

DESTRESS FOR SUCCESS



INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL



A program for children and teenagers designed by the
Centre for Studies on Human Stress and their collaborators



CENTRE FOR STUDIES
ON HUMAN STRESS
(CSHS)

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Destress for Success



What is the Destress for Success program?

DeStress for Success® is a 5-workshop program that provides stress education for children making the transition from middle-school to high school. The program allows children and teenagers to learn what stress is, how to recognize it, and how to cope with it in their lives. DeStress for Success® builds on what the students already know and provides them with the knowledge to recognize the ways in which stress affects the brain and body.

The program has been designed in close collaboration with school counselors, school nurses, social workers, teachers, children and teenagers.



" Now I understand how my body reacts to stress "

E., 13 years

" The Destress for Success program has taught me good ways to get rid of my stress " M., 12 years

" I now know the difference between social support and social pressure " A., 12 years

" The Destress for Success program has taught me that I need to understand my stress in order to manage it "
A., 12 years

For the instructor: Introduction to the program

The De-Stress for Success Program was created using scientifically grounded information, to improve the physical and mental health of children and teenagers. The program involves interactive discussions and activities that encourage students to think about factors that may be perceived as stressful and why these factors may create a stress-response. As well, the program will help children and teenagers to recognize what a stress-response entails, and to learn ways to decrease the stress-response following exposure to a perceived stressor.

The core concepts include:

- 1) What is stress? The N.U.T.S. Model
- 2) How do I recognize my own stress? The body's stress response – energy mobilization
- 3) How do I prevent and cope with stress?

The program is broken down into five workshops. Each workshop offers interactive and stimulating activities that enable the educator to explain various elements of stress to the students. Teaching instructions for each workshop are provided to serve as a guide for the course.

In addition to in-class learning, students are asked to complete several exercises in a logbook that will be provided. The logbook is intended to reinforce the concepts presented to the students during each workshop. Writing in the logbook allows the student to recognize how they react to and deal with stressful events, by applying the concepts to their own life.



Program Outline

Workshop 1: N.U.T.S. model

- What exactly is stress?
- Recipe for stress
- N.U.T.S. Model: Novelty / Unpredictable / Threat to Ego / Sense of Control
- Logbook #1: Identify stressors and the element(s) of the N.U.T.S model that each stressor contains.

Workshop 2: Logbook Discussion and N.U.T.S. Activity

- Students' results from logbook #1 will be discussed
- Individual interpretations of stressful events
- Let's Act it Out! In this activity, students role-play a stressful situation. It allows them to consciously think about how the body reacts and responds when stressed.
- Logbook #2: Identify stressors. How do you know when you are stressed?

Workshop 3: How do you know? / Where does the energy go? / Emotion-focused coping

- Recognizing the body's stress response: energy mobilization
- Physical signs of stress
- Ways in which the body gets rid of built up energy
- Emotion focused coping strategies (Quick Fix)
 - Practice goodwill
 - Laugh
 - Exercise
 - Put on the breaks – belly breathing
- Logbook #3: Identify stressors. How did your body react to the stressor? How did you lose your energy?

Workshop 4: Problem-Focused Coping

- Problem-focused: Break down the problem using N.U.T.S. and Plan B
- Activity: Scenarios with N.U.T.S. – encourages students to identify elements of N.U.T.S. within scenarios of real-life stressors
- Let's Act it Out! In this activity, students (in groups) are given a stressful situation. They need to create a skit to act out the stressful situation, which they will then analyze using the N.U.T.S. model to find ways to make it less stressful (using the problem-focused strategies)
- Logbook #4: Identify Stressor. For each stressor, identify which elements of the N.U.T.S. model it contains. What coping strategy did you use? Did the strategy work? If not, did you have a Plan B? What was it?

Workshop 5: Social support vs. Social pressure

- Activity: Trier Social Stress Test (TSST) – demonstrates the concept of social support
- Logbook: Social Support Tree
- Activity: The Line Experiment – demonstrates social support vs. social pressure



Logbook

To compliment the workshops, we have created logbooks for each student. The logbooks contain exercises for students to complete after or during particular workshops. Students are encouraged to complete the logbook in order to apply learned concepts to their own lives. They are also encouraged to make use of the “My Space” pages that follow each logbook activity, using these pages for therapeutic writing or drawing. As a fun way to identify their logbook, we recommend that students decorate their books in a manner that makes them identifiable only to the owner. The logbook instructions are given in class. Students will be able to take their logbooks home to complete each activity and to use the “My Space” pages.

The students should complete the logbooks on a regular basis (i.e. three times a week or when they experience a stressor).

Honor Code

To ensure respect and anonymity surrounding the logbooks, an honor code should be agreed upon. Once the instructor has explained the honor code, each student is asked to sign his/her name after having read and understood the honor code that is found on page 1 of the logbook.



Instructor's Manual

About the instructor's manual

The DeStress for Success Program has been written out in full detail in order to guide the specially-trained educators who will be presenting it. The text written in **black** may be read to the students verbatim, but need not be. Feel free to present the concepts using wording with which you feel comfortable. The text in **blue** serves as instructions for the activities that you will use to illustrate and apply the material.

Workshop 1: N.U.T.S. Model

We all know what stress is...but do we really?

Let me ask you this...

How do you feel when you have to deliver a speech in front of the entire class? Or how do you feel just before your teacher hands out your exams?

Some people would say that they feel stressed. But **what exactly is stress?**

To find out, let's do an exercise. I am going to ask you to form into groups of six. In your groups, I'd like you to come up with an example of a stressor. A stressor is anything that causes you to be stressed. Stressors can be events, situations, individuals, comments, or anything we interpret as negative or threatening. For example, writing your final exam can be really stressful! Once your group has decided on a stressor (and, of course, not the one I just gave you!), write it down, then come up and place your paper into this pot (a cook pot should be placed at the front of the class. Form the teams yourself to avoid too much movement in the classroom, and to prevent students being left out).

In this pot, each group has written down something that causes them stress. You will notice that what one group considers a stressor might be different from what another group considers a stressor. It is important to know, however, that although these stressors are different in nature, there is a recipe for stress that is the same for everyone.

Like every recipe, the recipe for stress has ingredients.

The recipe for stress contains one or more of the following ingredients or elements. It doesn't have to have all four. However, the more ingredients you have, the more stressful the situation is and the more stress you will feel.

The 4 elements/ingredients are...

N.U.T.S.

Novelty: The situation is something new that you have not experienced before.

For example: Your first day of school at a new school. Can anyone else give me an example of this?

Unpredictability: Something unexpected; you had no way of knowing the event would occur.

For example: You are given a "Pop Quiz" in Math without having had any warning from your teacher. Therefore, you had no way of knowing you would have this test.

Threat to Self: Your competence, ability, and/or self-worth are called into question.

For example: You are told to stand in front of your class, talk about your science project, and answer questions your classmates may have. You might not feel that you know enough about your project and are afraid to make mistakes in front of the class.

Sense of control: You feel that you have little or no control over the situation.

For example: You are in a hurry to get to school because you have an exam that morning. However, your school bus is stuck in traffic and you know you are going to be late.

An easy way to remember these 4 things is, *don't go NUTS!* (At this point, you can draw a table on the board that you will use to evaluate whether the stressor contains at least one of the N.U.T.S. elements).

	Novelty	Unpredictability	Threat to Self	Sense of Control
List of stressors				
.....				
.....				
.....				

Does your stressor contain elements from the recipe? Let's get the "stressors" out of the pot. (Read through the "stressors" that the groups have provided. For each stressor, go through each of the 4 elements, and discuss with the class whether that stressor contains that particular element. Students will notice that each of the stressors includes at least one of the N.U.T.S. elements.)

The rationale for this exercise is for students to become familiar with the elements of the N.U.T.S model, and to identify them within a given stressor.

As you can see, all of the examples have at least one ingredient from the N.U.T.S model. Remember, the more elements/ingredients it has, the more stressed you will feel.

In order to apply these concepts to your own lives, I have a logbook for everyone. This logbook includes exercises to complete during class-time and at home. So, you can take your time. It also has space for you to draw, write poems, song lyrics; anything that helps to alleviate your stress.

Please take care of these logbooks. They are an important part of this program. If you feel that this is going to be a problem, please come see me and we will try to work something out (ex. maybe they can work on their logbooks during break time).

Since each logbook will contain personal information, I am going to ask you not to write your name on the book. Instead, I think it would be a good idea to decorate your book in a way that you will be able to identify it. You can take your logbook home to work on the exercises and to use the "My Space" pages as you wish. But PLEASE make sure to bring them to the

next workshop so that you can participate with all the others. Once the program is complete, the logbooks are yours to keep. (If a student forgets his/her logbook, he/she can sit beside another student during the workshop to look over the exercise that needs to be completed for the following week. The student can then go home and complete the exercise).

Pass out the logbooks and have students sign the honor code that is found on page 1 of the logbook. Explain the importance of respecting and honoring each other's privacy.

Have students turn to logbook #1 (pg.2).



Logbook #1:

(Have students turn to pg. 2 in their logbooks while you explain the exercise to them.)

I would like you all to do an activity in your logbooks. Whenever you experience a stressful situation, write down what the stressful event is. Next to the type of stressor you experience, identify which element(s) of the N.U.T.S model it contains.



Workshop 2: Interpretations of stress & N.U.T.S. Activity

Have students take out their logbooks and share the stressful situations they experienced throughout the week. Compile the list on the board. Keep a tally beside each stressor that is mentioned more than once, in order to identify the most common stressors.

As you can see from the list of stressors, we are all different in the type of stressors we PERCEIVE. We all face different stressors, however, we have some common stressors too.

The following example is of a common stressor. For your workshop, use a common stressor that has been identified from the list you have created from your students' logbooks.

For example, if a common stressor among your list was "getting into fight with brother", instructions would go along these lines:

Common stressor:

Who experienced the stressor, "Getting into fight with brother"?

Why do you consider that to be a stressor? What elements of the N.U.T.S. model are involved?

Before we identify them, let's do a quick review of what the 4 elements of the N.U.T.S. model are. Put your hand up if you can remember any of the ingredients and their definition (Have students raise their hands and participate in this review).

N.U.T.S.

Novelty: The situation is something new that you have not experienced before.

Unpredictability: Something unexpected; you had no way of knowing the event would occur.

Threat to Self: Your competence, ability, and/or self-worth are called into question.

Sense of Control: You feel that you have little or no control over the situation.

Once the short review is complete, you can go back to identifying what elements of the N.U.T.S. model are involved in the stressor "Getting into fight with brother".

So, what elements are involved in the stressor "Getting into fight with brother?"

Ask students to raise hands and call on answers:

Who thinks this is NOVEL?...Why?

Unpredictable?...Why?

Threatening?...Why?

Low Control?...Why?

As you see, people have different interpretations of this stressful situation. Maybe some of you thought this was novel and others didn't. (Ex. It would be novel for someone if it were the first time getting into a fight with their brother). Maybe some of you thought this was threatening and others didn't.

Common stressor: "Getting into fight with brother"		
	JOHN	KELLY
Novelty		☒
Unpredictability	☒	☒
Threat to Ego	☒	☒
Sense of Control		
Number of N.U.T.S. elements	2	3

As you see from the table above, it may be quite possible that for John, his fight with his brother was stressful because it was unpredicted and threatening to his ego, while for Kelly, the same fight with her brother was stressful because it was novel, unpredictable, and threatening to her ego. Consequently, this exercise will help students conceptualize their own stressors, and realize that the reasons why something is stressful for them, may not be the same reasons why the same situation is stressful for someone else.

Take Home Message: What is important to remember is that we all PERCEIVE situations and events differently.

Now proceed with the following activity. This interactive activity has been developed to reinforce the 4 elements of the N.U.T.S model.

ACTIVITY: Let's Act it Out!

Objective: To allow students to role-play a stressful situation. It gives students a chance to become aware of how stress might be experienced in everyday life, and how different people might experience the same situation as stressful for different reasons.

Each group (form groups of 5-6 students) has 5 minutes to come up with a skit in which they are faced with a stressful situation. The situation must contain at least 2 elements from the NUTS model. The rest of the class will have to identify what the elements are and explain why they identified these particular elements.

Once each group has had a chance to present their skits, you can pass out their logbooks and explain logbook #2.

To introduce the activity for logbook #2, you can revert back to the skits by providing some examples of physical responses that occur when faced with a stressor.



Logbook #2:

I would like you all to do another activity in your logbooks. This time, whenever you experience a stressful situation, I would like you to write down what the stressful event was. And next to each of the events, I would like you to answer this question: “how do you know you are stressed?” In other words, we want you to think about how your body reacts to stress. (Turn to pg. 5 of your logbook).



Workshop 3: How do you know / Where does the energy go?

Have students take out their logbooks and share the stressful situations they have experienced throughout the week. For each stressor, ask the students to share how they knew they were stressed (how did their bodies react when faced with a stressor?)

Students will then share their comments (ex. Heart beating fast, butterflies in my stomach, cried...)

Now, let me explain to you how your body responds when it is faced with a stressful situation.

First, I would like everyone to place two fingers on your neck and pay attention to your pulse. Now, do 20 jumping-jacks. (You can also suggest push-ups and let them decide. Pay particular attention to girls: those wearing skirts may find the exercises more difficult and some may not be comfortable to do jumping-jacks). Can you breathe when you're doing your jumping-jacks/push-ups? Are your muscles tense? Are you sweating? (Teachers will ask these questions to the students in order for them to pay attention to what they are doing and how their body is reacting).

ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY: Instead of asking the entire class to do push-ups (some may not want to), have the students stand facing the wall with their arms straight out in front of them. Instruct them to push the wall with the palms of their hands as if doing push-ups against the wall).

Now get back up on your feet and put your fingers back on your neck to check your pulse. What's happened to your pulse? Much faster now, right?

This is how your body feels when it is stressed.

In doing physical exercise, you can see how you were building up and using all of your energy. When you are faced with something stressful, your body does exactly this. It gathers up all its energy for you to use. In your case, you were using the energy to get your body to exercise. So, you realize that you need energy and strength to put your body in motion.

This is called energy mobilization. It's the body's way of preparing us for a stressful situation. Let's go way back in time...one and a half million years ago. We are now in prehistoric times. We are all hunters from the Bogong tribe, looking for food. Suddenly, we come across a huge mammoth with long white tusks and woolly fur! We are faced with something stressful! What do we do?

We have 2 choices – we can fight the mammoth and try to kill it, or we can run away...fast!!! This is your body's stress response. Your body gathers up all the energy that prepares you to either run away or fight and kill the mammoth. This is commonly known as the fight or flight response.

When you are stressed, your body is your best friend as it gathers up strength for survival. This gathering of strength is called energy mobilization. All the physical signs you felt when you did the push-ups are the same as when you are stressed. There are a few other signals you might receive from your body in a stressful situation. Let's take a look:

Everyone turn to page 8 of your logbooks. Here you see a picture of a prehistoric man and he looks like a mammoth has stepped right in front of him. Being faced with a giant mammoth is a stressor indeed! Let's review how the body responds to a stressor.

- Increased secretion of stress hormones (the most important one is called cortisol)
- Pupils dilate (become larger) so that we can see more clearly
- Hair stands on end, making us more sensitive to our environment and also making us appear larger to intimidate our opponent (remember, we had a lot more hair back then!)
- Heart rate increases so that we can pump more blood to our working muscles
- Breathing speeds up
- Sweat glands open, allowing body to cool when over-worked

Where does the energy go?

Remember the prehistoric man who suddenly was faced by a mammoth? He had two choices; he could either fight the mammoth or run away from it.

But things that stress us today are not mammoths! These days we are faced with different kinds of stressors. (Remember some of the examples from the previous workshop and write them on the board). However, your body reacts the same way to today's stressors as it would if you were faced with a mammoth. Does everyone remember energy mobilization?

When you are faced with these stressors (the ones you have just written on the board), can you always fight or run from them? NO! For example, if you get a pop-quiz, you can't just hop out of your seat and run away!

Since your body has built up all this energy, the energy has to go somewhere.

It is important to be able to get rid of the mobilized energy. To explain this further, I am going to ask you to think about what a soccer player does when he has scored a goal. Sometimes he jumps around and/or he'll imitate a plane with his arms spread out. He had mobilized his energy for the goal, but once the goal was made, he still has energy remaining. This is why he had to release his energy in another way. You can also think of an athlete who has just completed a race, and jumps or cries at the finish line. The athlete is releasing all the energy that was mobilized.

Each person has a unique way of getting rid of mobilized energy. Just as our PERCEPTION (emphasize) of stress is different, our way of REACTING to stress is also different.

Ask the students to discuss ways to get rid of accumulated energy. (Ex. crying, exercising...).



Coping Strategies **(Emotion-based coping)**

I am sure you know there are many ways to de-stress.

Many of these strategies are considered emotion-based coping strategies as they change how you FEEL with regards to the stressor. Look at page 9 of your logbook. There are various examples of emotion-based coping strategies.

The advantage of all this is that some of these strategies only take a few minutes!

1. Practice Goodwill

Have you ever thought about how it feels to help someone out? Helping a friend stand up after he or she has fallen down, or helping Grandma or Grandpa make dinner, or helping your mother or father clean the house? When we perform acts of goodwill, the brain sends positive messages to the body, those that decrease stress.

Suggestions: Start a chain of goodwill, become a volunteer, open the door for strangers...

Provide the example of a goodwill chain. Give a "token" to a student in the class (it can be a playing card, a stress ball...). Provide the class with a challenge of creating a goodwill chain within the classroom. The person who witnesses the act of goodwill, must then carry out a good deed for another person, and then pass the token. The goal is for the token to be passed around the entire class in one week. This way, each student would have received a good deed and would have also carried out an act of goodwill. IMPORTANT: to have the token a second time, you must ensure that all the students have had it at least once.

2. Laugh

As long as we laugh, we continue to secrete hormones that decrease the effects of stress hormones.

Suggestions: Read the comics in the newspaper, tell jokes with your friends, go to the comedy show or watch a funny movie.

3. Exercise

Remember energy mobilization? You don't always have the option of fighting or running away from the stressor. However, you do have the option of exercising and using up the energy at a later time. Walking up and down a few flights of stairs will do the trick. Running around the block will also help.

Suggestions: Run, ride your bike, take a brisk walk, swim, play team sports, run up and down the stairs a few times.

1. Put on the breaks - belly breathing

When you are stressed, your breathing quickens and the muscles in your abdomen tighten. Trick your body into thinking there is no stress through belly breathing. You have probably heard of this through yoga or meditation. The reason why belly breathing works is because when you breathe deeply using your belly, it extends a muscle called the 'diaphragm' that is located under your ribs. When this muscle is extended to a certain level (with a big belly), there is a message that is activated that stops the stress response! This is like a break on a car. You can accelerate with a car using the accelerator, but you also need a break to stop. Belly breathing is exactly like pushing the break pedal on a car. It stops the stress response!

Let's practice belly breathing. It is very simple and you don't need to have any special training to do it on a daily basis. One thing you can do is imagine you have a balloon in your tummy that you will blow-up and then release. Place one hand on your belly button. Then, inhale air in any way you wish (through your nose or mouth, it does not make any difference). The trick here is that while you are inhaling air into your body, you want to have inhaled enough air in so that you create the biggest belly possible. You really have to try to look like Santa Claus! At some point, you will feel like you are becoming calmer. This is because you have expanded your diaphragm to the level that is needed to activate the break on your stress response.

Other ways to do belly breathing:

We may not always think of belly breathing in times of stress. However, you should know that there are other methods that can be used in order to have your body do belly breathing, without you noticing it! Below, we give you three methods.

Sing! When we sing, we are belly breathing! In order to sustain a musical note, we have to extend our diaphragm, and this stops the stress response the same way as if you were to consciously do belly breathing. So in times of stress, sing! Something else you can do to alleviate some of your stress is to participate in a choir. Scientific studies have shown that participants in a choir have a decreased stress response compared to those who do not participate in a choir.

Pray! When we pray, we also do belly breathing. When praying for a while, we have a tendency to use a monotonous voice that leads to an extension of the diaphragm, which then stops the stress response. So if this is of interest to you, you can practice any kind of prayer, and this will have you do belly breathing without noticing it!

Listen to music! But not all types of music! The brain has a strange tendency, ie. It has the tendency to synchronize our breathing with the beats of a given music. This is why, in African tribes, some members can get into a trance using tam-tams. The beat of tam-tams starts

slowly, but gradually gets faster. When the beat is fast, the brain synchronizes the person's breathing with the beat. If the beat is fast, then the person's breathing is faster, which brings more blood to the brain and can lead to a trance (this is also what happens in raves where music is often over 100 beats per minutes). However, if you listen to soft, low-beat music such as smooth jazz or classical music, your brain will synchronize your breathing to the beat. Since the beats are slow, you will do slow, deep belly breathing without even noticing it! So music (soft music) is another way to do belly-breathing that helps decrease a stress response.



Logbook #3:

Write down stressors that you have experienced – events, people or situations that caused you stress. Next to each stressor, explain how your body reacted to the stressful event. This time, also write down how you got rid of your energy. (Turn to page 10).



Workshop 4: Ways to cope – PART I (Problem-focused coping)

Have students take out their logbooks and share the ways in which they got rid of their energy during a stressful situation.

It's impossible to eliminate stress, so we must learn to live with it.

Everyone interprets stressful situations differently, and that's why everyone has to learn how to cope in their own way. A coping strategy that works for one person might not work for the next.

Last week, we learned a few coping strategies that can be used instantly. There is also another way of coping, and in the long-run, it's probably the best way to manage stress. It is based on problem-focused coping.

1. Break down the problem

One way of coping with a stressful situation is to break down the problem to see why it is really making you feel stressed. Remember, you have the tools now to know what makes up a stressful situation. Let's quickly go over them. N.U.T.S – Novel, Unpredictable, Threat to Self and low Sense of Control.

Once we know what elements of the N.U.T.S. model are present, we can then think of solutions for making the situation less stressful. Let's try this out.

ACTIVITY:

The instructor will present the class with scenarios that contain elements of the N.U.T.S. model. Have students identify which elements are present (any answer could be correct, depending on how the student justifies his/her interpretation of the situation). Then suggest solutions for making the situation less novel, unpredictable, threatening, or uncontrollable.

- *Thomas is a new kid at school. One day he picks a fight with your best friend.*
- *Your teacher is passing out an exam. You forgot the exam was today and you didn't study.*
- *It is your first day in a new school. You don't know anyone at this school.*
- *You are failing Math.*

Let's do an example together.

Is there a stressor you encounter on a regular basis? For example, do you always argue with your mother about cleaning your room? Think about the problem and why it is a stressor.

Think of N.U.T.S.

- Is it Novel? No, I always argue with Mom about my room.
- Is it Unpredictable? Yes. I never know when she's going to bother me!
- Is it Threatening to my ego? Yes. I feel like she is accusing me of being a slob!
- Do I have control? No! I feel like I have no choice when she tells me to clean, even though it's my room and my mess.

Thinking of the problem that stresses us this way is called '**Deconstructing Stress**', ie. We deconstruct the reasons why a situation is stressing us.

Once we have deconstructed the stress, the best way to deal with it is to '**Reconstruct Stress**', ie. To try to find ways to deal with the exact reasons why this particular situation is stressing us.

So, if the situation with Mom is stressing us because it is Unpredictable, Threatening to our ego and we have a low sense of Control, then we can reconstruct the situation by asking our self:

- 'What can I do to decrease the Unpredictability of the situation?'
- 'What can I do to decrease the Threat to my ego?'
- 'What can I do to increase my sense of Control over this situation?'

YOU should find the solution(s) to reconstruct your own stress. For example:

'What can I do to decrease the Unpredictability of the situation?'

You could talk with your mother and come up with a schedule in which there are days when you are allowed to have a room that is not as neat as she wants, and there are other days when she is allowed to enter your room and give her comments about it. This would decrease the unpredictability of this situation.

'What can I do to decrease the Threat to my ego?'

Maybe you can talk to your mother about your stress. Perhaps the two of you can come up with a solution to the problem that will make you feel better about yourself and give you more choice in the matter which will be less threatening to your ego.

'What can I do to increase my sense of Control over this situation?'

For instance, you could make a cleaning schedule for yourself that gives you a choice of days to clean your room.

Altogether, these three strategies will give you more control over the situation, making it more predictable, and you feel much better about the situation. When this is done, your body will stop producing a stress response because the brain is not detecting a threat anymore!

1. Plan B

Sometimes after we break down the problem and come up with a plan, our original plan doesn't work as well as we thought it would. It helps to have a "plan B" to maintain control over the

situation. Let's take the last example: *"You're failing math."* There is still time in the semester to bring your grade up and pass, but there are several strategies you could use.

Plan A: spend lunch hours in the library studying. But wait! You keep getting distracted by friends and find that your brain just doesn't want to work during lunch hour.

Plan B: ask your math teacher for extra help after school. However, your teacher can only work with you on certain days.

Plan C: ask a classmate to help you with the concepts you don't understand, or find a tutor in a higher grade to work with you...

...and so on.

What you have to remember here is that the only thing that your brain needs in order to stop a stress response is an exit door. Just as you would need a plan B when chasing a mammoth, your brain needs a plan B (and C, and D...) to negotiate any given stressor. When the brain has a plan B, it decreases the signal that leads to a stress response...and you feel much better!

To remind yourselves of these ways to cope with stress, you can always go to page 16 of your logbook. You'll find a list of these coping strategies along with some of the helpful suggestions we discussed today. We recognize that there are some situations that you'll encounter that are difficult to control. For these situations, you may find some of the quick fixes most useful for reducing stress. Whenever possible, addressing stressful situations by breaking them down and finding solutions for Novelty, Unpredictability, Threat to Self, and Sense of Control will be much more helpful (and healthy) in the long-run.



Logbook 4:

Identify the things that made you stressed this past week. For each stressor, identify which elements of the N.U.T.S. model were present, and write down the coping strategy you used to deal with the stressor. Did the strategy work? If not, did you have a plan B (C, D...)? If so, explain what your plans were. (Turn to pg. 13).

Workshop 5: Social support vs social pressure

Over the last two weeks, we have talked about emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. There is a secret weapon against stress and this is probably the best weapon to have when dealing with stress: social support.

Social Support vs. Social Pressure:

One very good way of coping with stressful situations is to seek social support. That is, you talk to a friend about what's making you stressed, or you seek advice from your parents. By sharing your experiences of stressful events with others, you are not isolating yourself. Instead, you will find that seeking help and support from friends, family members, teachers and others that are close to you can often be a beneficial and positive experience. In receiving the type of support that you need, you will often feel a sense of diminished stress.

ACTIVITY: TSST (Trier Social Stress Test)

Objective: To demonstrate the positive effect of social support on stress.

Ask for ONE student volunteer. Ask the volunteer to leave the classroom and wait outside. When the volunteer walks back into the classroom, he/she will be asked to stand in front of the class and to deliver a speech for 4 minutes on one of the following topics, " Why do dolphins jump out of the water?" / "Cats and lions – how do they compare?" / "What exactly is math?"

The volunteer is then asked to rate how stressful this exercise was (1=not stressful at all; 10=very stressful).

Ask for THREE volunteers. Have the 3 volunteers leave the classroom and wait outside. When the volunteers walk back into the classroom, ask them to stand in front of the class and deliver a speech for 4 minutes on one of the following topic, " Why do dolphins jump out of the water?" / "Cats and lions – how do they compare?" / "What exactly is math?" (Note: do not give the same subject as the first volunteer).

Ask the volunteers to rate how stressful they found this exercise (1=not stressful at all; 10=very stressful).

The result of this activity will show that the group setting makes the situation less stressful. Being in a group increases social support between members so that it may feel less stressful.

Logbook: Social support tree

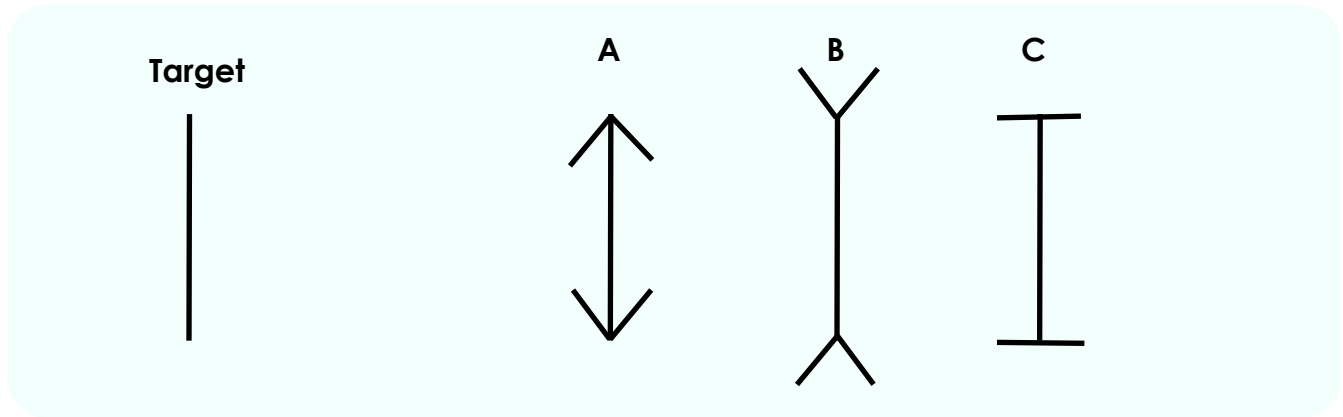
Please turn to page 16 in your logbooks. Here you see a tree with lots of leaves. What I'd like you to do is to think about all the people who are your social support. Write their names down – one name in each leaf. If you run out of leaves, you can draw more leaves.

I'd like you to join me now in doing an experiment that demonstrates how social support can work.

ACTIVITY: The Line Experiment

The objective of this activity is to demonstrate that sometimes, social support can become social pressure....and induce stress. (However, do not tell the students this at the beginning of the experiment).

The teacher tells the students that the workshop on social support will continue. Students will now have to make a judgment and see how their friends can help them. A line (target) is shown on the board, along with three other lines (A, B, C).



Now ask students to form a queue based on their response. Therefore, all students who answered "A" must stand in the 1st queue, all those who answered "B" should stand in the 2nd queue, and all those who answered "C" should stand in the 3rd row.

Once the 3 queues are created, tell the students that there is only ONE correct answer among A, B and C, and therefore, some of them are surely wrong as there should only be one queue! In order to help their friends who are in different queues, tell the students that you will give everyone 5 minutes to convince their friends to join them in what they consider the correct queue.

At the end of 5 minutes, some people would have changed their mind, and others would not have. Ask all the students to write their answer down on a sheet of paper (the same answer or the new answer if they had changed queue).

Then, ask the students to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, how stressful or uncomfortable it was to make a decision with their friends 'helping' them.

Ask the students to give their sheet (anonymous, no name) to the teacher who then writes down the following information on the blackboard:

1. How stressful or uncomfortable is the "alone" decision? (On a scale of 1 to 10)
2. Discrepancy between the "alone" and the "group" decision?
 - one column for the discrepancy
 - one column for the NO discrepancy

How stressful was this decision? Look at the results for those who did not change their minds due to the influence of the group, and those who did change their minds due to the group's influence. Compare the figures given for the "alone" condition with the "group" condition. It is expected that the stress score for those who changed group to be higher than the score for those who did not change groups.

So, what we should see here is that sometimes, social support can turn into social pressure. And when this happens, it can lead to stress. How? Well, let's take an example. You have a group of friends whom you always hang out with. You always go to them if you need help with your homework and they are always very helpful. One day, however, they tell you to try a cigarette. If you don't, you are told won't be accepted as a part of the group anymore. All of a sudden, your group of friends who used to be supportive of you (social support group) has placed some social pressures on you (smoking). This causes you to be stressed.

If you are suffering from social pressure, you might consider looking for more support from the people on your tree who don't pressure you and rely less on those who do. Often it is not realistic to change your entire peer group or end relationships, but it is possible to find healthier social networks to help you cope with stress.

Open your Logbook to the Social Support Tree on page 16. On the leaves of your "Social Support Tree", write down names of people who you consider a social support. If these people become a social pressure, go back and draw a circle around their names. This tree will help you to see who provides you with social support and who are sources of social pressure.



Logbook 5:

The task for the following week is to teach your parents the N.U.T.S. elements and to show them how to manage stress (social support, quick fixes, and construct and deconstruct the situation). If you are able to explain what you have learned to someone else, it means you have understood what has been taught during these workshops.

We will not be reviewing the contents of Logbook 5, but we hope that by now you have learned to monitor your stress and to deconstruct/reconstruct it. The logbooks are now yours to use as much as you want; when you are particularly stressed by an event, or during a specific time period (e.g. exams). You will see that monitoring your stress is a great way to recognize and control it.

If, during the school year, you need to review some of the concepts that we have discussed in the workshops, do not hesitate to visit the Centre for Studies on Human Stress website at www.humanstress.ca. You will find a wealth of information on stress that can be of help to you.

Finally, and depending on your school, it may be a good idea to organize an end-of-year show featuring all sorts of fun ways in which students deal with their stress. A show like this could feature a group that decides to start a chain of goodwill, a group playing music, etc. This could be a great way to start a discussion about stress with friends from other classrooms.

Well, that's it for now! We sincerely hope that you have enjoyed participating in the DeStress for Success Program and that it was helpful in providing you with valid information on stress. We wish you the best, and don't forget to visit us on our website!

