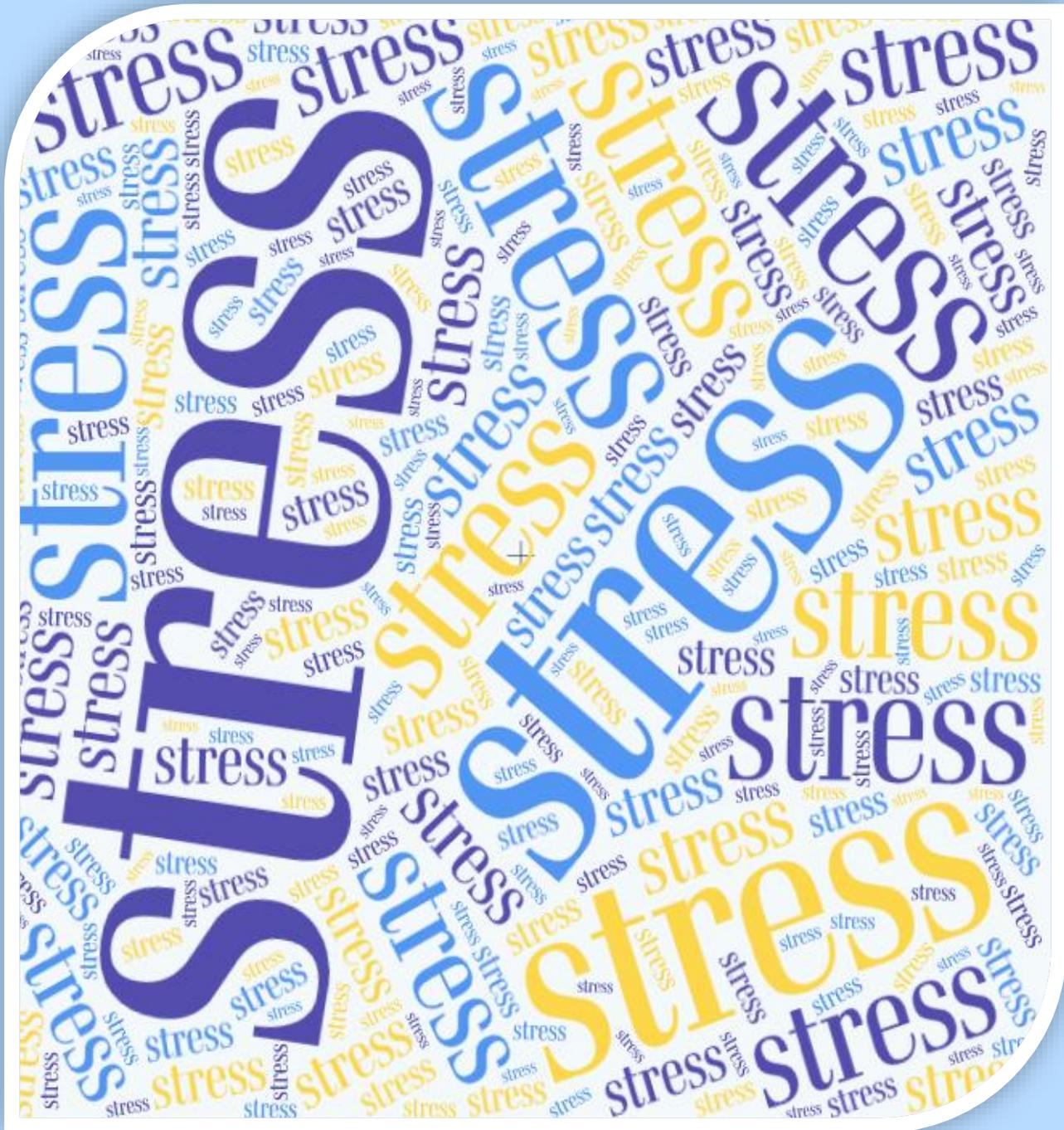


Stress Management Workbook 1



What is STRESS?

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WHAT IS STRESS?

The aim of these Wellbeing Workbooks is to help you learn more about stress and the things you can do to help reduce your stress when you feel very worried or anxious.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- There are four workbooks altogether and they should each take around 2 hours to complete
- The workbooks should supplement the information you are learning about mental health in your school classes
- Each workbook has information, exercises and games to help you learn about wellbeing
- The exercises in the workbooks are simply there to aid your learning. You do not have to share any of your answers to the exercises; you can keep them as private as you would like to
- If you are feeling really stressed and think you would like to talk to someone about this, there are phone numbers and websites at the back of this book which might be useful



- What is stress
- What causes stress
- How stress affects you
- What maintains stress
- How you can change your lifestyle to make yourself feel less stressed
- How you can begin to deal with stress

In weeks 2 and 3 we will look at how behaviour and thinking can cause you to feel stressed; and in week 4 we will look at problem solving skills that can help you to cope with stress.

To start though, it would be good to think about how you feel your life is for you at the moment. The exercise below will help you do that.



WHAT IS STRESS

TRUE

- ✓ Everybody feels stressed from time to time
- ✓ It is a normal reaction
- ✓ It happens to us all in situations we find stressful - at times of threat and uncertainty, or when we have taken on too much
- ✓ Stress can be useful because it can help us perform better e.g. a footballer before a match; before a class test or speaking out loud in front of your class



FALSE

- X If you feel stressed or anxious you have a mental illness
- X You should know exactly why you're feeling stressed
- X You are weak if you feel stressed

When something is happening to us that we find scary or makes us feel unsure, then it is **normal** to feel stressed. For example, imagine someone who is scared of flying:

- They may think the flight will be awful or a disaster
- They may have threatening images running through their mind which makes them feel stressed as a result.
- They may sometimes begin to feel sick, shaky and tense

- The combination of how they think, how they feel and their body's response can be uncomfortable or overwhelming and very often, they find it easier to avoid flying

This is an **unhelpful** reaction

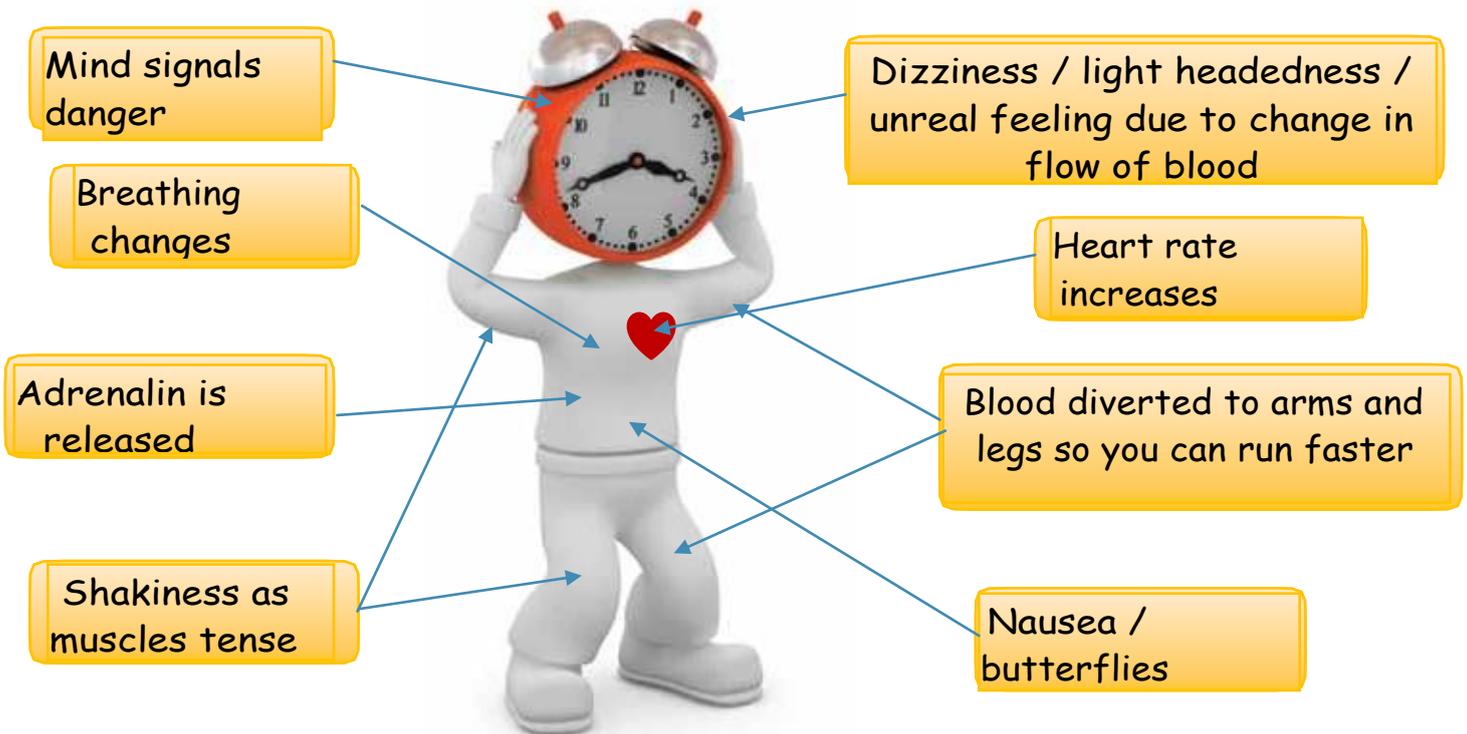


Nevertheless other stress reactions can be **helpful** e.g.

- You are about to perform in a school performance
- You feel your body tense up but this makes you work harder and perform better
- This is a **helpful response**



THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE



Sometimes when we feel stressed we are unaware of what is happening. This can make us feel worse because we do not understand why we feel the way we do. When this happens we can start to feel overwhelmed. By

stepping back and becoming more **curious** about what is happening in both our bodies and our minds, we can start to identify when we are starting to feel stressed and come up with ways to tackle this.

When we are feeling stressed we can sometimes tell where exactly we feel it in our bodies. People often say that they feel like they have butterflies in their tummy, feel out of breath, need to go to the loo and feel tense.



Humans respond to stress in the same way as animals. Think of a leopard padding along quietly.



IT HEARS A NOISE. HOW DOES IT THEN REACT?

Spine gets longer and stiffer so they can escape more quickly - blood is sent to the legs -to be stronger when fighting.

Neck muscles fill with blood to keep the head steady and protect its spine while allowing it to focus.



Heart rate will get faster to quickly send the blood to where it is needed most when feeling threatened.

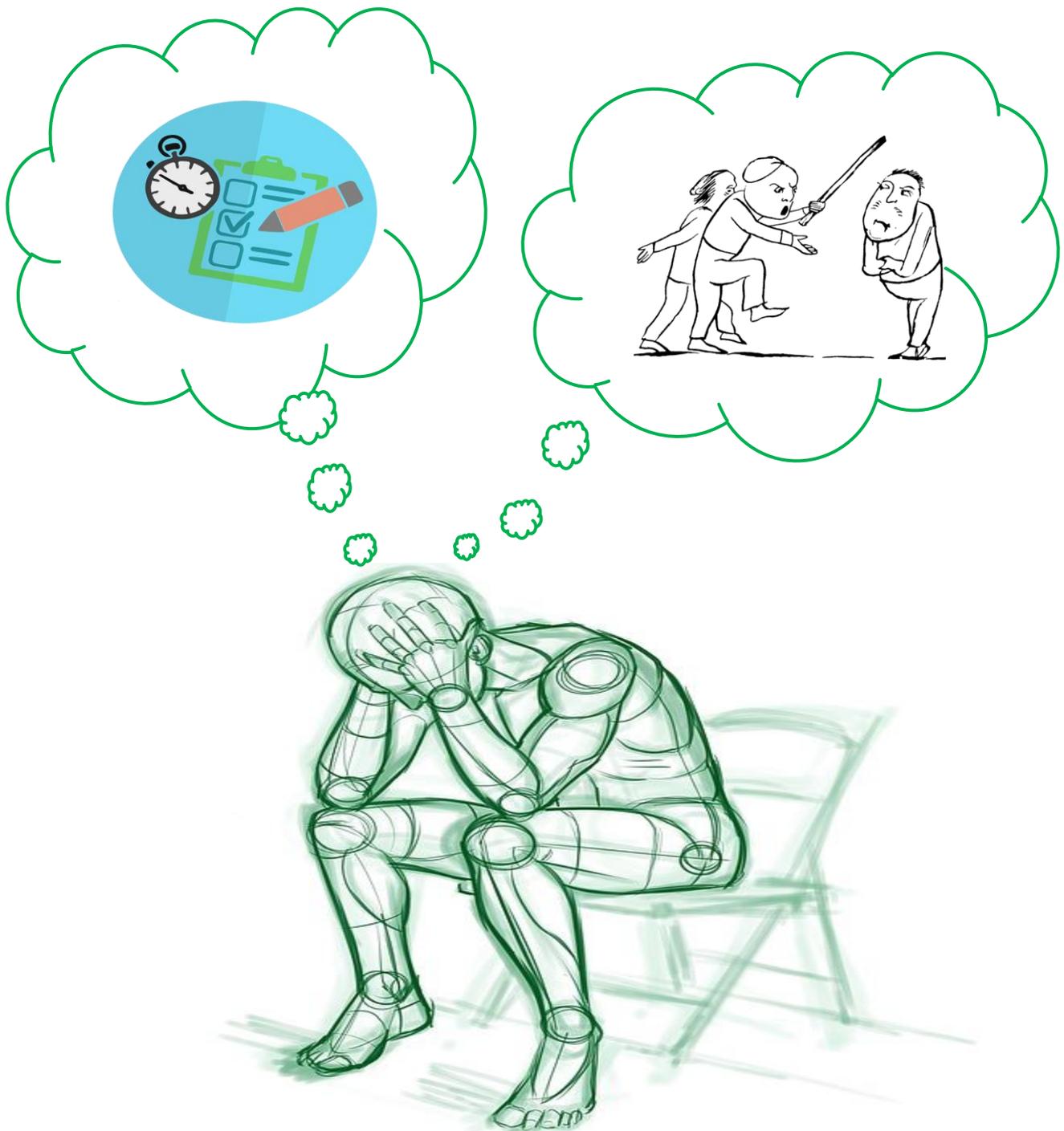
Freezes on the spot

You may have felt a similar way when you have been stressed. This is a **completely normal stress response** and is known as **FIGHT OR FLIGHT**. As well as running away, sometimes when you're extremely stressed you can **freeze**. This is called the adrenaline response.



The **FIGHT OR FLIGHT** response can also happen because of a psychological threat. The way we make sense of what is happening around us guides how we react. We may be sitting at home worrying about a class test or an argument we had with a friend in the playground earlier that day. When we are sitting at home we are no longer in the playground or doing the class test but we may still feel stressed because we are thinking about it. This is **unhelpful**, as there is **no physical threat** at that moment when you sitting at home in your chair. A video that does a good job of explaining fight or flight response can be found here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEHwB1PG_-Q



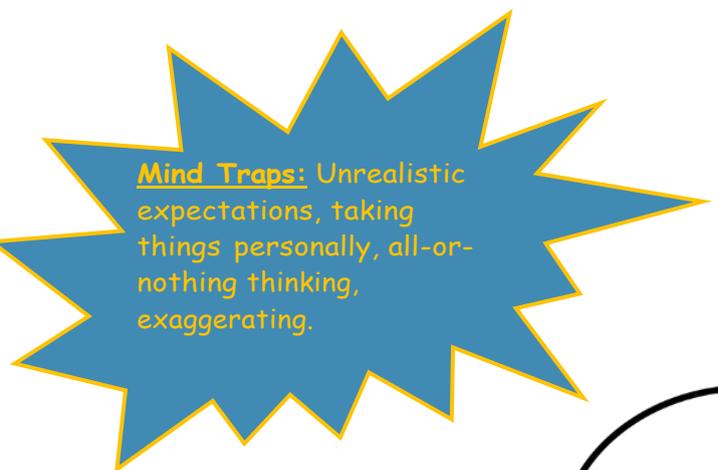
WHAT CAUSES STRESS?

ANYTHING CAN CAUSE US TO FEEL STRESSED. THINGS THAT CAN MAKE US FEEL STRESSED CAN BE SPLIT INTO TWO GROUPS

1. Internal stressors - These are things that go on inside our head that make us feel anxious e.g. telling yourself you are no good. As these thoughts are internal we can usually control them e.g. being proud of yourself when you have done a good job.



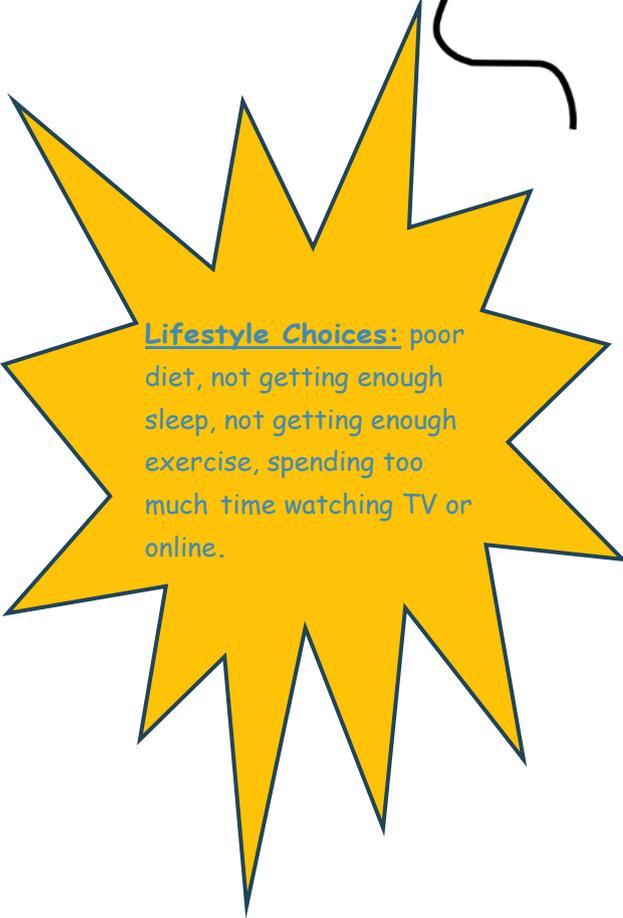
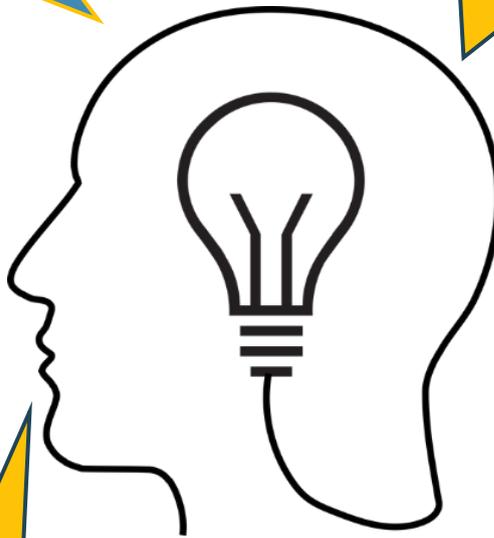
EXAMPLES OF INTERNAL STRESSORS:



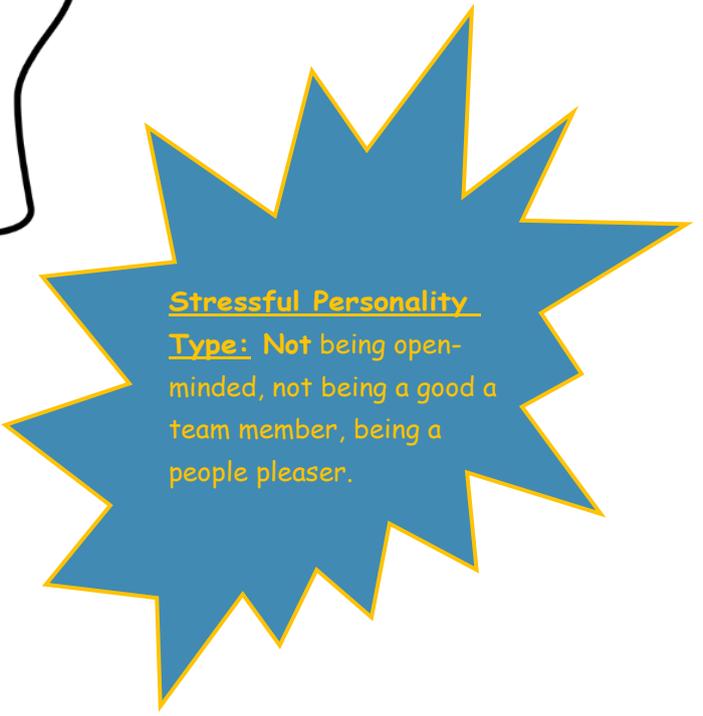
Mind Traps: Unrealistic expectations, taking things personally, all-or-nothing thinking, exaggerating.



Negative Self Talk: expecting the worst, being hard on yourself, over-thinking.



Lifestyle Choices: poor diet, not getting enough sleep, not getting enough exercise, spending too much time watching TV or online.



Stressful Personality Type: Not being open-minded, not being a good a team member, being a people pleaser.

EXTERNAL STRESSORS

2. External stressors: There are also things going in the world around us which can cause stress e.g. moving to a new school or starting a new job. Often we may have less control, however we can sometimes take steps to reduce this stress e.g. visit the school before you start to meet your new peers and teachers.

Daily Hassles: e.g. forgetting your homework, losing your favourite piece of clothing, bus breaking down on the way to school.

Physical Environment: e.g. being too noisy, being too hot or being stuck in a small space.

Organisational Rules: e.g. School rules, sports club rules, code of conduct where you work.



Social: (interactions with other people) e.g. when someone else is rude, bossy, rough or doesn't listen to you. Disagreement in relationships with parents or friends. Feeling lonely and left out.

Major Life Events: Moving house, a death, a change in family circumstances or changing schools

FACTORS WHICH CAN INFLUENCE OUR INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STRESSORS INCLUDE:

- Our personality - who we are
- Learning
- How we react to things that happen in our lives
- How we look after ourselves e.g. making time to relax, getting exercise
- How we talk to ourselves when facing stress - e.g. mountains out of molehills

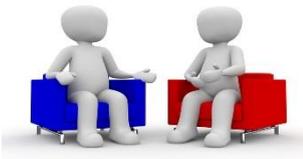
STRESS AND LEARNING

There are many things in our lives that can cause us stress. When stressful things happen to us we learn how to deal with them and develop **cop**ing **sk**ills. Some of these skills can be **helpful**, others can be **unhelpful**. Often when we learn an unhelpful coping skill it will stay with us until we challenge it and come up with new and better ways of coping.

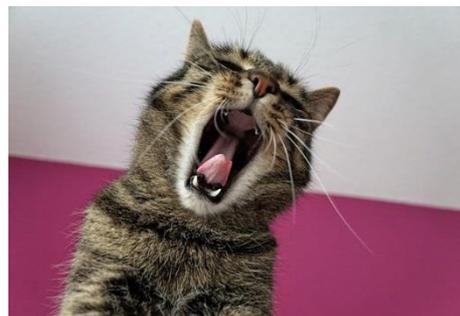
EXAMPLES OF MAJOR LIFE EVENTS WHICH CAN CAUSE STRESS ARE:

- Moving to a new school
- Death of someone close
- Falling out with a friend
- Taking an exam
- Losing a family pet
- Moving house and leaving your friends
- Ill health or the ill health of someone close

Healthy coping strategies can help us move through this time in our life e.g. looking after yourself, sharing how you feel, making time to relax.

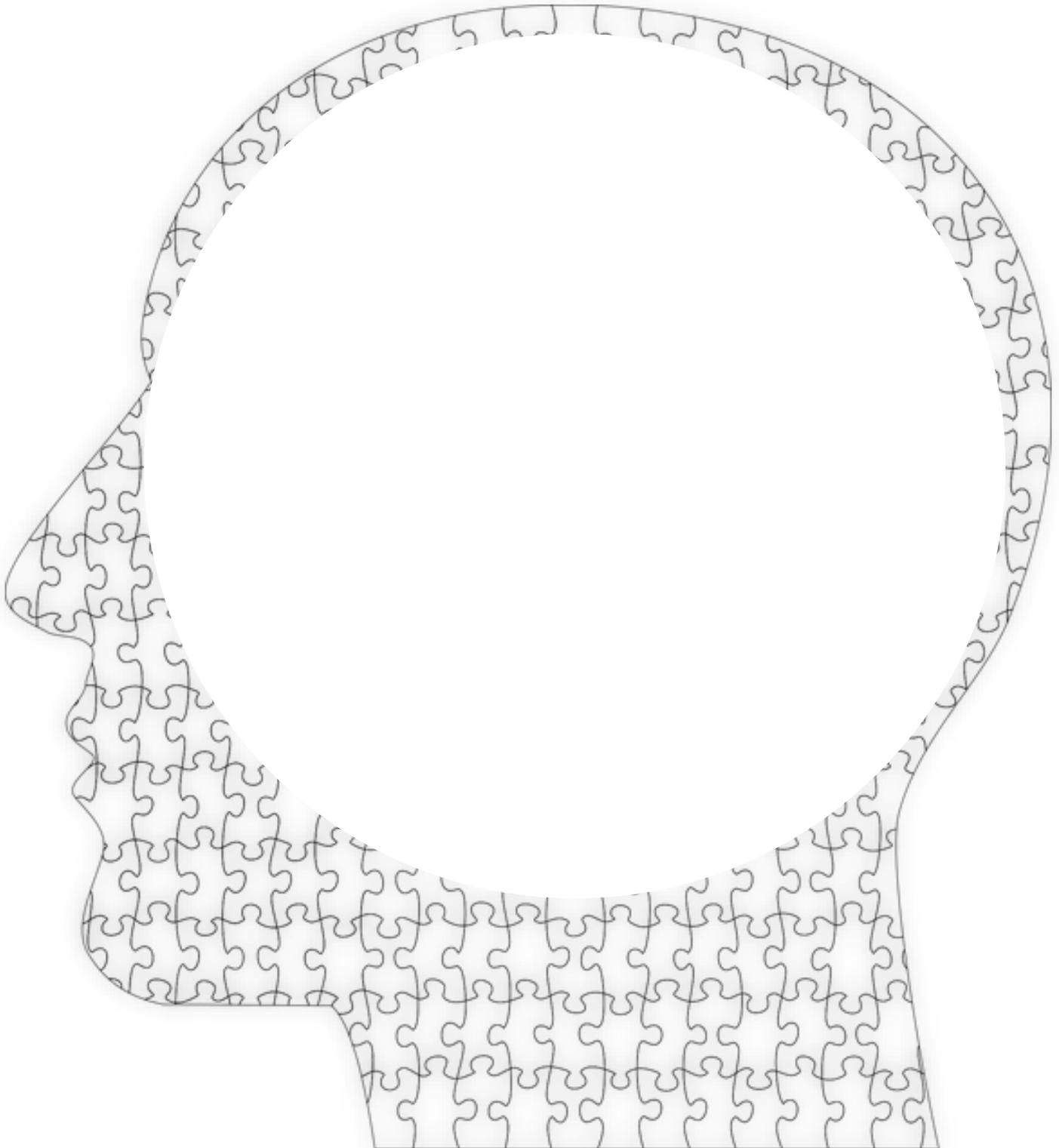


Unhealthy coping strategies may make us feel even worse, e.g. not getting enough sleep, not eating, having a poor diet, drinking too many sugary or caffeinated drinks.



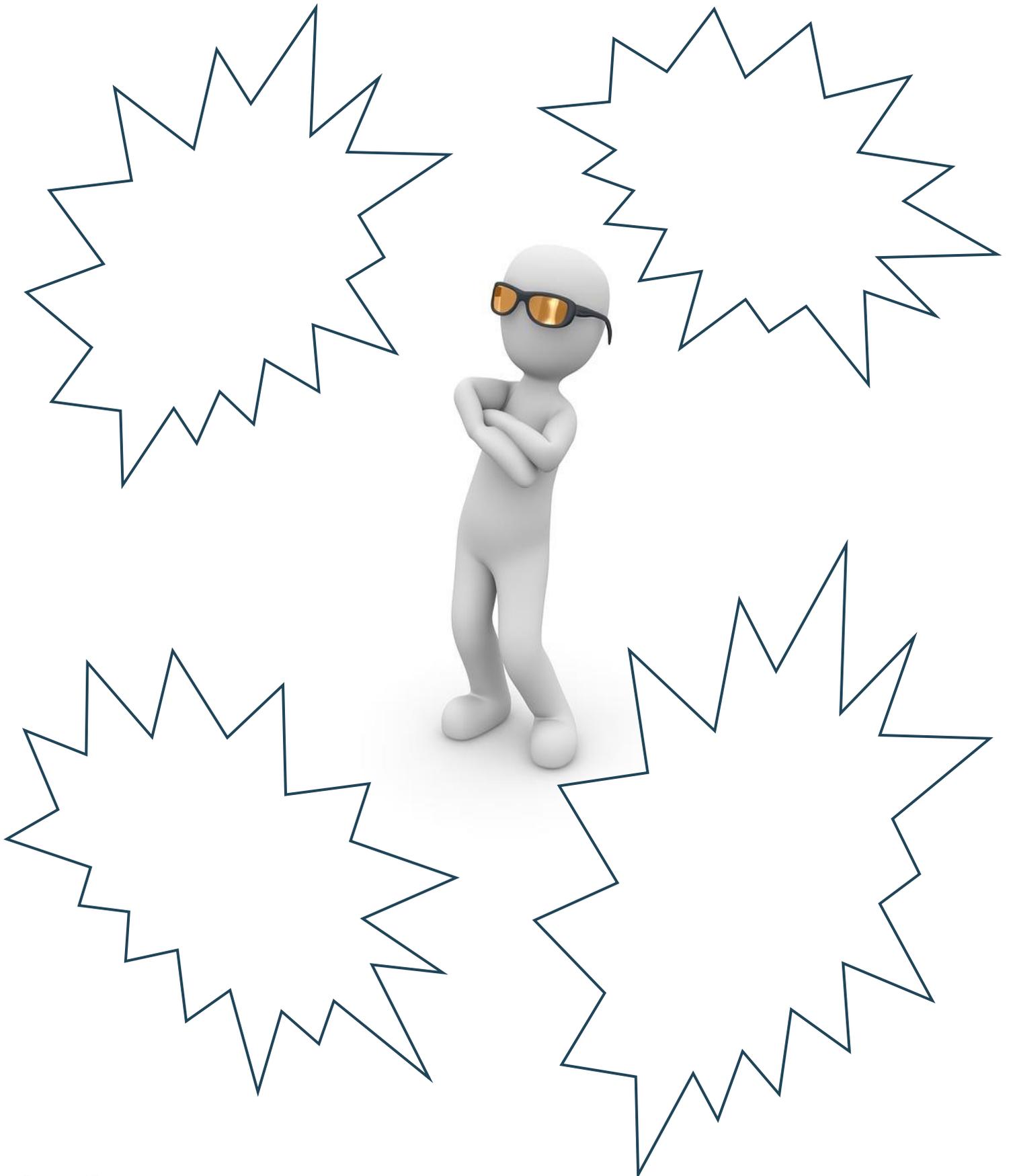
EXERCISE

Now let's think about anything in your life that has made you stressed, now or in the past. Inside the head below draw some **internal stressors** that may have made you stressed:



EXERCISE

Now let's think about any **external stressors** that have made you stressed draw some external stressors in the boxes below.



Now think back to one life event that you have experienced in the past that you were able to manage **well** (watch out for your negative self-talk when doing this exercise as it may cause you to forget all of your many successes):

What did you do that allowed you to manage the situation?

What would others see you doing that told them you were managing it?

HOW CAN STRESS BECOME A PROBLEM?

Stress is very **unhelpful** when:

- It happens repeatedly
- There is no threat
- When the threat is over, you still feel stressed for a long time

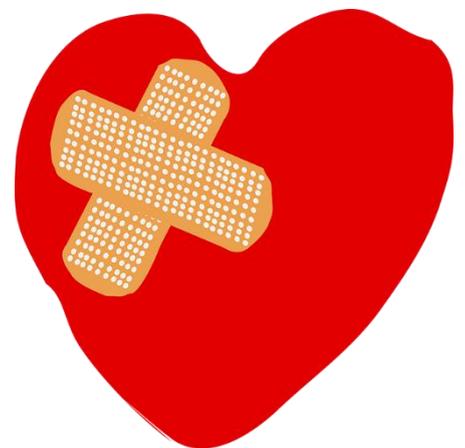
Stress is very unhelpful when it stops us from doing things that we want to do in life. The earlier example of avoiding flying highlights how stress can lead us to avoid things that we find scary or worrying



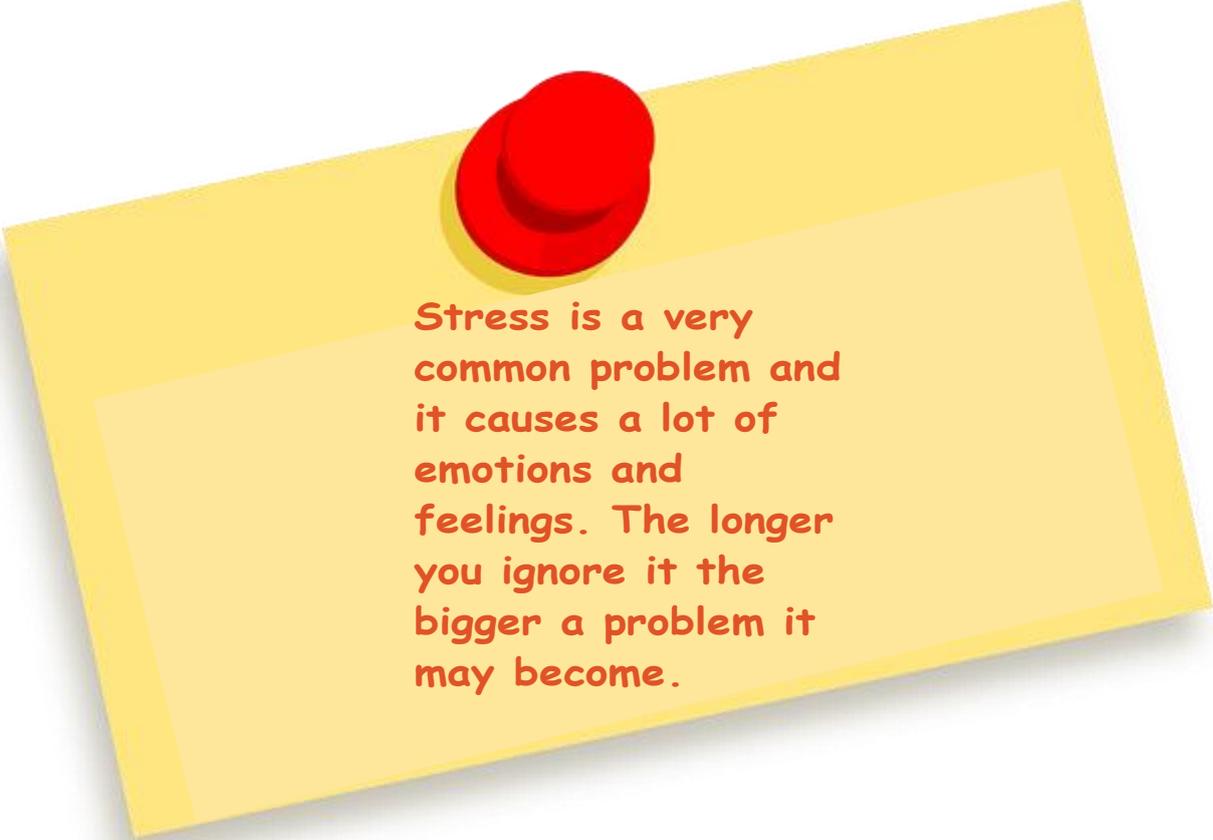
Stress is very unhelpful when it affects our performance, e.g. trying to finish your homework in time or being able to concentrate in school. When we are feeling very stressed our fight or flight response can kick in and this can make it very difficult for us to concentrate, speak clearly and to stay focused.

Stress is very unhelpful when you start to worry about how your body reacts when you are feeling stressed

Sometimes when we are feeling stressed we recognize that our body is feeling tense but we are unable to determine why. This can sometimes cause us to imagine the worst e.g. "I'm having a heart attack". The more we can recognize that this is a normal response when we are feeling very stressed, the less likely we are to worry about it when it happens.



Stress is very unhelpful when it is severe and lasts for a long time. The longer we feel stressed the more likely we are to begin to avoid the situation or people that we think make us feel this way.

A yellow sticky note is pinned to the page with a red pushpin. The note contains text about stress.

Stress is a very common problem and it causes a lot of emotions and feelings. The longer you ignore it the bigger a problem it may become.

HOW STRESS CAN AFFECT YOU?

STRESS AFFECTS US IN 4 WAYS:

THE WAY OUR BODY WORKS



THE WAY WE BEHAVE



THE WAY WE THINK



THE WAY WE FEEL



By understanding how stress affects us, we can learn to **recognise the signs** and try to deal with them before feeling overwhelmed. Start to be curious about what makes you tick without judging yourself.

- How you behave in situations
- How you feel about situations
- What you think of situations and
- What your body does in situations

OUR BODY- ACTIVITY

When we are stressed our bodies can become stiff and ready for action (fight or flight), or we can feel slowed down and struggle to get through the day. The more we can recognise these feelings the sooner we can respond in a more helpful manner.

Typical symptoms of stress include:

- Breathlessness
- Heart beating very fast
- Dry mouth
- Dizziness or light headedness
- Shakiness
- Sickness
- Wobbly legs and arms

- Stiff muscles
- Feeling hot and cold
- Flushing or sweating Headaches
- Upset stomach
- Poor concentration
- Tired a lot
- Unable to sleep

D H H E V L J F S A Z V U X T
 R B C Q Q N F E R J V N C B R
 Y S U A Y L H W S P A O I R A
 M H H F M C E I F B P R X E E
 O Y C A A O C P L F A Y A A H
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 T K A T N I T S X V J R Y H N
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 H N S J S Z S E B E T C T E C
 B S Z L G D P M S Q S O T S A
 Y U E U H U Z H W S Z P X S R
 E E D I Z Z I N E S S G U N Y
 P S E L C S U M F F I T S E U
 H Y A J P B S N Y H R U S S J
 R P F L U E X G Z E E T X S K

Below are some common physical stress responses.

Try to find the one's you have experienced in the word search:

1. BREATHLESSNESS
2. DIZZINESS
3. HEADACHES
4. SICKNESS
5. UNABLE TO SLEEP
6. RACING HEART
7. STIFF MUSCLES
8. UPSET STOMACH
9. DRY MOUTH
10. SHAKINESS
11. TIRED

OUR BEHAVIOUR - ACTIVITY

Stress affects **how we behave** and what we do in response to stressful events. Typical behaviours when under stress:

- Stop looking after yourself (poor diet and appearance)
- Biting nails, teeth grinding and pulling hair out
- Avoiding things we find stressful
- Putting things off
- Need to use the loo a lot

- Stop doing things you enjoy
- Cry a lot
- Unable to sit still
- Having arguments with other people
- Hesitating
- Speak faster

If we notice these feelings quickly we can do something to make ourselves feel better. When you feel stressed, how do you feel?

Follow this link to access an activity surrounding how we behave in response to stress:

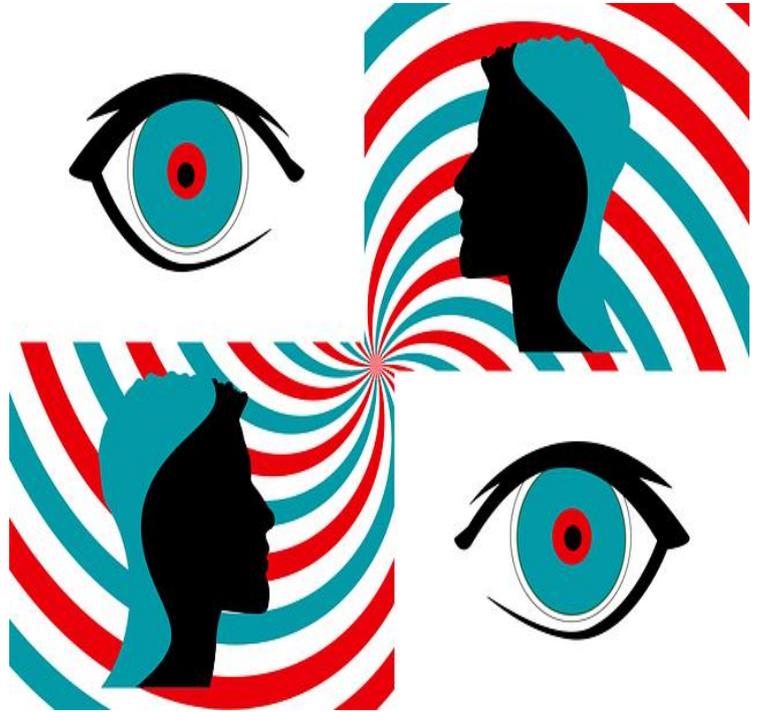
<https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=2e6ca704ff4d>



OUR THOUGHTS

Things that you might think when you are feeling very worried or stressed:

- I can't cope
- I'm useless
- They're all looking at me
- They think I'm stupid
- I just want to get out of here
- They all know I can't cope
- What's the point in trying?
- Things never go right for me
- There must be something wrong with me



The way we think about and understand the things that happen to us is what makes us feel a certain way about it.

What thoughts go through your mind when you are feeling stressed?

OUR FEELINGS

Typical feelings when you are feeling stressed include:

- Sad
- Annoyed
- Angry
- Fed up
- Panicky
- Little interest in anything
- No excitement or interest
- Dislike yourself
- Feeling flat or low
- Easily upset
- Feeling unsure
- Hopeless
- Worried

These are but a few of the emotional responses we might feel when stressed. Below is a crossword of emotional responses to stressed. Based on the emotions mentioned above, how many can you figure out?

Across: 2. No Excitement or Interest; 3. Annoyed; 5. Sad; 7. Easily Upset; 8. Little Interest in Anything; 10. Hopeless; 11. Unsure; 12. Fed up.

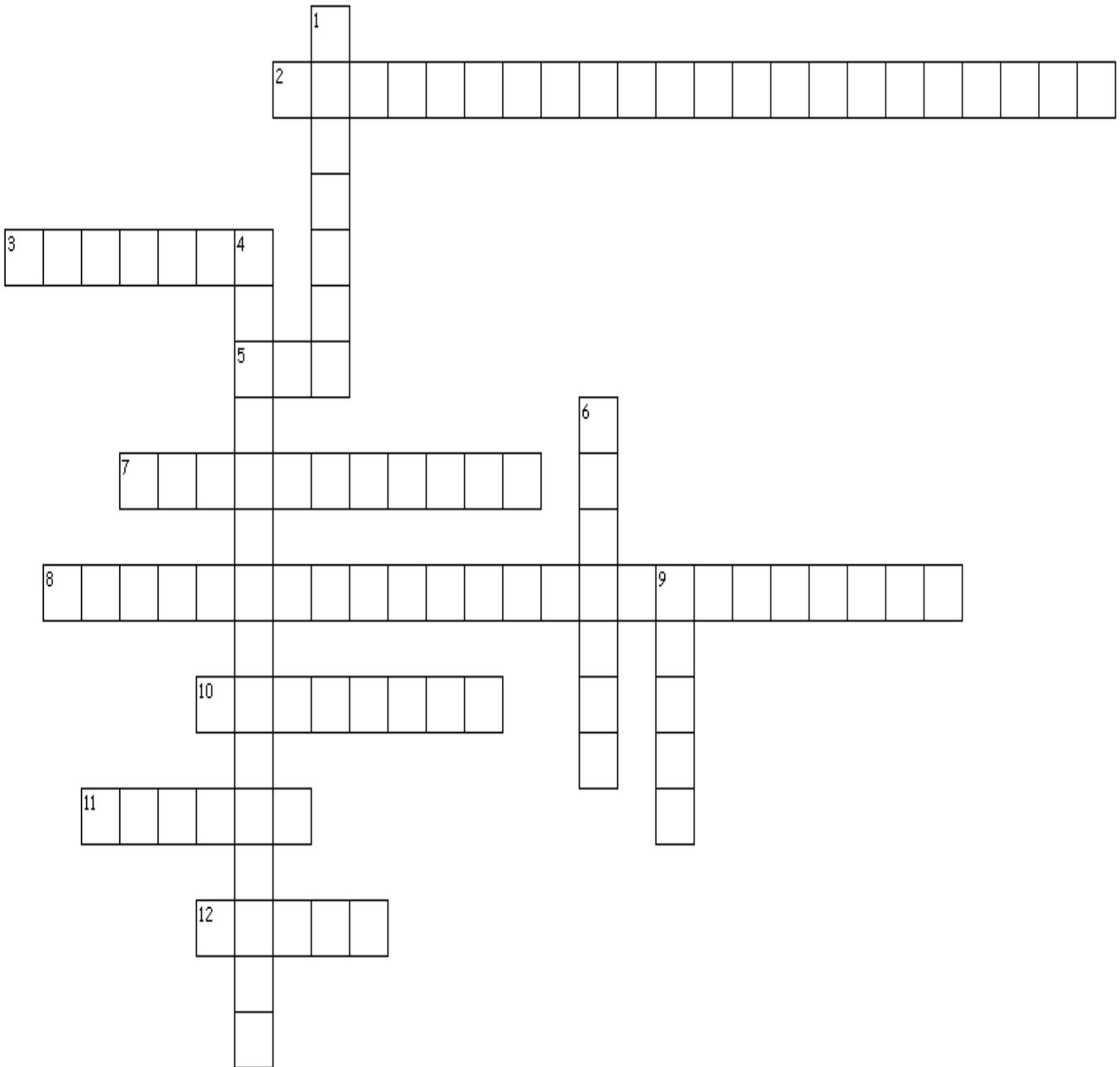
Down: 1. Worried; 4. Dislike Yourself; 6. Panicky; 9. Angry.

Across

- 2. Having little or no enthusiasm
- 3. Feeling irritated or bothered
- 5. Feeling down or low
- 7. Very sensitive
- 8. You do not find many things engaging
- 10. Feeling like things are pointless or useless
- 11. Feeling of uncertainty
- 12. Feeling like you have had enough

Down

- 1. Feeling anxious or concerned
- 4. Negative opinion of self
- 6. Feeling frightened or alarmed
- 9. You feel like this when experiencing rage



WHAT KEEPS IT GOING?

The Vicious Cycle of Stress



This cycle shows how our **thinking**, **behavior**, **feelings**, and how our **body feels** are all linked. The more we experience a stressful situation, the stronger this cycle gets. These workshops will help you learn new ways to break this cycle and feel less stressed.

ACTIVITY

THINK ABOUT THE LAST TIME
YOU WERE FEELING A LITTLE BIT
STRESSED.

NOT THE MOST EXTREMELY STRESSFUL SITUATION YOU HAVE
EXPERIENCED JUST ONE WHERE YOU FELT A LITTLE STRESSED

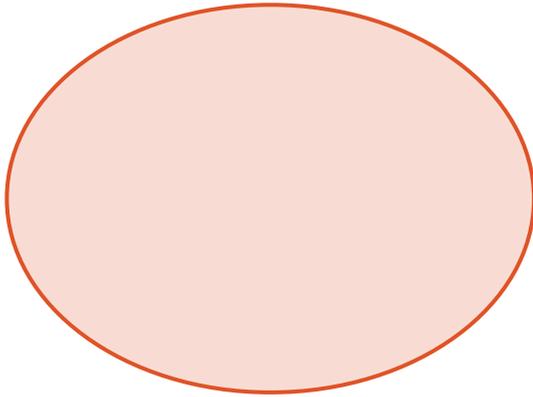
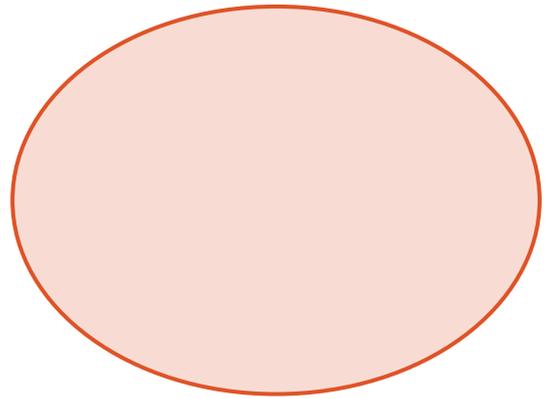
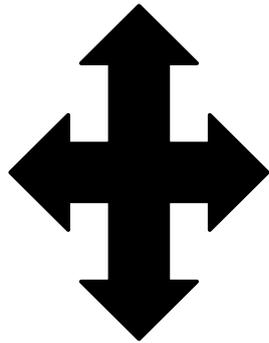
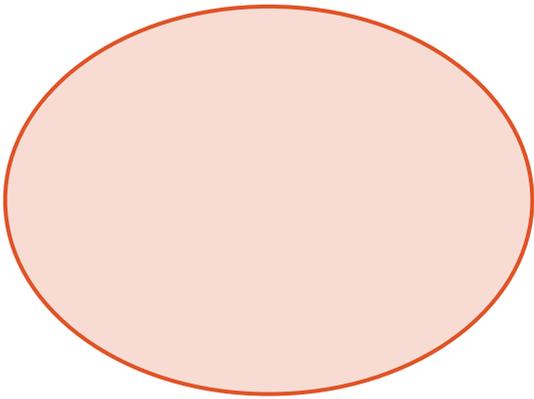
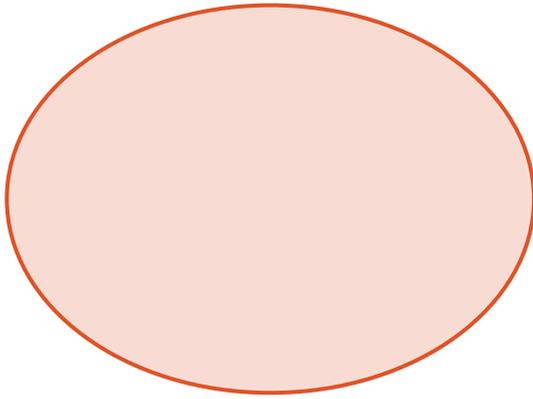
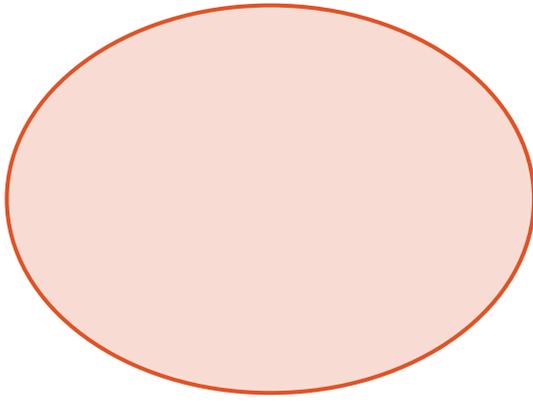
SITUATION - what was going on around you?

THOUGHTS - what was going through your head at that time?

FEELINGS - how were you feeling?

BEHAVIOUR - what did you do in response?

BODILY RESPONSE - did you notice any tension, shakiness, sickness etc.?



- Stress affects us in 4 ways: our thinking, feelings, behavior and bodily responses
- Stress is a normal reaction that we all experience - otherwise known as fight or flight
- A vicious circle keeps stress going
- Everyone reacts differently to stress depending on their personality and what is going on around them at the time



Lifestyle Changes That Can Help You Deal With Stress



Healthy Living: Diet

The way we feel physically, affects how well we cope with stress. Quite often when we are stressed we can forget to eat, or eat a lot of unhealthy junk food.

Tips for a healthy diet include:

- Avoid drinks which are high in sugar or caffeine
- Eat five fruit and vegetables a day
- Drink lots of water
- Have breakfast, lunch and dinner or healthy snacks and do not miss out on breakfast



Healthy Living: Exercise

It is a fact that exercise improves our mood by working off tension and boredom. By scheduling time for exercise you are making time for yourself and it can be a way of:

- Making new friends
- Finding new hobbies
- Helping your body feel less tense which helps you to sleep better

Remember to: Choose something you enjoy!

Make lots of time to exercise



(N.B. Consult your GP before changing your exercise regime)

Healthy Living: Sleep

Too much or too little sleep affects how we feel when we wake up and how we feel throughout the day. We all need different amounts of sleep and have different ways of helping ourselves to fall asleep. When you are stressed you might find it hard to fall asleep or you might wake up suddenly during the night.



Tips which aid better sleep include:

- Relaxing before going to bed to help you to unwind
- Avoiding caffeinated drinks in the evenings
- Trying to switch off your worries by writing them down
- Making time the next day when you will tackle the things that are worrying you, instead of focusing on them when you are trying to sleep
- Keeping your bedroom tidy
- Trying to avoid watching TV or using the internet in bed
- Trying not to think about your worries when you are trying to fall asleep



FIRST STEPS TO CONTROLLING YOUR STRESS

One of the best things we can learn to do to make ourselves feel less worried is to control our breathing

CONTROLLING OVER-BREATHING

Look out for the early warning signs of over-breathing:

- Chest feels tight
- Difficulty getting your breath
- Breathing very fast



When we have too much air in our lungs it can actually feel as though we can't get a breath in when in fact the opposite is true. Use these First Steps to keep it under control:

First Steps

- Slow down
- Breathe out, really emptying the lungs
- Place one hand on your chest, one on your stomach
- Repeat a helpful word to yourself e.g. "relax", "slow", "calm"
- Breathe in through your nose counting 1... 2... 3... slowly
- You may notice your belly expand on the in-breath
- Breathe out through your mouth counting 1... 2... 3... slowly



RELAXATION

Relaxation is an important skill that can help us manage stress by taking time out to unwind. When we recognize that we are stressed e.g. we notice our body is feeling tense or we are thinking unhelpful thoughts that make us feel worried, we can then take some time to relax to make ourselves feel better and break the cycle of stress.

There are many different forms of relaxation from:

- Simply taking time out
- Sitting comfortably and controlling our breath
- Listening to nice music
- Meeting a friend
- Visualization/ meditation
- Muscle relaxation (This is helpful because it helps us slow down our bodies when we are feeling stressed and tense)



Remember: everyone finds different things relaxing and different activities can relax us at different times.

TYPES OF RELAXATION

Take a few minutes to think about the ways you relax at the moment. If you don't take time to relax, think about what stops you from taking time out and how you could create 'me' time?

A large yellow rectangular area with a thick orange border, containing ten horizontal lines for writing.

What stops me from taking time to myself to relax?

Internal barriers	How they could be overcome	External barriers	How they could be overcome

TIPS TO HELP YOU RELAX

1. *Get as comfy as you can before you start. Wear loose clothes and take off your shoes. Make sure the room is warm. If you can, turn your phone off. Make sure no one comes in the room while you are having this time to relax. If they want to join in from the start then that is fine.*
2. *Using relaxation audio is a good idea. You can find relaxation audio clips on the SafeSpot app. To get used to it, play it when you are feeling fairly calm. You will be able to concentrate better. This will let you pick up the skill more quickly. Don't worry at first if you get distracted by worrying thoughts, don't give up, it will take practice to learn. However, the more you practice relaxation the easier you will find it to control your inner self talk and the calmer and more in control you will feel.*
3. *As with learning any skill, practice makes perfect. So do something each day which helps you to relax. Try and build it into a routine -perhaps at the same time each day.*
4. *Don't worry about how well or badly you are doing. Most people find that their mind wanders during the first few weeks. This is normal. As you get used to it, this will improve.*
5. *Practice slowing down your breathing at various times of the day. You can time it using your watch or phone. This will help you keep your body calm.*
6. *Muscle Relaxation can leave you feeling drowsy. Some people fall asleep. If you are one of them, don't worry, just remember that you are learning a new skill.*
7. *You may find that when you tense your muscles, you hold your breath. Don't worry; most people do this at the start.*
8. *Keep a diary and check your progress as the days go by.*
9. *It's a good idea to use a relaxation audio clip on a regular basis until you find you can relax well unassisted.*

SUPPORT NETWORK

When feeling stressed we sometimes like to be on our own, at a time when speaking to other people would be very helpful.

Speaking to others can help make you feel better and help us come up with better ways to make ourselves making ourselves feel less stressed.

YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK ACTIVITY

Make a note of the people who are around you and think about what support is available to you.

WHO IS AROUND YOU?

WHO CAN YOU TALK TO?

WHO CAN YOU GET EMOTIONAL / PRACTICAL HELP FROM?

HOW CAN OTHERS TELL HOW YOU ARE FEELING?

WHO ELSE COULD YOU LOOK TO FOR SUPPORT BEYOND THE CURRENT SUPPORT?

If you have answered nobody to the above questions then please consider the list of resources you have been given at the back of this workbook.

SUMMARY QUIZ

1. Who can get stressed?
 - A. Adults only
 - B. Everyone
 - C. People with mental health issues
 - D. People with fast-paced jobs

2. What is not a symptom of the flight or fight response?
 - A. Change in breathing
 - B. Shakiness
 - C. Random limb movements
 - D. Heart rate increases

3. Which of the following is an example of an internal stressor?
 - A. Organisational rules
 - B. Major life event
 - C. Social factors
 - D. Mind traps

4. Pick 3 helpful coping strategies which could help with stress:
 - A. Taking time to relax
 - B. Skipping meals
 - C. Talking to someone about your worries
 - D. Doing something you enjoy

5. Which of the following is not a part of the vicious cycle of stress?
 - A. Social interactions
 - B. Thoughts
 - C. Feelings
 - D. Behaviours

Answers: 1-B; 2-C; 3-D; 4-B; 5-A

THINGS TO TRY

- Over the next week try to notice when you feel stressed. What is the situation - who are you with? What are you doing? Where are you?
- Are there similar situations where you don't feel stressed? When you are coping well? What are you and others around you doing differently?
- When you use your breathing control or relaxation - make a note of how it went. Was it helpful?
- Try some new activities e.g. join an after school club or sports team. This might help you find something new that you like and make some new friends.



Session 2 - Behaviour and Stress