

# UNIT 10: STRESS MANAGEMENT



## INTRODUCTION

Stress Management is the tenth unit in the *Habits of Work* curriculum, and the third and last unit in part four, *Staying Well*. The lesson activities are designed to be pick-and-choose to suit the needs and interests of your students. See Appendix A in *Staying Well* for an overview of the full curriculum.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to:

1. Identify personal stress triggers and reactions and the impact on work performance.
2. Develop strategies for responding to stress in a productive manner.
3. Practice at least one activity that strengthens emotional resilience.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR INSTRUCTOR

This unit is focused on stress in the workplace and healthy responses to those inevitable stressors. Your body is flooded with chemicals when you experience stress. There are stressors associated with work, and stressors from other parts of our lives that are part of us and accompany us to work each day. Both can impact work performance and need to be managed.

Each person has their own set of stress triggers and each person has their own set of automatic reactions. Growth comes from identifying your triggers and replacing your instinctive **reactions** with conscious healthy **responses**. Healthy responses are those that cause no harm to anyone or anything and do not break any rules.

Remember that anger and stress are not the same things. Stress can manifest itself in different ways, one of which is anger. Anger is not necessarily a negative emotion, for example, a person may feel angry about a social injustice.

Resiliency is the ability to recover from a setback, to shake off an unpleasant experience, and to go on. Resilient people know how to re-energize themselves. They have strategies to renew themselves and get back on task. Your natural resilience is affected by wellness factors such as sleep, diet, and exercise. Growth comes from identifying and practicing strategies that increase



your emotional resilience so that you experience fewer situations as stressful, and can recover more quickly.

### Readings

An explanation of react versus respond: [www.serenejourney.com/2009/06/do-you-react-or-respond/](http://www.serenejourney.com/2009/06/do-you-react-or-respond/)

Information about the Relaxation Response, Herbert Benson's work: [www.relaxationresponse.org/](http://www.relaxationresponse.org/)

An overview of resilience: [www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/topic/resilience/what-resilience](http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/topic/resilience/what-resilience)

An overview of mindfulness and good links to tips on cultivating mindfulness and starting a meditation practice, from Jon Kabat-Zinn: [static.oprah.com/download/pdfs/presents/2007/spa/spa\\_meditate\\_cultivate.pdf](http://static.oprah.com/download/pdfs/presents/2007/spa/spa_meditate_cultivate.pdf)

### Other Resources

There is a tremendous amount of information and resources on stress from the Mayo Clinic, including a list of traits of stressed out students and an online stress assessment: [www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-management/MY00435](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-management/MY00435)

SuperBetter (also suggested in the Unit 8: Wellness Basics) is a free online game that uses the structure of a game (e.g., superheroes, bad guys, quests, allies, points) to help you achieve a health-related goal you specify. Each time you log on you have tasks to complete. The designer was grappling with the question, "What if you took all the energy people put into imaginary gaming worlds, and put it to use for real purposes?," when she got a severe concussion. She wrote the prototype of this game to help motivate herself to do the things that would help her get better. There is a text introduction, a graphical introduction, and a video introduction at [www.superbetter.com](http://www.superbetter.com). It's fun!

This Australian website, [au.reachout.com/](http://au.reachout.com/) has resources for teens to help with mental health and well-being. It includes coping tips, forums, fact sheets, and personal stories in an interactive and appealing format. Their tagline: "From everyday troubles through to really tough times, take the first step with ReachOut.com, Australia's leading online youth mental health service."

## UNIT PREPARATION CONSIDERATIONS

### Tasks

To deepen your understanding of stress, you may want to have a discussion with a school counselor or psychologist who specializes in stress management or mindfulness.

If you plan to use the individual stress releaser plan as a summative assessment, create a tracker template for students to record ideas from the different unit activities.



If you do the:

- Work Styles activity with O\*net Online activity in the Healthy Responses lesson, take some time to become familiar with navigating around O\*Net so you can assist students to get to the work styles information. As an example, here are the work styles for a dental hygienist: [www.onetonline.org/link/summary/29-2021.00#WorkStyles](http://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/29-2021.00#WorkStyles)
- Strike a Pose activity in the Healthy Responses section, read the article, “Strike a Pose,” to better understand the research behind the idea: [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2032113,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2032113,00.html)
- SuperBetter summative assessment: Play it yourself first. It’s pretty intuitive, but you’ll want to play enough that you can demonstrate the basic idea.

### Speakers

Scan the classroom introduction activities for speaker ideas. Contact these people early to arrange dates and times.

### Prior Knowledge

You may need to preteach some of these concepts depending on the lessons and activities you select:

- triggers
- react versus respond
- meditation
- mindfulness
- resilience

## SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT IDEAS

Following are ideas for a summative assessment for this unit:

1. Individual stress releaser plan. Use what you have learned from this unit (e.g., local resources, online exploration, workplace research, your reflections, or advice from speakers) to create your own stress management plan (learning outcome 2). You could create:
  - a graffiti wall with sayings that will help you in stressful situations
  - a flow chart for stress management
  - a flip card deck with stress management mantras and affirmations for dealing with stress
  - a flip card deck with stress management techniques that work for you. Include physical ones, e.g., weight room or a brisk walk, that appeal to you.



2. Write a palindrome about stress management. A palindrome is a sequence of words or phrases that make sense read forward or backward. See a sample, “Lost Generation” at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=42E2fAWM6rA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42E2fAWM6rA). Include stress triggers, healthy responses, and a strategy to build emotional resilience in your palindrome. Alternatively, write an acrostic poem using the letters in STRESS MANAGEMENT (learning outcomes 1, 2, 3).
3. Create a SuperBetter game to grow your stress management skills: [www.superbetter.com/](http://www.superbetter.com/). Create quests and power-ups about strategies that help you respond to stress in a healthy manner and strategies that help you build emotional resilience. Create bad guys about your personal stress triggers and reactions (learning outcomes 1, 2, 3). Play your game for a few weeks!

## UNIT KICKOFF

Watch the 2:24-minute video, “Managing Stress – BrainSmart – BBC,” at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnpQrMqDoqE&feature=list\\_related&playnext=1&list=SP56IE980B8783F9AC](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnpQrMqDoqE&feature=list_related&playnext=1&list=SP56IE980B8783F9AC). Share stories about experiencing the fight or flight response.

## LESSONS

This unit is divided into the following lessons. The lessons contain choices for activities and are organized into an instructional sequence around a workplace assignment.

1. Stress triggers and reactions
2. Healthy responses
3. Resilience

Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
I. Stress triggers and reactions	Introduction – individual	 Journal. Think about your last workplace visit. How were you feeling when you started your day? How about when you were done? Make a list of adjectives that capture your feelings. Name the feelings. What do they look like? Where did you feel them in your body?  Now think about a recent homework assignment. How were you feeling when you started it? How about when you were done? Make a list of adjectives that capture your feelings. Name the feelings. What do they look like? Where did you feel them in your body?



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Stress triggers and reactions, continued</i></p>		<p>Examine your answers and make a Venn diagram comparing work and homework feelings. Circle the ones that were stressful.</p> <p> Journal. Step 1: People can experience stress differently: anxiety, withdrawal, angry, eating, headaches, etc. How and where do you feel it in <u>your</u> body? Make your own five level stress reaction scale, from mild stress to unbearable stress. You could use colors or emoticons for your scale instead of numbers. This is an example for a person who gets angry when stressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I could lose control (level 5)</li> <li>• Can really upset me (level 4)</li> <li>• Starts to upset me (level 3)</li> <li>• Bugs me (level 2)</li> <li>• Minor annoyance (level 1)</li> </ul> <p>Step 2: List or draw pictures of at least three events that could trigger the reaction at each of your levels.</p>
	<p>Introduction – classroom</p>	<p>Your body speaks. Students sit quietly, eyes looking down. Invite them to think about a time that was stressful at work or at school. Ask them to picture the setting, what they were wearing, inside or outside, sounds, smells. Ask them to relive the event and look at where they feel it in their bodies: head, stomach, shoulder, neck, etc. Hand out body maps and have students put an X on each area that had a stress response. Sample body map: <a href="http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_a8vATy25gyM/TDydOidnmgI/AAAAAAAAADp0/YQPq_PKWfdA/s1600/Body%2BTemplate.jpg">4.bp.blogspot.com/_a8vATy25gyM/TDydOidnmgI/AAAAAAAAADp0/YQPq_PKWfdA/s1600/Body%2BTemplate.jpg</a></p> <p>Share experiences and look for commonalities. Paying attention to body clues tells us when we are experiencing stress. Tell students they will be discovering strategies to use when their bodies tell them they have stress.</p>
		<p>Improv. Create a deck of cards with feeling words. Draw a card and look at the feeling</p>



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Stress triggers and reactions, continued</i></p>		<p>word. Roll the dice. Dice (evens = workplace stress, odds = relationship stress). With a partner, act out a scenario using the feeling word according to the dice result. What happens when you bring relationship stress into the workplace?</p>
		<p>Pair and share. As a class, brainstorm a list of behaviors of stressed students. Then, in pairs, look at different events (e.g., exams, holidays, balancing work and school) and notice which behaviors you see in yourselves, and when.</p>
		<p> Invite a school counselor to do an introductory lesson on stress triggers.</p>
		<p> Invite a school counselor to do an introductory lesson on mindfulness. Awareness is critical to being able to manage stress.</p>
	<p>Workplace activity</p>	<p> Interview two people at your workplace. How does stress affect their ability to do their jobs well? Have the stressors changed over time?</p>
		<p> Mental notes. Identify places and practices at your workplace that help to decrease stress (e.g., ability to walk around when you start to feel stress, deep breathing, climb some stairs, pleasant break room, boss who is willing to listen). Identify places and practices at your workplace that may increase stress (e.g., inability to take a break when you need it, break room that is gloomy or messy, isolation from others). For this last group, are there ways that the situation could be improved?</p>
	<p>Follow-up – individual</p>	<p> Journal. When do your stress reactions affect your ability to perform your job well? To complete homework and school projects? Can you see any growth in yourself over the past year in this area? Where would you like to improve more?</p>



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Stress triggers and reactions, continued</i></p>		<p> Journal. List the tasks you are asked to do at your workplace. Identify the top three stressful tasks. What makes them stressful for you?</p>
	<p>Follow-up – classroom</p>	<p>Role play. In pairs, ask students to create role play situations where someone is presented with a stress trigger. Have classmates take turns acting out the situations, along with healthier responses.</p> <p>Networking. The teacher describes different work tasks or situations that might create stress. The students mingle and find a partner who can suggest a strategy to address a stress reaction. The teacher calls time, then students mingle again and find a different partner. When the students are finished they should have a class set of healthy stress responses.</p>
<p>2. Healthy responses</p>	<p>Introduction – individual</p>	<p> Journal. Make five circles on a piece of paper. Inside each one, write down something that triggers stress in you. Outside one side of the circle, write down your instinctive reaction. Opposite that, write down a better response.</p> <p> Stressed about homework? Watch (and mostly listen) to the 26:39-minute video, “Music to Help Study and Work,” at <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8-IWIDT19k&amp;feature=related">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8-IWIDT19k&amp;feature=related</a>. Follow the directions below the video for how to use it. Do your homework assignment. Then write a journal entry about how it was to do your work this way. List two kinds of workplaces where you could probably listen to music while you worked. List two others where you would not be able to listen to music, and explain why not.</p> <p> Journal and experiments. Try doing your homework at different times, different places and with different background noise. Create</p>



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Healthy responses, continued</i></p>		<p>and fill out a four column chart with headings for time, place, type of noise and comments. What works for you? What does not?</p>
	<p>Introduction – classroom</p>	<p>Ask students to discuss the difference between reacting and responding. Most students will benefit from clarifying the difference between the two, since we tend to use the words interchangeably in daily life. As a class, come up with possible stressful situations, then give both a reaction and a response to each.</p> <p>As a group, create a stress mantra or jingle or an acronym that can be used as a stress reliever or reminder. Create or find reminders that you can use at the workplace. Do a show and tell with the different reminders (e.g., a picture of your dog, a simple symbol, a necklace that you can touch).</p> <p>Routine stress relievers investigation. Divide the class into groups and assign each group a different investigation from the list below. Groups share their findings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss easy exercise activities you could build into the course of a day that would burn off stress: stairs versus elevator, parking farther away, housecleaning, dance, walk the dog, hobbies.</li> <li>• Come up with stress relievers that can be done in class (e.g., squeeze balls, stand and stretch at your desk, write things that are bothering you on a notecard and put them aside until after class).</li> <li>• Find a song that helps you relieve stress.</li> <li>• Create a list of daily affirmations that can be used when you feel stressed.</li> <li>• Create three different stress reliever</li> </ul>
	<p>Workplace activity</p>	<p> Find out what your workplace offers to employees to help them manage stress. Collect any print materials the workplace has to help manage stress. These materials can be used</p>



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Healthy responses, continued</i></p>		<p>later to create a stress management resource for the class.</p> <p> Ask people in three different kinds of roles what is stressful about their field, and in their job in particular. What do they see as poor reactions to stress? What do they see as healthy responses?</p> <p> Ask three people how they deal with outside stressors that they bring to work. How do they set them aside and be productive at work anyway?</p>
	<p>Follow-up – individual</p>	<p> Journal. Look up an occupation of interest on <a href="http://www.onetonline.org">www.onetonline.org</a>. Look at the work styles required for that occupation (some occupation descriptions will not include this information, unfortunately). Pick at least one style that might be stressful for you and write down a plan for responding in a healthy manner.</p> <p> Journal. Describe three ideas about how to respond to specific stresses at work so you could complete a work shift successfully. Include an idea about how you will deal with an outside stressor that affects your work performance.</p> <p> Journal. Create a stress-related scenario that could happen to you in the workplace. Then create a cartoon of at least three different ways you could respond to the stress. Make sure at least one of the three reactions is a positive way to respond to stress and a method you would use.</p>
	<p>Follow-up – classroom</p>	<p>You're like me. Each student makes two lists, one titled "Things that trigger a stress reaction in me" and the other, "These are healthy responses that work for me." Walk around the room and find someone who shares one of your triggers. Share your healthy responses. Do this with several more people. At the end, do a</p>



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Healthy responses, continued</i></p>		<p>group share about the new techniques students will try. For each technique, decide in which settings you could use it: work, school, extracurricular activities, family, relationships.</p> <p>Try it. Create a list of common stressors at school. Students brainstorm healthy responses to each one. Note which responses are “anytime, anywhere” and which ones are limited. For example, you can always breathe slowly and deeply. You cannot always go for a run. Each student picks at least two responses to try over the next week, then reports back to the class about how they worked.</p> <p>Mindfulness practice. Try the Raisin exercise at <a href="http://www.mindfulnessinfo.com/exercise-2-the-raisin/">www.mindfulnessinfo.com/exercise-2-the-raisin/</a>. How could being fully present help in a stressful situation?</p>
<p>3. Resilience</p>	<p>Introduction – individual</p>	<p> Journal and activity. Make a list of simple small things that refresh you in your day-to-day life. Search for images of those things on the Internet and make a poster or booklet using the images. Some examples might be listening to a song, walking into a good smell, coming upon a view, running into a friend in a store, taking a nap.</p> <p> Journal and activity. Describe your mood right now. What are you feeling? Now stop and go outside for a few minutes. Use your senses and name:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• three sounds you hear</li> <li>• three sensations you feel</li> <li>• three things you see</li> <li>• three smells</li> </ul> <p>Go back inside and assess your mood again. Is anything different because you took a break and focused on the world around you?</p>
	<p>Introduction – classroom</p>	<p> Survey the class for their interests and areas of curiosity about relaxation activities (e.g. yoga, mindfulness). Which locally available</p>



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Resilience, continued</i></p>		<p>activities would they like to know more about? What resources for these activities are in your community? Bring in practitioners to give talks and sample classes.</p> <p>Strike a pose. This is a demonstration that faking it till you make it is a real phenomenon. Learn more at <a href="http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2032113,00.html">www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2032113,00.html</a>. Ask your students to sit with their shoulders slouched, slumped in their seats for 10 minutes, or to stand with arms hugging their chests and legs crossed at the ankle. They can talk or read, but they have to stay slumped. Give them a pop quiz on something. Ask how it went.</p> <p>Now ask them to assume power positions for 10 minutes, taking up a lot of space. Either sit leaning back in their chairs, arms crossed behind head, elbow out, feet on desk or standing, leaning forward, hands on the desk. Give them another pop quiz. Have them remain in their power positions while they take the quiz. Discuss the differences from the first quiz experience. Share your observations as well.</p>
	<p>Workplace activity</p>	<p>Mental notes. Notice who seems to bounce back from difficulties easily. Ask them how they do it. Were they the same in high school? How did they learn the skills?</p> <p>Mental notes. Resilience practice: pick one of the healthy response or mindfulness exercises you have learned about and try it at work. Notice what happens to your mood.</p> <p>Mental notes. Notice how you cope with things on a day you are short on sleep. Compare it to a day when you had a good night’s sleep. Notice how you cope with things on a day when you are distracted by something that is bothering you.</p>
	<p>Follow-up – individual</p>	<p> Journal. Ask two adult family members or other adults to tell you about a difficult time they faced. What did they do to get through it?</p>



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Resilience, continued</i></p>		<p>What advice would they give you about overcoming difficulties in your life? Write the advice in your journal.</p>
		<p> Journal. Write about a time that was difficult for you. How was your resilience? What things did you do to help you overcome the difficulty? What other things could you have tried?</p>
		<p> Journal. Create a visual wellness meter and chart your coping ability for a week</p>
		<p>Calendar. Look at one week in a calendar. Fill in the calendar with all your scheduled events and have-to-do time commitments. Note the free time where you have control over your time. Make a plan to take care of yourself. Schedule time for relaxation. How will you use this time to ensure you keep your resiliency high?</p>
	<p>Follow-up – classroom</p>	<p>Practice one activity from this unit each day for a week. Write down on a calendar what you do. Share your calendars with others in the class. How did you plan out your free time using activities from this unit? What activities helped most? Was there a time of day that worked better?</p>
<p>Wellness pie. Using the Dimensions of Wellness at <a href="http://healthcenter.ucdavis.edu/hep/well/wellness.html">healthcenter.ucdavis.edu/hep/well/wellness.html</a>, brainstorm activities for building resilience in each of the seven dimensions. Create a resilience pie that represents your week. Each pie slice represents what you will do to take care of yourself in the seven dimensions of wellness for a week. Be realistic, not all pie slices will be the same size.</p> <p>Alternatively, do this activity with the health triangle: <a href="http://www.dawnmwilliams.com/Health-Triangle.gif">www.dawnmwilliams.com/Health-Triangle.gif</a>. Here is an example: <a href="http://www.toolboxpro.org/secure/teachers/5524/cute%20health%20triangle.jpg">http://www.toolboxpro.org/secure/teachers/5524/cute%20health%20triangle.jpg</a></p>		



## CONNECTIONS TO NH CAREER DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

The NH Career Development Curriculum Framework (October 2006) establishes seven curriculum standards “that define what New Hampshire students should know and be able to do relative to career development” at the end of grades four, eight, 10 and 12. Listed below are the End of Grade 10 and End of Grade 12 proficiency standards addressed in this unit, some more intensely than others. Student competence will depend on the activities you choose and the depth of student practice. You may need to develop individual activities in order for students to achieve competence.

### End of Grade 10

- 1.1 Access information from multiple sources and information-retrieval systems.
- 1.3 Demonstrate the ability to summarize ideas and information.
- 2.2 Identify the issues involved in making a decision or solving a problem.
- 2.5 Develop a plan that reflects research and builds on relevant precedents.
- 2.6 Evaluate an event or activity in terms of expressed purposes.
- 2.8 Devise strategies for improving the performance of a system.
- 4.2 Demonstrate an understanding of how individual characteristics relate to achieving individual, social, educational, and career goals.
- 6.3 Demonstrate an understanding of how employers and employees organize to improve the quality of goods, services, and working conditions.
- 6.5 Identify individuals in selected occupations as possible information sources, role models, or mentors.
- 6.6 Consult with and observe adult role models at work to identify elements of their work and determine the need for specific knowledge and skills.
- 7.2 Demonstrate a positive attitude toward work and learning.

### End of Grade 12

- 2.3 Develop a systemic plan and communicate the plan clearly.
- 2.4 Develop and test strategies to optimize the performance of a system.
- 4.1 Demonstrate behaviors that maintain physical and emotional health.
- 4.2 Demonstrate knowledge of how individuals grow and develop throughout their lives.
- 4.4 Demonstrate the ability to make decisions consistent with one’s own belief system.
- 5.1 Demonstrate consistent, responsive, and caring behavior.
- 5.2 Demonstrate the ability to respect the rights of, and accept responsibility for, oneself and others.
- 6.2 Explain the importance of the balance between work and leisure time.
- 6.5 Analyze the effects of the changing workplace on the individual, employers, workers, labor organizations, the economy, and society.
- 6.9 Demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which work, family, and leisure roles are interrelated.

