



SURVIVAL



GUIDE



TO STRESS



LESSON PLAN

Survival Guide to Stress Lesson Plan

TOPIC

This program explores the stress that many college students will experience. It includes coping with stress, signs of unhealthy stress, and resources for students who are stressed.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to reflect on sources of stress in college.
2. Students will be able to learn three stress relief exercises.
3. Students will be able to identify campus resources that can help in managing stress.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Included in the Toolkit

For students

- *Survival Guide to Stress* booklets
- Markers
- What's on Your Plate worksheets
- What's on Your Plate example
- Passion Planner worksheets

Not included

- White board or flip chart
- Insight Timer mobile app: Insight Timer can be used to play a guided imagery exercise instead of having the instructor walk the students through the guided imagery exercise on page 17 of the *Survival Guide to Stress* booklet. Download the free app and choose a guided imagery exercise to play before beginning the program.

Throughout the lesson plan, talking points are italicized in orange.

Survival Guide to Stress Lesson Plan

ICEBREAKER

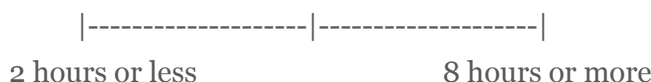
- Break students into pairs, pairing them with someone you do not see them regularly speaking to.
- Inform them that you're all going to take a few minutes to get to know each other.
- Ask them to share with each other things like their name, hometown and state, major, and something fun like their favorite band, cereal, animal, movie, etc.
- You can tie this in to stress by discussing how it can be hard, overwhelming, intimidating, and awkward meeting new people—you can have them talk about their experience so far meeting new people and how they have been able to deal with that stress.

PART ONE

Use a scale with each question. Identify one side of the room representing one end of the scale and the other side the opposite end of the scale. Have students move around the room with each question to keep them engaged. Follow up questions by sharing two or three facts related to the questions. (You can choose to ask one or two questions per section—pick your favorites!)

1. How many hours of sleep do you get a night?

Scale: Two hours or less on one side of the room, 8+ hours on the other



Is this is more or less than high school?

What has caused you to sleep less or enabled you to get more sleep?

What is the impact of less sleep on stress?

Sleep and Stress Facts

- Stress can cause hyperarousal (heightened physiological and psychological stress), which in turn can cause insomnia. Hyperarousal symptoms can also include anxiety, and anxiety can make it hard to fall asleep and stay asleep (National Sleep Foundation, n.d.).
- Stress can disrupt the quality of sleep (American Psychological Association, 2013).
- Adults who sleep less than eight hours a night are more likely to report more symptoms of stress such as feeling irritable and feeling overwhelmed (American Psychological Association, 2013).
- 25 percent of adults reported feeling no motivation to take care of their responsibilities because they didn't get enough sleep (American Psychological Association, 2013).

Survival Guide to Stress Lesson Plan

- Adults with high stress levels are more likely to say they feel the effects of not getting enough sleep, suggesting that the more stressed you are, the more important it is to try to get enough sleep (American Psychological Association, 2013).

2. How much caffeine do you drink?

Scale: No caffeine on one side of the room, 10+ caffeinated beverages a day on the other

|-----|-----|
No caffeine 10+ caffeinated beverages a day

Ask each person how much caffeine they drink.

Has it increased since coming to UT?

What is the impact of too much caffeine on stress?

Caffeine and Stress Facts

- Caffeine inhibits the brain's ability to prepare the body for sleep, meaning too much caffeine can impact sleep. Too much caffeine (500–600 mg a day) can cause insomnia and restlessness. This can create a cycle where you use caffeine to stay awake, but it makes it difficult to fall asleep and get an adequate amount of sleep (Mayo Clinic, 2014).
- Caffeine has been found to increase the level of perceived stress and the level of stress hormones, and elevates blood pressure in people who experience higher levels of stress during the day—meaning if your day is typically stressful, caffeine can make you feel the effects of that stress more (Duke Medicine, 2004).
- Caffeine raises dopamine and cortisol levels, but when these drop it can cause people to experience a low state, fatigue, or even mild to moderate depression.

3. Have you become involved in something outside of attending classes?

Scale: Have not gotten involved on one side of the room, very involved on the other

|-----|-----|
Not involved Very involved

Ask what they have gotten involved in.

What are some obstacles that make it hard to get involved?

Survival Guide to Stress Lesson Plan

How can being involved help with stress?

Benefits of Being Involved

- Research shows that people who get involved perform better, have smoother transitions from high school to college, have a higher GPA, and are more likely to stay in college and graduate on time. Involvement also helps you make new friends and meet people. Being involved encourages and advances your development on all levels: intellectual, cultural, spiritual, and social.
- Involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience (Astin, 1984).

3. Do you procrastinate?

Scale: Never procrastinate on one side of the room, always procrastinates on the other

|-----|-----|
Never Always

Is this new, or did you procrastinate in high school?

Has your procrastination increased since starting at UT?

How does procrastination impact your stress? Does it cause more?

How might it affect you as the semester continues and the work and deadlines increase?

4. Have you met with any faculty members one-on-one?

Scale: Met at least one faculty member on one side of the room, met none on the other

|-----|-----|
Met at least one Met none

How many faculty members have you met?

What led you to want to meet faculty?

In what ways is it helpful to reach out to faculty?

What could be some things that make it hard to reach out? (Awkward, don't know what to say, intimidating, etc.)

What are some benefits to meeting faculty?

Survival Guide to Stress Lesson Plan

Benefits to Meeting with Faculty

- First-year seminars, writing-intensive courses, student-faculty research, internships, and study abroad are some high-impact activities for student success, with many of the same benefits as student involvement. Meeting with professors can help make these high-impact activities more successful (Kuh, 2009).

PART TWO

Have the students sit back down and move into the time management activity and discussion.

Transition

Some of the behaviors we discussed—lack of sleep, caffeine use, procrastination—are the result of the commitments we all have. These commitments can be sources of stress, so how can we manage them? Before we get to that, we'll take a moment to think about all the things we have to do.

Activity 1: What's on Your Plate

1. Pass out What's on Your Plate worksheets and set markers on the table.
2. Instruct students to think about all the things they have to do and all the things they are involved in. They can use the back of their worksheet to list these things.
3. On the front of the worksheet, students can draw the commitments they have, with each one taking up the amount of space on the plate in relation to how much time they feel it takes up in their lives. (For example, if working out takes up 15 minutes a day, they can draw it as a small circle.) Students can be creative—they can do it as a pie chart or however they would like!
4. Have students pair up and share their completed worksheets. Ask if students would like to share their partner's worksheet.

Transition

So we all have a lot on our plates (pun intended) and managing everything we have to do can help reduce stresses related to these things. One way to do this is by using a planner or calendar to keep track of classes, activities we're involved in, jobs, etc. It can also help us plan the amount of time needed for each of these.

Activity 2: Planner Worksheet Exercise

Pass out Planner worksheets. Explain to students that this is based on a page from a Passion Planner from PassionPlanner.com. Instruct them to use their What's On Your Plate worksheet to fill

Survival Guide to Stress Lesson Plan

in the planner sheet.

Discussion: How do you obtain success when stressed?

How did it feel to fill in your plate?

How does it feel to see what was on your plate spaced out through the week?

Passion Planners are just one way to organize your commitments and activities. There are other journals or journaling methods to choose from if this works for you. For those of you that use planners, are there some tips you can share with us?

If students are interested in purchasing a Passion Planner the URL is passionplanner.com.

PART THREE

Move into the stress booklet lesson plan.

Transition

We've touched on sources of stress and one way to help manage stress. These booklets explore stress further and include other activities that might be helpful for you.

Have students turn to **page 4** and review some sources of stress.

Activity 3: Timeline Activity

Refer to page 5 of the guide and ask students to identify where they fall on the timeline. Ask them to answer the questions on page 6 and encourage some students to share their responses.

We've talked about planners, but are there other ways you currently managing your stress? How is this working for you?

Review healthy ways of dealing with stress on page seven with the class.

Activity 2: Stop and Breathe

Refer to page 11 and walk students through the Stop and Breathe exercise—practice for a minimum of three rounds. At the end of the exercise, discuss:

How do you feel?

What is different, if anything?

Remind them that this is a quick tool they can use to reduce stress.

Discussion 1: Academic Success and Goals

What is your definition of academic success?

Survival Guide to Stress Lesson Plan

What challenges do you see existing in college that you didn't have in high school?

Note that in order to achieve your definition of academic success, some sort of goal setting might be involved.

What are some of your academic goals?

What makes it hard to come up with goals? What gets in your way?

Discussion 2: Symptoms of stress and how to manage stress

Be sure to make note that there is good stress and bad stress. *Good stress is what allows us to work hard, meet deadlines, and drives us to reach our full potential. It's when stress is long-term that it can lead to some unpleasant symptoms.*

Have students look at page 12.

Which symptoms are most surprising to you?

So how do we manage stress so that it doesn't lead to these symptoms?

Have students look at page 15.

What are some of your favorite ways to manage stress other than those listed on the page?

Activity Three: Guided Imagery

1. Direct students to page 17 for the Guided Imagery activity. You can choose to walk students through this exercise yourself or use Insight Timer to play a guided meditation.

Transition for doing it yourself: *Guided imagery is one way to manage stress. There are actually apps for guided imagery and guided meditation so you can do these almost whenever you need to. We'll try a guided imagery exercise together.*

Transition for using the app: *Guided imagery is one way to manage stress. There are actually apps for guided imagery and guided meditation. One is called Insight Timer. We'll play a guided imagery exercise and try it together.*

2. Facilitate or play guided meditation for students, having them do it.

Survival Guide to Stress Lesson Plan

Activity Four: Working through Your Stress

1. Walk through the text on page 19 with students and have them complete the three questions.
2. Invite students to share their answers with the group.

CONCLUSION

Refer to the resources on pages 20-21 of the *Survival Guide*. Highlight 974-HELP and the “Feel Better Fast” workshop offered by the Student Counseling Center, which is a free program for any student who would like to drop in. Students can call the center at 865-974-2196 for specific days and times.

Thank students for their participation.