

Performance Virtues & Stress

Perseverance
Courage

Self-discipline



Determination

Confidence

Activity 1



Aim(s)

- To look at the positive benefits of stress.
- To practise finding the positive aspects of a stressful situation.



Resources

- Pen and paper.



Delivery Guide

This activity will work better if you are able to complete the Introduction to Stress activities.

Ask students to think of two examples of situations that cause them stress.

Look at each of these examples using the following:

1. What is happening?
2. What is my response to what is happening?
3. Who will benefit from this situation and my response? How?
4. What are the potential harms?
5. What are the potential benefits?

Ask the young people if it helps to identify the potential benefits of a stressful situation? Does it help them to see it differently?

Things that might come up include:

- Yes, but it's still a stressful situation.
- The benefits don't help.
- Sometimes there aren't any benefits if the situation is so hard.

Discuss the notion that there are times when we recognise that there are some positives to the stressful situation we are in, but we still feel the emotional and physical stress: anger, fear, anxiety, sadness and so on. There may also be times when we are in a stressful and difficult situation where there aren't any benefits and we need to manage our stress.

Points to highlight

- Sometimes looking at the benefits of a stressful situation can be helpful; it can mean you can see how you are getting something from the situation.
- It is easier to identify positive things in some situations, than others.

Activity 2

Feel the fear and do it anyway.

Aim(s)

- To look at resilience and strategies for overcoming stress.

Resources

- *Virtues Information Sheet.* **OPTIONAL**
- Internet connection to watch videos.
- *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* Power Point.

Delivery Guide

Part I

Watch the video of the interview with Captain Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger, who managed to land a plane safely in the Hudson River after birds had hit the engine and he lost 'power' in both engines. www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZ5HnyEQg7M (available 8/16)

What do you notice about how he reacted? Things to highlight include:

- He stayed very calm.
- He was prepared – pilots are trained and they practise to be able to manage these things.
- Even in a high pressure situation, he took time to assess the situation (self-discipline).
- He showed courage.
- He had confidence in his own abilities.
- He kept trying different options (perseverance).
- He was resourceful; he decided to land the plane in the river.

While the young people are identifying these, write down anything that relates to or indicates a 'performance virtue'.

Performance virtues are those virtues that enable us to achieve our goals. They are virtues such as:

- Perseverance
- Confidence
- Resilience
- Optimism
- Grit
- Motivation
- Ambition
- Self-discipline
- Determination
- Courage

They are not necessarily 'moral' virtues because they can be used for negative ends – for instance, you can have a very determined bank robber or murderer. However, without the performance virtues we wouldn't be able to achieve anything for a good life.

For more explanation about different types of virtues see the Jubilee Centre's 'A Framework for Character Education in Schools' (www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/publications).

Part II

Introduce the concept of 'performance virtues', such as the ones that Captain Chelsey Sullenberger used (as above). These are the character strengths we use to deal with stress and overcome problems.

Ask students to think about the strategies they use to cope with stressful and challenging situations. These could be:

- Taking a deep breath
- Meeting the challenge
- Removing yourself from the situation
- Talking to someone

Share them and create a list. See if they can pick out the virtues used in them.

Ask students to evaluate which of these collated strategies would be most useful for them. Ask students to identify at least one new method of managing stress that they have encountered this lesson that they will attempt to use to manage stress in the future.

Points to highlight

- Performance virtues are the character strengths we use to overcome problems and to achieve our goals.
- The physical response to stress can get in the way or can be used to achieve our goals.