

Reality Matters

Stress and Anxiety

Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 9–12

Curriculum Focus: Health

Lesson Duration: Two-three class periods

Program Description

Teens face a great deal of stress in their daily lives—from social and academic pressures to worrying about issues like terrorism and school violence. While many teens cope well with anxiety, some do not. Nearly one in eight teens suffers from depression. This can lead to many serious health consequences, ranging from eating disorders to suicidal tendencies. Learn how typical teens cope with a variety of stressful situations, explore methods for defusing some of the anxiety in your own life, see why some teens had to hit bottom before they could heal, and find out how one cancer patient deals with a terminal illness by being upbeat, creative, and giving to others.

Discussion Questions

Before watching the video

- What causes stress or anxiety in your life?
- How do social and academic pressures create stress in your life, and how do you cope with it?

After watching the video

- What are some stress-related health consequences?
 - What advice would you give to teens struggling to cope with anxiety about issues like school violence or terrorism?
 - What are some of the warning signs of depression and what can be done to help teens cope?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Examine the effects of social, family, and academic pressures on stress levels.
- Explore positive and negative ways of coping with stressful situations.
- Develop a creative way to present coping strategies to their peers.

Materials

- *Stress and Anxiety* video
- Computer with Internet access
- Any props, as needed, for skits

Procedures

1. Discuss as a class and note down (either on the board or large sheets of paper) some of the common stress issues that teenagers encounter. These may include
 - academic pressure
 - pressure to fit in with a particular group by adopting their fashion or lifestyle
 - peer pressure to try drugs or alcohol
 - sexual pressure
 - conflicts with parents or siblings
 - violence/bullying
 - schedule overload
2. Ask students if any of them have experienced one or more of these issues. How have they coped? What advice would they give to others in this situation? Do they think these are universal issues for teens? What are some similar issues that their parents, or other adults, might face?
3. Explain to students that they will create and perform a 5-8 minute skit that presents a stressful or anxiety-inducing situation and provide strategies for coping with the situation.
4. Divide the class into groups of three or four. Students will select or be assigned one of the topics that have been discussed. Each group will write a script that explores their assigned issue and provide a minimum of three ways to cope with the situation in a healthy emotional and/or physical manner and three coping strategies that might produce negative results. They will then present the skit to the class.

The following web sites have useful information about teenage stress, anxiety, and depression. They are a good starting point for exploring this topic:

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/youthdevelopment/DA3083.html>

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/oes-bsu-02/teens_e.html

<http://www.vh.org/pediatric/patient/pediatrics/cqqa/teenagersstress.html>

http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_25837.html

<http://www.lifespan.org/Services/ChildHealth/Parenting/teen-stress.htm>

http://www.momsandkids.org/momskids/teenunit/topic_anger.html

5. Students should include the following information in their skits:

- An overview of the stress-causing situation (e.g., tests, grades)
- Three or four specific instances relating to the situation (e.g., weekly math quiz, the SAT, not keeping up with homework assignments).
- How stress is affecting the teen, such as loss of appetite, loss of sleep, moodiness
- At least three unconstructive ways to cope with the situation.
- At least three constructive ways to cope with the situation.
- Prediction of outcome or resolution based on coping strategies (positive and negative).

Students can use their creativity to develop potential stress-scenarios, utilize props or other visuals for the skit, and be as dramatic as they can in demonstrating or explaining a situation.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students were highly engaged in class discussions; contributed thoughtful insights to the conversation; presented a well-conceived, creative, and informative skit.
- **2 points:** Students were somewhat engaged in class discussions; contributed some ideas to the conversation; presented an adequately written and informative skit .
- **1 point:** Students were not engaged in class discussions; contributed little to the conversation; created a poorly conceived and presented skit .

Vocabulary

anxiety

Definition: An overwhelming sense of apprehension, usually over an anticipated event

Context: It's normal to have feelings of anxiety when a big exam is coming up, but it's important to develop good test-taking strategies to cope.

clique

Definition: A narrow, exclusive group of people who share common interests, views, or purposes

Context: Most teens want to be part of the right clique, so they adopt similar clothes, hairstyles, accessories, or even lifestyles in an effort to fit in.

depression

Definition: A psychological disorder marked by sadness, inactivity, difficulty thinking and concentrating, a significant change in appetite or sleeping habits, feelings of dejection and hopelessness, and sometimes suicidal tendencies

Context: One in eight teenagers suffers from depression, but there are many ways to successfully treat the disorder.

peer pressure

Definition: Undue influence from members of the same age, grade, or status group

Context: Peer pressure can lead teenagers to try drugs, alcohol, sex, or other activities, just to be part of the “in” crowd.

self-esteem

Definition: A feeling of confidence and respect for oneself

Context: Teens’ feelings of self-esteem are often linked to their friends and social network.

Standards

National Academy of Sciences

The National Academy of Sciences provides guidelines for teaching science in grades K–12 to promote scientific literacy. To view the standards, visit this Web site:

<http://books.nap.edu/html/nses/html/overview.html#content>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Science in Personal and Social Perspectives: Personal and community health

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL’s Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K–12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Health – Knows how to maintain mental and emotional health
- Health – Knows how to maintain and promote personal health

Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
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DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

How To Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video—This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index—Here the video is divided into sections indicated by video thumbnail icons. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. Brief descriptions and total running times are noted for each part. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

Curriculum Units—These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

Standards Link—Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

Teacher Resources—This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

Video Index

I. Pressure Cooker (2 min.)

Most teens experience some form of stress, which can be caused by many different things. For some teens it gets too much to handle alone.

II. The "In" Crowd (5 min.)

It's important for teens to fit in with their peers. Being excluded can lead to depression, anxiety, and stress.

III. Raising the Bar (6min.)

Teens face a great deal of pressure to do well in school and often pressure themselves to excel in other areas of their lives.

IV. Close to Home (3 min.)

The events of September 11, 2001, added a great deal of stress to many teens' lives.

V. A Helping Hand (8 min.)

One girl's struggle with depression is not so different from what many teens go through. But help is out there—from therapy sessions to medication to creative expression.

Curriculum Units

1. A Stressful Time of Life

Pre-viewing question

Q: What kind of stress do you experience in your life?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What can we do to control our stress?

A: Answers will vary.

2. Coping with Peer Pressure

Pre-viewing question

Q: How has peer pressure influenced you?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What other ways could Taylor could handle the issue of wanting to get good grades without appearing uncool?

A: Answers will vary, but might include finding other friends that feel the same way about grades, not letting his friends' opinions influence him so strongly, being his own person, going his own way, or focusing on his long-term goal of getting into a good college.

3. Stress: Not Just Academic

Pre-viewing question

Q: What are some stress-busting strategies you use at test time?

A: Answers will vary, but might include getting a good night's sleep, not cramming, eating a good breakfast, or dressing comfortably.

Post-viewing question

Q: Do you think Megan brought the stress and anxiety on herself? How so?

A: Answers will vary, but should mention her liking the recognition, competitive nature, a lack of self-esteem, lack of a good support system, over scheduling her time, or not being able to let go.

4. Post 9/11 Anxiety

Pre-viewing question

Q: How have the events of 9/11 changed your life?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What advice would you give to teens struggling with issues of terrorism, violence, or a parent in a war zone?

A: Answers will vary, but should mention getting involved in helpful activities such as letter writing campaigns, sending care packages, writing down their feelings in a journal or poem, expressing their feelings through artwork, or talking to someone.

5. Learning to Cope

Pre-viewing question

Q: What are some ways you cope with stress, anxiety, or depression?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What would you say to a friend who was struggling with feelings of anxiety or depression?

A: Answers will vary, but should mention getting professional help, taking prescribed medication, finding a productive emotional outlet such as art or music, writing poetry or stories, or doing volunteer work.