

Finding Ways to Manage Stress

Lesson Objective:

Students will explore physical and mental techniques to manage stress, reflect on what works best for them, and create a personal stress management plan.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Chapter 22: Finding Ways to Manage Stress
- Paper and pencils
- Stress Management Poster
- Personal Stress Management Worksheet
- Home Connection Letter

Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Greeting Outline:

- Welcome the children and have them sit in a circle (if applicable)
- Briefly discuss the concept of stress and how to manage it.

Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script

Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:

- "Today, we're going to explore different ways to manage stress. Stress is something we all feel, especially when we have a lot to do. The good news is that there are ways we can manage it so it doesn't take over. We'll read about how Ollie and his friends learned to handle stress, and then we'll try out some strategies together."

Discussion Starter

- "What are some things that make you feel stressed? How do you usually handle stress?"

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 22 aloud.
- Ask questions during key parts of the story.

Story Time Teacher Script:

Prepare the Children for the Story:

- “Now let’s read a chapter from *The Star Squad: Navigating Fifth Grade Adventures* where the squad learns new techniques to manage stress.”

(Read the chapter aloud, pausing at key moments to ask questions and engage the children.)

Read the Chapter with Emphasis on Key Moments.

While reading, pause during key moments.

Ask Questions:

- Why are Ollie and his friends feeling stressed?
- What does Maya say about how stress affects the brain?
- Why does Buzz think exercise is a good way to relieve stress?
- How does Harriet describe using deep breathing before bed?
- What is progressive muscle relaxation, and how does it help friends?
- What mental techniques does Maya suggest?
- How does Harriet use positive visualization to calm down?
- Why does Bennie suggest setting small goals?
- Which stress management techniques work best for the different characters?
- How do the friends feel after practicing stress management techniques?

Chapter 22: Finding Ways to Manage Stress

April was coming to a close, and with end-of-year exams and final projects looming, the pressure at school was starting to build. Ollie, Harriet, Bennie, Sammy, Buzz, Betty, and Maya all felt the weight of their busy schedules, and stress was becoming a common topic in their conversations.

“I’ve been so tense lately,” Harriet admitted one afternoon as the group sat on the playground. “I keep worrying about all the homework we have and the tests coming up.”

“Me too,” Ollie said. “It feels like there’s always something to study for or some assignment to finish.”

The friends realized that they needed to find better ways to manage the stress they were feeling. They decided to explore different techniques to help them feel calmer and more in control.

Understanding Stress and the Brain

The group remembered a lesson from Mr. Jenkins about how stress affects the body and mind.

“When we’re stressed, our brains are predicting that something challenging is happening or about to happen,” Maya said. “That can make us feel tense or anxious, even if it’s not a big deal.”

Buzz added, “And if we stay stressed for too long, it can wear us out. Our bodies and minds need breaks to recharge.”

The friends decided to try some physical and mental techniques to help them manage stress and keep their body budgets balanced.

Trying Physical Techniques

The friends wanted to start with physical techniques, since stress often made them feel tense or restless.

Deep Breathing: Ollie suggested that they try deep breathing exercises like the ones they had learned in class. “When we take slow, deep breaths, it tells our brains that we’re safe, and it helps calm our bodies down,” he explained.

They practiced breathing in slowly for four counts, holding for four counts, and then breathing out for four counts. They noticed that it helped them feel more relaxed almost immediately.

Exercise: Buzz, who loved playing sports, suggested that they get moving to release some of their stress. “Physical activity helps get rid of that tense feeling,” he said. “Even going for a walk can make a difference.”

The group agreed to take breaks during study sessions to do some light exercise, like stretching, playing catch, or taking a walk around the block.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Betty had heard of a technique where you tense and then relax different muscle groups. “You start at your feet and work your way up,” she said. “It helps release tension from your whole body.”

The friends tried it together, squeezing their muscles tightly for a few seconds before releasing. They found that it helped them feel less tight and more at ease.

Exploring Mental Techniques

Next, the group focused on mental techniques to help manage stress.

Mindfulness: Maya suggested mindfulness exercises, which involved focusing on the present moment without judgment. “It helps us notice our thoughts and feelings without getting overwhelmed by them,” she explained.

The friends practiced by closing their eyes and paying attention to their breathing. If their minds wandered, they gently brought their focus back to the breath.

Positive Visualization: Harriet shared that she sometimes imagined herself in a calm place, like the beach or a quiet forest, when she was feeling stressed. “It helps me feel more relaxed,” she said.

The others tried it, closing their eyes and picturing peaceful settings. They found that visualizing a calm place helped them feel more centered.

Setting Small Goals: Bennie pointed out that breaking big tasks into smaller steps could make things feel less overwhelming. “Instead of thinking about everything we have to do, we can focus on one thing at a time,” he said.

The friends decided to set small goals each day, like finishing one assignment before taking a break or studying for 20 minutes before switching to another activity.

Reflecting on the Techniques

Over the next week, the group tried using the different techniques whenever they felt stressed. At the end of the week, they met again to discuss what had worked well for them.

Harriet: “I’ve been using deep breathing before bed, and it’s helped me fall asleep faster. I didn’t realize how tense I was until I started doing the exercises.”

Sammy: “Going for walks really helped clear my mind. I didn’t think a 10-minute walk could make such a big difference.”

Buzz: “I liked the progressive muscle relaxation. It felt like I was squeezing the stress out of my body.”

Maya: “Mindfulness was harder than I thought, but when I managed to stay focused, it helped me feel calmer. I’m going to keep practicing.”

The friends agreed that having a variety of techniques to choose from made it easier to manage their stress in different situations.

Moving Forward

As they continued through the school year, the friends made a habit of using the stress management techniques they had learned. They found that combining physical and mental approaches helped them stay balanced and better handle the demands of school and life.

“Stress doesn’t just go away,” Ollie said. “But we can learn to manage it in a way that keeps it from taking over.”

Harriet added, “It’s like our brains are always predicting how challenging things will be, but when we use these techniques, we’re telling our brains, ‘It’s okay. We can handle this.’”

The friends felt more prepared to face the rest of the school year, knowing that with the right tools, they could manage stress and maintain a sense of calm—even during the busiest times.

Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** “This story shows us that there are quite a few ways to handle stress, and we just have to give them a try to see which ones work best for us at which times.”

Post-Chapter Questions

These questions encourage children to think deeply about what they listen to and to understand that they can use the S.T.A.R. Strategy in many different situations.

- What did you learn about how stress affects the brain?
- Which physical stress management technique do you think would help you the most? Why?
- Have you ever used breathing exercises or mindfulness before? How did it feel?
- Why do you think setting small goals helps reduce stress?
- How can exercise or physical activity change the way we feel?
- What do you think is the hardest part about managing stress?
- How does stress affect how you interact with others?
- How can you tell when your stress levels are getting too high?
- Why is it important to have more than one way to manage stress?
- How can you help a friend who is feeling stressed?

Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- Students will explore stress management techniques by journaling



Activity: Personal Stress Management Journal worksheet

Introduce Activity

- “Today, we’re going to begin a special kind of journaling—your **Stress Management Journal**.

Everyone feels stress sometimes. It might happen when you have a lot to do, when something is hard or confusing, or even when things feel out of your control.

When we notice what makes us feel stressed and learn ways to manage it, we start to feel calmer, clear, and confident.

In your journal, you’ll reflect on a time you felt stressed and then explore some tools you can use to feel better next time. This journal is just for you. You don’t have to share anything unless you choose to.

I’ll give you some prompts to help you get started.”

Prompts (write on the board or distribute on a slip):

1. Describe a recent situation where you felt stressed. What made you feel that way?
2. Which physical stress management techniques could you try next time? (e.g., deep breathing, exercise, progressive muscle relaxation)
3. Which mental techniques could you try? (e.g., mindfulness, positive visualization, setting small goals)
4. How did your body feel when you were stressed? How did your mind feel?
5. What can you do to remind yourself to use stress management strategies when you need them?

“You’ll have 15–20 minutes to write quietly. Use this time to think honestly and take care of yourself. The more we learn about stress, the better we become at handling it.”

Instructions

- Distribute the journal worksheet. Explain that students will start their personal stress management journals by reflecting on situations that make them feel stressed and planning strategies they can use to manage them. Use the following prompts to guide their writing:
- Journal Prompts:
 1. Describe a recent situation where you felt stressed. What made you feel that way?
 2. Which physical stress management techniques could you try next time? (e.g., deep breathing, exercise, progressive muscle relaxation)
 3. Which mental techniques could you try? (e.g., mindfulness, positive visualization, setting small goals)
 4. How did your body feel when you were stressed? How did your mind feel?
 5. What can you do to remind yourself to use stress management strategies when you need them?
- Encourage students to write freely and reflect on their experiences.

Closing Discussion (5 minutes):

Sharing



- “Some of you may feel ready to share part of what you wrote in your journal—what made you feel stressed, or what strategies you want to try. Remember, this is your personal journal, and sharing is your choice. Listening and learning from one another helps us realize we’re not alone in how we feel.”
- *Allow students to read a line, mention a strategy, or talk generally about their reflection.*

Wrapping It Up

Wrap Up the Lesson (5 minutes)

Review and Reflection Overview:

- Have students reflect on their experiences and what they learned.

Review and Reflection Teacher Script

Gather in a Circle for Reflection:



- “Let’s gather in a circle for a quick reflection. Circles help us feel connected, just like how sharing our feelings can help us feel supported.”
- When it’s your turn, you can finish this sentence:
 - **‘One thing I can try when I feel stressed is...’**
- If you’d like to pass, that’s perfectly okay. Let’s show respect and kindness as we listen.”
- “Today, you took time to understand your stress and explore tools to manage it—and that’s a really grown-up thing to do.
- Learning to deal with stress doesn’t mean you’ll never feel overwhelmed again. But it *does* mean you’ll be better prepared and know what to do when tough moments show up.
- You’re building skills to take care of your mind and body—skills you can use anytime, anywhere.”

Closing

- “Stress happens to everyone, but we can all learn ways to calm down, stay focused, and take care of ourselves when it does.
- Whether it’s breathing deeply, stretching, or thinking positively, you have tools inside you to handle stress in healthy ways.
- Keep using your journal whenever you need to check in with yourself. The more you practice, the stronger and more confident you’ll feel.”

Home Connection Letter

Sending Information Home:

- “Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. It explains that we learned some stress management techniques and began a stress management journal to help better understand what stress feels like and how to respond to it in healthy ways..”
- Hand out the letters as the children prepare to leave.

Parent Letter

Sending Information Home:

- Provide each child with a letter to take home to their parents explaining the lesson.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Today, your child participated in a lesson about managing stress. We explored how stress affects the body and mind, and students learned different physical and mental techniques to help them stay calm and focused during stressful times.

Your child also began a personal stress management journal, where they reflected on situations that make them feel stressed and planned strategies they can use to manage it. You can support your child by encouraging them to talk about what they've learned and by trying some of these techniques at home, such as:

- Taking deep breaths together when feeling overwhelmed.
- Setting small, achievable goals for tasks like homework.
- Going for a walk or engaging in light physical activity.

Thank you for your support in helping your child develop healthy stress management habits!

With Gratitude,

Stress Management Strategies



Physical Techniques



Deep Breathing



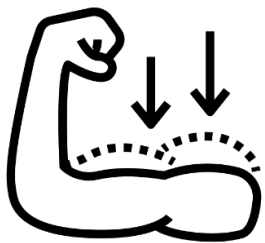
Exercise



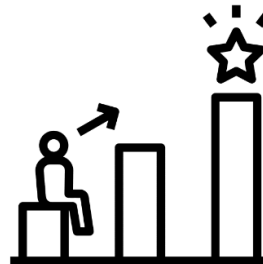
Mindfulness



Positive
Visualization



Progressive
Muscle Relaxation



Setting Small
Goals

Stress Management Journal



Describe a situation where you felt stressed.
What made you feel that way?.

Which physical stress management techniques could you try next time? (e.g., deep breathing, exercise, progressive muscle relaxation)

Which mental techniques could you try? (e.g., mindfulness, positive visualization, setting small goals)

How did your body feel when you were stressed? How did your mind feel?

What can you do to remind yourself to use stress management strategies when you need them?