Suggestions For Daily Use of Stress Control Techniques In The Classroom

**Breathing:** Breathing exercises can be used at all times during the school day. These exercises can be used at the beginning, end, or during a class lesson, to help the students relax.

**Visualization:** This exercise can be used at the beginning, middle, and end of the school day.

1. Teachers can start students off with a positive visualization about how their day will go.
2. During the day, teachers can have students visualize pleasant situations for a calming effect.
3. Visualization can also be used before a transitional period. Teachers can have students visualize how the transition will take place. This enable the student to go through a mental exercise of what they are expected to do, prior to actually having to do it.
4. Visualization can be used as a mind-set to help introduce a lesson or enhance the mind's thinking capability; for example: If the lesson is on plants, the teacher may have students close their eyes and visualize a field or a forest surrounded by many different plants. The teacher can help students in the visualization process by describing the plants to the students.

**Positive Statements:** (Called Affirmations). Students should be encourage to use positive statements about themselves and their behavior at all times. Teachers can start the class off with a positive statement(s) at the beginning of each day; for example:

- I ENJOY LEARNING.
- I AM IN CONTROL OF MY BODY (HANDS & MOUTH) AT ALL TIMES.
- I AM SMART.
- I AM CAPABLE OF HANDLING CONFLICTS PEACEFULLY.
- I AM THE BEST ME POSSIBLE.
- IF I AM ANGRY, I WILL TAKE DEEP BREATHS AND EXPRESS MYSELF CALMLY.
- I CAN DO IT.
- I CAN CONTROL MYSELF.

These positive statements can be referred to at different times of the day. Have students read or repeat them out loud individually. Teachers can make small personal positive statement cards to place on the student's desks. If a child is having a hard time learning how to read; his/her affirmation may be as follows:

- I CAN READ.
- I AM A GOOD READER.
- I ENJOY READING.
- READING IS EASY FOR ME.

**Positive Communication:** Encourage children to be more expressive, by helping them to use positive communication steps during the day; for example: "I feel mad, when someone teases me," or "I feel sad when no one plays with me."
**Problem Solving:** Help students develop responsibility for problem solving. Have group meetings and go over the steps for problem solving, using input from students. The students can begin to take ownership of class problems, with guidance from the teacher.

**Massage:** Massage can help students calm down. When doing massaging activities, encourage students to take deep breaths. Play soft background music.

**Yoga:** Slow moving yoga exercises can be used to help channel positively, the naturally high energy that children have. During transitional times, have students engage in yoga exercises.

**Baroque Music:** Super learning music can be played at all times during the school day. It is recommended for times when students are doing seat work, reading, or during listening times.

**Color Sensitivity:** Use color as much as possible in the classroom, and be aware of the energies that different colors transmit. For example: Yellow-Wisdom, Red_Vitality, Blue-Calming, Green-Order, ect.

**Left Brain/Right Brain Dominance:** Set up an anger center in the classroom. Include posters, anger bag and contents (pillow, soft ball, crayons or color pencils, play dough, teddy bear, ect.); relaxation tapes (earphones optional). Involve parent(s) in anger management plans. Put up a chart, listing appropriate behavior in the classroom (things to do when angry).

DEVELOPED BY JENNIE C. TROTTER, WHOLISTIC STRESS CONTROL INSTITUTE, INC. 1986; ATLANTA, GA.
Life Change Index

Directions: If an event mentioned above has occurred in the past year, or is expected in the near future, copy the number in the score column. If the event has occurred or is expected to occur more than once, multiply this number by the frequency of the event.

**EVENT** | **IMPACT SCORE**
---|---
Death of spouse | 100
Divorce | 73
Marital Separation | 65
Jail Term | 63
Death of close family member | 63
Personal injury or illness | 53
Marriage | 50
Fired at work | 47
Marital reconciliation | 45
Retirement | 45
Change in health of family member | 44
Pregnancy | 40
Sex difficulties | 39
Gain of a new family member | 39
Business readjustment | 39
Change in financial state | 38
Death of a close friend | 37
Change to a different line of work | 36
Change in number of arguments with spouse | 35
Mortgage over $20,000 | 31
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan | 30
Change in responsibilities at work | 29
Son or daughter leaving home | 29
Trouble with in-laws | 29
Outstanding personal achievement | 28
Spouse begins or stops work | 26
Begin or end school | 26
Change in living conditions | 25
Revisions of personal habits | 24
Trouble with boss | 23
Change in work hours or conditions | 20
Change in residence | 20
Change in schools | 20
Change in recreations | 19
Change in church activities | 19
Change in social activities | 19
Mortgage or loan less than $20,000 | 17
Change in sleeping habits | 16
Change in number of family get-togethers | 15
Change in eating habits | 15
Vacation | 13
Christmas approaching | 12
Minor violation of the law | 11

Scoring The Life Change Index
The body is a finely timed instrument that does not like surprises. Any sudden change stimli which affects the body, or the reordering of important routines that the body become used to, can cause needless stress, throwing your whole physical being into turmoil.

The following chart will give you some idea of how to informally score yourself on Social Readjustment Scale. Since being healthy is the optimum state you want to achieve, being sick is the state of being you most want to avoid.

**LIFE CHANGE UNITS**

- 300+
- 150-299
- less than 150

**LIKELIHOOD OF ILLNESS IN NEAR FUTURE**

- about 80 percent
- about 50 percent
- about 30 percent

The higher your life change score, the harder you have to work to get yourself back into a state of good health.

HOW VULNERABLE ARE YOU TO STRESS?

(1) Always
(2) Almost Always
(3) Sometimes
(4) Almost Never
(5) Never

--------- 1. I eat at least one hot, balance meal a day.
--------- 2. I get seven to eight hours of sleep at least four nights a week.
--------- 3. I give and receive affection regularly.
--------- 4. I have at least one relative within 50 miles on whom I can rely.
--------- 5. I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.
--------- 6. I smoke less than half a pack of cigarettes a day.
--------- 7. I take fewer than five alcoholic drinks a week.
--------- 8. I am the appropriate weight for my height.
--------- 9. I have an income adequate to meet basic expenses.
--------- 10. I get strength from my religious beliefs.
--------- 11. I regularly attend clubs or social activities.
--------- 12. I have a network of friends and acquaintances.
--------- 13. I have one or more friends to confide in about personal matters.
--------- 14. I am in good health (including eyesight, hearing, teeth).
--------- 15. I am able to speak about my feeling when angry or worried.
--------- 16. I have regular conversations with the people I live with about domestic problems, e.g., chores, money and daily living issues.
--------- 17. I do something for fun at least once a week.
--------- 18. I am able to organize my time effectively.
--------- 19. I drink fewer than three cups of coffee (or tea or cola drinks) a day.
--------- 20. I take quiet time for myself a day.

Total Score:---------

Interpretation: Add the score and subtract 20.
0-24: Slightly vulnerable.
50-75: Seriously vulnerable.
Above 75: Extremely vulnerable.

"Vulnerability Scale", The Stress Audit. Developed by Lyle H. Miller And Alma Dell Smith.
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The scenario has become an increasingly familiar one. You go to the doctor with a stomachache or other minor ailment that just doesn't seem to go away. Unable to find anything wrong, the doctor tells you that you're "stressed out" and that you need to relax more. You want to take his advice to heart, but you're not sure what to do.

Experts say that effective relaxation requires more than simply vegging out in front of the TV set. It means learning a few relaxation techniques to combat stress -- a condition that has been linked to a host of physical and emotional problems like heart disease, headaches, asthma and insomnia.

In times of stress, your body produces various chemicals, such as adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol, which put the body on alert and send your cardiovascular system into overdrive. In other words, your muscles tense, you breathe faster and your pulse quickens. Scientists call it the "fight-or-flight" response, and no doubt it enabled our cave-dwelling ancestors to react quickly to imminent danger, such as the unexpected appearance of a saber-toothed tiger at teatime.

Today's comparatively more mundane threats, such as the traffic jam that threatens to make you late for a meeting, produce the very same reactions.

And unless you make an effort to alleviate those stresses through relaxation, your blood pressure may rise, your immune system's ability to fight disease may drop a notch and you may indeed begin to suffer from stomach and muscle aches and other stress-related symptoms. Turning on the TV -- particularly violent TV -- probably won't help. More than likely, it will just stimulate production of those chemicals that trigger a fight-or-flight response. It's better that you do something that reduces or eliminates the production of those chemicals, says Barbara Moeller, a New Jersey stress therapist.

Here are some techniques you can practice to relax more deeply and effectively:

Paul J. Rosch, M.D., a professor at New York Medical College and a leading stress expert, says that what you think about can affect your stress levels. To see how this is true, try this exercise:

Imagine arguing with someone you don't like. Notice how your pulse quickens, your jaw tightens and your muscles tense? Now take a few minutes to imagine a more pleasant situation, such as napping on a warm beach. Notice how your heartbeat slows and muscles loosen up?

You've just witnessed how guided imagery -- similar to good old-fashioned daydreaming -- can help you to relax. To relax further:

- Sit or lie comfortably and close your eyes.
- Imagine a situation or scene that you find comforting or relaxing, such as a quiet stroll in the park.
- Try to involve as many of your senses as possible. If you're envisioning a beach, for example, imagine seeing the blue sky, hearing the waves crashing, smelling the salt air, feeling the warm sun and tasting great ice cream.
- Repeat an affirmation, like "I'm releasing tension now," to yourself as you keep the scene fixed in your mind.

There's no way to overstate the value of regular aerobic exercise, such as riding a bicycle, walking or jogging, to help your body relax, say experts. Regular exercise not only improves your fitness, it produces endorphins -- chemicals in the brain that counteract the stress chemicals and produce a feeling of well-being.

One variation on exercise you might try is yoga, which uses stretching techniques to strengthen the body and quiet the mind. Yoga helps relieve tension in the muscles and increase circulation in the body, experts say.

Not many of us are aware of just how much our own breathing reflects and affects our state of mind and stress levels, says David Feifel, M.D., Ph.D., a professor of psychiatry at the University of California, San Diego.

Fast, shallow breathing initiates anxiety, while slow, steady breathing invites a sense of calm, says Dr. Feifel, who adds that simply slowing your breathing can trigger relaxation in both the mind and the body.

Here's a simple technique you can practice anywhere, even in the car:

- Take a deep breath and hold it for a few seconds.
- Imagining that you're blowing all the tension from your body, purse your lips and exhale slowly. Repeat several times.

"Relaxation techniques can give you a whole new perspective," says Dr. Feifel. "They can do more than just reduce stress; they can help you can gain the ability to extract a greater appreciation of the richness of life."