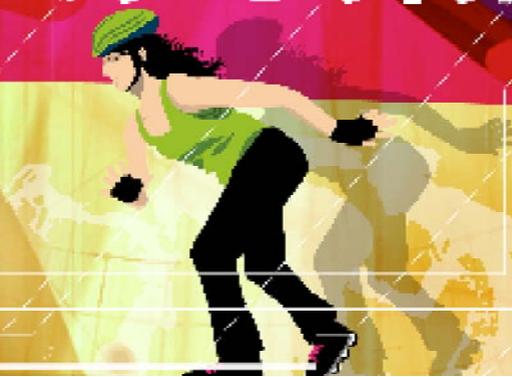




**STAY COOL!  
BEAT STRESS!**



# STAY COOL! BEAT STRESS!

Our life as a teenager is an exciting and challenging time for many of us, as we are faced with many changes. For example, we change physically, we start to search for our own identities and we desire independence. These changes can make us feel stressed out and frustrated.

We may get stressed out handling our school work and relationships with parents and friends. To stay cool, we need to learn about stress, its causes and how we can beat stress.



# What Is STRESS?



Stress is how our body reacts to changes. Our thoughts, feelings and beliefs about changes in a situation can make stress a **positive** or **negative** experience.

For example, if we move to a new school and think of it as an exciting and happy experience, the stress can be considered a **positive** experience. If we think the new school will never be the same as the old one and feel very sad about the move, the stress can become a **negative** experience.

Our stress usually comes from:

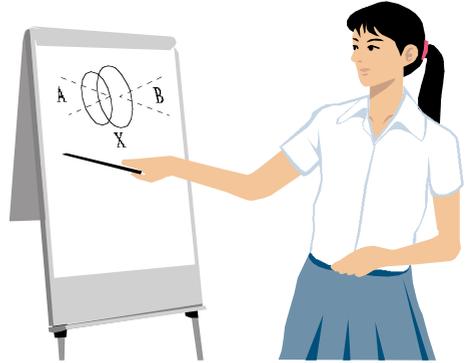
- Examinations
- Peer pressure
- Family expectations
- Relationships
- Personal expectations
- Changes in our routines

*The stars are constantly shining, but often we do not see them until the dark hours. – Earl Riney*

# Is Stress Really **BAD** for Us?

We cannot run away from stress. It is a part of our lives. Some of us may have difficulty managing it but others may **thrive on the adrenaline rush** that stress brings.

For example, we feel our heartbeat increasing as we get ready to present our project in front of the whole class. Some of us may have stage fright at this point, have a mental block and become speechless; while others may be grinning from ear to ear, all ready to show off their ideas to the class.



## How Do We **KNOW** We Are Stressed?

Stress can motivate us to excel, but when stress makes us feel frustrated for a long time, it is bad for us. It is important for us to learn to **manage stress, find our optimal level and use it to motivate ourselves** rather than allow it to discourage us.

### We may be stressed if we

- have difficulty sleeping well through the night
- feel tired out
- lose our appetite
- have frequent headaches

- cannot concentrate on our studies
- are easily irritated and angered
- have difficulty making decisions
- feel anxious most of the time
- lose interest in our usual activities
- have low self-esteem
- have falling grades



## How to **MANAGE** Stress?

To manage stress, we need to start by looking at ourselves. Do we feel good about ourselves? Are we confident of our abilities? Being positive and confident helps build up our self-esteem. High self-esteem can help us to better manage stress.

Self-esteem is the value we see in ourselves as a person. It depends on

- 🔍 our past achievements
- 🔍 how we think others see us
- 🔍 our purpose in life
- 🔍 our potential for success
- 🔍 our strengths and weaknesses

High self-esteem means **we value ourselves highly and are confident and optimistic of our abilities and achievements.**

We are **more motivated and have the right attitude to manage stress.** With such a positive attitude, even if we fail, we will still be able to manage stress.



*If you doubt you can accomplish something, then you can't accomplish it. You have to have confidence in your ability, and then be tough enough to follow through. – Rosalyn Carter*

# Coping with EXAMINATIONS

We all have to go through examinations in school. Can we remember how we felt the last time we sat for an examination? Nervous? Stressed? Sometimes, the thought of the “E” word may make us feel stressed out.

We can all **beat the stress of examinations by preparing well for them.**



This checklist can be used to help us in our exam preparations.

## Exam preparation checklist

### Organising your space

- Think about where you can study best. Your study environment should be comfortable (not too cold, hot or noisy) for you.
- Separate your "studying" space from your "relaxing" place, so that you can concentrate and keep away distractions.

### Organising your time

- Make a list of what you have to study. Make a tick against each item once you have completed, so you know what you have achieved.
- Draw up a revision schedule. Be realistic about how much you can achieve.

### Becoming motivated

- Establish a work routine. Follow your schedule faithfully.
- Start with the easier or more interesting subjects.
- Reward yourself when you meet your revision targets by doing something you enjoy.
- Have a good study buddy to motivate each other.

### Improving concentration

- Take short breaks when tired. Go for a stroll or jog to destress.

*Write it down. Written goals have a way of transforming wishes into wants; can'ts into cans; dreams into plans; and plans into reality. Don't just think it – ink it! – Author Unknown*



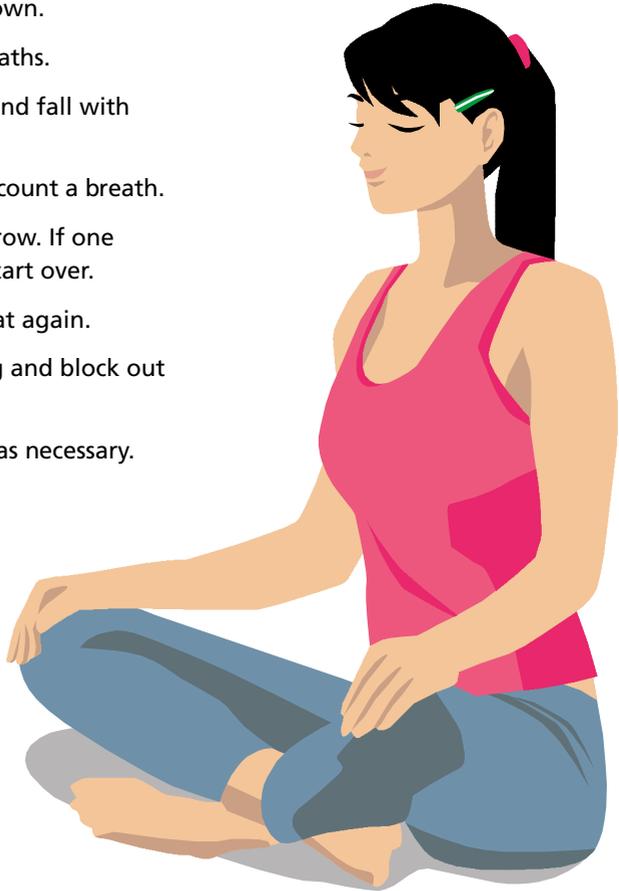
# RELAXATION

## Techniques

*We can also beat stress by following these relaxation techniques.*

### **Breath counting**

- Sit up straight or lie down.
- Take normal, deep breaths.
- Feel the stomach rise and fall with the breathing.
- With each breath out, count a breath.
- Count 10 breaths in a row. If one breath is missed out, start over.
- After 10 breaths, repeat again.
- Focus on the breathing and block out all other thoughts.
- Repeat as many times as necessary.



## Muscle relaxation (hands and face)

- Bend and straighten fingers several times to increase blood flow.
- Let the fingers and hands hang loosely from the wrists; gently shake hands.
- Clench the fists and curl the wrists inward; curl the wrists back; rotate fists in circles.
- Wiggle the face, raise and lower the eyebrows; puff out the cheeks; relax the jaw.
- Gently massage the ears: pull down gently on the ear lobes and massage them; release and gently grab the entire ear, gently rotating it in small circles.



## Mental relaxation

- Switch on some soft music.
- Sit on a comfortable chair or lie down.
- Close the eyes.
- Do some deep breathing. Relax all the muscles and let the body go limp.
- Think of pleasant, soothing images such as a beautiful scenery.
- Continue until relaxed.

*Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will. – Zig Ziglar*

# Coping with PEER PRESSURE

We might have felt pressured by our friends into doing something. We might go along with what they are doing as we want to be a part of the “in” crowd.

Peer pressure is how we feel when friends whom we hang out with try to influence us to act in certain ways or to make certain decisions. Peer pressure can be **positive** or **negative**.

**+** **Positive peer pressure** can motivate us for success or inspire us to do something worthwhile. It also encourages us to follow positive behaviours.

**-** **Negative peer pressure** makes us turn to activities that may harm us, like abusing drugs, smoking or even gang fights. Negative peer pressure can sometimes cause us to become stressed.

**Knowing whom to listen to and whom to avoid** will help you stand firm against negative peer pressure.

One basic thing that we can do in handling negative peer pressure is to firmly say, “No, I don’t want to do that.”



# Learning to SAY "NO"

Learning to say 'NO' can help us stay away from situations that can stress us or cause harm to ourselves or others. We can plan in advance what we want to say or do if we encounter such situations. Here are some steps to help us think ahead.

- 1 Try to anticipate possible situations.
- 2 List out options in handling the situation.
- 3 Choose the best option.
- 4 Stick to our stand and be firm.

Look at the situation below:

If your friend offers you a cigarette, you can say "NO" by

- ✓ **Telling them the reason** e.g. "I don't like the smell of cigarettes, especially on my hair and clothes."
- ✓ **Suggesting something else to do instead** e.g. "Why don't we go roller-blading instead? It's more fun."
- ✓ **Putting them in your shoes** e.g. "Smoking is bad for my health, do you want me to fall sick?"
- ✓ **Excusing ourselves politely** e.g. "I have to go now, please excuse me."

*My best friend is the man who in wishing me well wishes it for my sake. – Aristotle*



# Communicating with **PARENTS** and **FRIENDS**

Our stress does not just come from our studies. It can also come from the way we handle our relationships with our parents and friends.

At times we may feel that we have problems communicating with our parents. It could be the way we speak to each other or the tone of our voice. As we grow from a child to a teenager, the way we think and behave change. We tend to spend more time with our friends and therefore our expectations and those of our parents will differ. Conflicts and misunderstandings also arise when there is little communication.

It is the same with friends. Some of us get along well with some friends but may have conflicts with others. **We must understand that each of us manages our lives differently. We have different goals and expectations of ourselves and others.**



Therefore, we need to be **more patient and tolerant of one another**. We should not allow these differences to sour relationships. The key to a harmonious relationship is to follow the **BLUE CABS!**

**B**e supportive in times of trouble.

**L**isten to what our parents/friends have to say.

**U**nderstand what our parents/friends may be facing in their lives.

**E**ncourage and not criticise.

**C**ommunicate with our parents/friends with warmth and respect.

**A**ppreciate our parents/friends for who they are and not what they have done.

**B**e honest and sincere about ourselves and towards others.

**S**pend time with our parents.

*When you carry out acts of kindness you get a wonderful feeling inside. It is as though something inside your body responds and says, yes, this is how I ought to feel.*  
– Kahlil Gibran



# Coping with DIFFERENCES

*Here are some ways we can avoid conflicts:*

## 1 Communicate

Our parents/friends may not understand us unless we communicate our thoughts to them. We can write short notes to them if we have difficulty talking to them face-to-face. We can also find someone to help us speak to them on our behalf.

## 2 Listen with our heart

We often get into arguments especially with our parents over returning home late, friends that we hang out with or the way we dress. However, if we try to **understand the intention of our parents rather than their words or tone**, it can often mean "I'm really worried about you", "I fear for your safety" etc. In other words, **we are important to them.**

## 3 Cool down

When people get angry and start shouting at each other, they make hurtful remarks that they do not mean. The best thing to do is to stop ourselves immediately and walk away. **Tell the other party that we need to cool down before discussing the issue again.**

## 4 Apologise

When we are in the wrong, we must learn to say sorry. **Be sincere with our apology.** This simple action can do can do wonders.

## 5 Be supportive

When family members or friends quarrel among themselves, we should give them time to cool off and lend them a listening ear when they need to talk. **Do not take sides but aim to find the best way to resolve their problems.**

# SUMMARY

Stress is part and parcel of life. The tips to manage stress from studies or relationships mentioned in this booklet can help us in our daily life as teenagers. Just remember, if we start feeling anxious, tensed or frustrated, stop what we are doing. Ask ourselves why we may be feeling this way.

If we have negative thoughts, we need to challenge them. Think back to the times when we managed to solve our problems. How we resolved our problems in the past may help us with the present one. Ask someone for help if necessary. Positive thinking is not only necessary for the development of high self-esteem, it is crucial for managing stress. Also, remember that having a healthy body helps maintain a healthy mind, so eat right and exercise regularly!

**Be Strong, Be Positive and  
Just Keep Going!**



*Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into positive one. – Hans Selye*

## Useful helplines for students

- SOS (Samaritans of Singapore) 1800 221 4444 (24 hours)
- Youth Line 6336 3434 (Mon-Fri, 8:30am-6:00pm)
- Touch Line 1800 377 2252 (Mon-Sat, 8:00am-8:00pm)
- Counselling and Care Corner 6536 6366 (For making appointments only)
- Students Care Service 6778 6867 (For making appointments only)
- Fei Yue Counselling Centre 6563 1106 (For making appointments only)

*\*The above information is correct at the time of printing.*