

Introduction To Stress

Perseverance

Resilience



Activity 1



Aim(s)

- To introduce the concept of stress.
- To explore how stress might be experienced.



Resources

- Pens and paper. **OPTIONAL**
- *Stress* Power Point. **OPTIONAL**
- Craft/art materials as required.



Delivery Guide



You can do this activity in small groups, pairs or as individuals.



Facilitators can take part in this by sharing their own triggers for and experiences of stress.

If you feel the young people need a prompt about stress, you could start the session by showing the following short video:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnpQrMqDoqE (available 8/16)

Start by asking the young people to think about and write down or brainstorm the things/people/situations that cause them stress in their lives. What causes them the most stress?

Get them to think about how they feel when they get stressed. What happens to their body? What happens to their mind? What happens to their behaviour?

Things that come up might be:

- Body gets tense
- Headache
- Gritted teeth
- Mind is racing
- Don't think about what I'm doing
- I want to do crazy things
- Want to hurt someone
- Get irritated and angry

- Feel sick
- Sweat
- Get tired and sleep all the time
- Want to be on my own

Share the ideas with the whole group. It can be interesting to see the similarities and differences of how stress affects different people.

Then, based on the things people have shared, ask students to come up with a creative representation (a picture, a sculpture, a video, some music or a piece of creative writing, or anything else they want to do) to represent the ways in which they experience stress. There is some inspiration in the *Stress* Power Point.

Points to highlight

- Everyone experiences stress differently.
- Stress can be felt in the body and the mind – it can be a physical thing.

Activity 2



Aim(s)

- To look at how stress can be a positive force.



Resources

- Flipchart paper.
- Post-it notes and pens.



Delivery Guide

Ask the young people whether they think stress is good or bad? Discuss this as a group. If they struggle to come up with how stress can be positive, it can be useful to highlight athletes or sports players – do they think they feel stress? How do they channel that into achieving success?

There are some good resources on stress for you or the young people:

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronic_stress
- psychcentral.com/lib/the-physical-effects-of-long-term-stress/000935
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-t1Z5-oPtU and www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuyPuH9ojCE – videos about stress and the effect it has on your body

If you haven't already shown the short video from Activity 1, this would be useful here.

After you've talked about it, challenge the young people to come up with as many arguments as possible about both the positive and negative roles that 'stress' can play in our lives, e.g. on the positive side, it can focus our attention and force us to 'get things done'; on the negative, it can overwhelm us and make us ill. Write these up on two different pieces of flipchart paper.

How easy did they find it to come up with reasons for stress being a good thing? What do the students notice about the ease/difficulty of doing this? What does this tell us about our cultural understanding of stress?

Could having some stress in our lives be useful? Giving us the experience of being able to manage it? What would someone's life be like if they had no stress at all?

Has their understanding of stress changed since the beginning of this session?

Points to highlight

- Stress is not always a bad thing, even if we see it as such in society.
- Some stress can motivate us to do things, to change things, to persevere and improve.



Extension Activities

There is a list of the most stressful activities called the Holmes and Rahe stress scale. It was created by psychiatrists who looked at all the stressful experiences their patients had and whether there was a connection to illness. More information, including the list, can be found here: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holmes_and_Rahe_stress_scale (available 8/16).

This list is based on the lives of adults and does not include young people. Ask the participants if they think a list focussed on young people would be different. Challenge them to create a new list for young people, taking into account the things that they and their peer group find stressful. There may be some similarities between the lists.

To do this, they could just talk to others and find out the most stressful events in their lives. However, if you want to extend the activity, they could survey their peers, ask them to come up with different things that cause them stress, as well as rating them all.

