument with a parent about the same thing, again. **Possible script: “Mom, could I talk to you about how many minutes I'm allowed on screens every day? I feel like we always fight about it.”*** You'll probably be surprised at

how impressed a parent will be, if you maturely try to communicate and problem-solve this issue, together.

CONCLUSION - Summary of teenMEN & teenFEMM

Review

- Our emotions are affected by our hormones.
- Stress + conflict are a normal part of life.
- We can learn skills to make us better at conflict resolution.
- It is the way that we choose to manage stress and deal with conflict that makes us mature individuals.

Stress and conflict is a normal part of life. It is the way that we choose to manage stress and deal with conflict that makes us mature individuals.

The girls in your grade have completed their Grade 8 teenFEMM course as you have been working through this course. Although their changes are different from yours, their hormones are also playing a major role in their body and brain development during puberty. It is important to remember that everyone goes through puberty and just as you may have difficult days, the mature and thoughtful thing to do is recognize that your peers are also learning to navigate physical and emotional changes. With a little bit of focus on making good choices to support your bodies and minds through this process, you will all grow into amazing young leaders in your family, school and community!

REFERENCES

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- Rubenstein, J.L. & Feldman, S.S. (1993). Conflict-resolution behavior in adolescent boys: Antecedents and adaptational correlates, *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 3(1), 41-66, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327795jra0301_3



Stress and Healthy Conflict Resolution

teenMEN – Grade 8 | Lesson 8