Session 7.4

Stress, Positive Character Traits, Peer Pressure

Session Overview:

1. Review Sessions 7.1-7.3.
2. Review physical and emotional needs.
3. Define stress and stressors and discuss healthy ways to handle stress.
4. Watch the I Won't Break video and discuss stress as it relates to emotional needs.
5. Have participants identify stress in their own lives and healthy ways to handle it.
6. Discuss positive personal character traits and connect the traits to managing and reducing stress.
7. Discuss a scenario where one unhealthy choice leads to a series of unhealthy choices.
8. Define peer pressure and build participants' refusal skills self-efficacy.
9. Utilize scenarios to increase participants' understanding of peer pressure and refusal skills. Introduce and explain the three steps to follow when saying "no".
10. Answer all participant questions related to curriculum covered in sessions 7.1-7.3.
11. Wrap up session.
12. Distribute Parent Connection Form Session 7.4: Stress, Positive Character Traits, Peer Pressure.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will identify stress factors in their own life.
- Participants will discuss the emotions related to stress and healthy ways to meet those emotional needs.
- Participants will identify positive personal character traits that will help promote a well-adjusted, healthy individual who can choose to avoid risky behaviors, and who aims to develop healthy friendships.
- Participants will identify ways to make good choices.
- Participants will learn skills to avoid peer pressure.
- Participants will identify and practice refusal skills by developing an ending to hypothetical conversations.
- Participants will demonstrate mastery of refusal skills by role-playing.

Materials Needed:

- Computer, projector, speakers
- Jar of Now and Later candy
- I Won't Break Video (7.4.4)
- Teen Interviews on Stress Video (7.4.6)
- Stress, Emotional Needs and Positive Personal Character Traits PowerPoint (7.4.5, 7.4.6)
- Handouts:
  - Refusal Scenarios (Handout 7.4.9)
  - Parent Connection Form Session 7.4: Stress, Positive Character Traits, Peer Pressure
- Question cards
- Question bag

Classroom Planning:

- Review Session 7.4 curriculum.
- Make copies of handouts.
- Gather question cards and the question bag.

The Standards:

- See Appendix E for a list of state and national standards met in this session.

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Educator states:
Who remembers what we covered in our first session together?

[Goals, dreams, and the keys to success: know what you want and know how to get there. Review details if necessary.]

Who remembers what we covered in our second session together?

[Physical and Emotional Needs. Review details if necessary.]

Who remembers what we covered in our last session together?

[Puberty and pregnancy. Review details if necessary.]

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Educator states:
Who remembers what the five basic human needs are that we discussed in session 2?

[Identity and purpose (emotional needs); acceptance and love (emotional needs); relationships, companionship, intimacy (emotional needs); safety and security (physical and emotional needs); and food, water, sleep, and shelter (physical needs). Review details if necessary.]

Great! I am glad you remembered these because they will be important to tie in to today's lesson.

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Educator states:
Sometimes in life we experience stressful events, which interfere with our basic physical and emotional needs. A stressor is something externally around us that produces stress in our lives. Stressors can be any event or experience that creates stress in your life. Sometimes it is small like meeting a deadline on a paper, getting stuck in traffic, or running late. Other times it is something bigger like the death of a loved one, divorce, moving, major changes at school or work, and so on. However, stress is an expected part of life, and therefore, it is important to know how to handle it.

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Educator states:
Before we jump into some coping mechanisms for handling stress, let's watch the I Won't Break video. While you are watching, be mindful of any and all stressors that are influencing the girl in the video.

Educator highlight: The video will show a teen who deals with a range of stressors that each detract from her ability to have her basic human needs met. Hopefully the participants will be able to identify will at least one of the stressors in the video that is relevant in their own life. The intention is to show the link between how stress negatively affects our physical and emotional needs.

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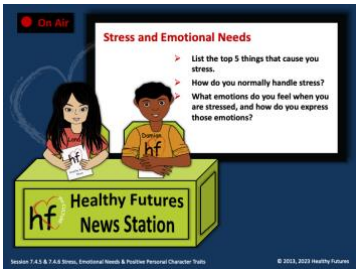
[Show the Stress, Emotional Needs and Positive Personal Character Traits PowerPoint.]

PPT Slides: Stress, Emotional Needs & Positive Personal Character Traits

[Slide 1]



[Slide 2]

Educator states:
Please take out a piece of paper and write down the top five things that cause you stress. Then evaluate how you would normally handle or react to stress. List the emotions you feel when you are stressed and describe how you express those emotions.

[Ask for individuals to share their responses to the questions and engage the class in discussion.]

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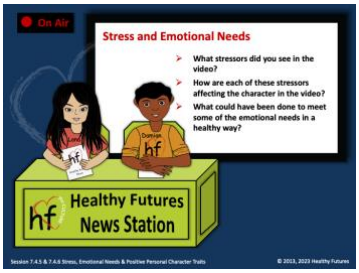
Educator states:
The girl in the video had several big stressors in her life. What stressors do you think she is experiencing?

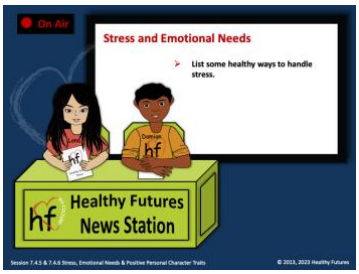


[Slide 3]

[Allow time for participants to respond. Potential answers include fighting with her boyfriend, depression.]

Now, thinking about these stressors, tell me how they may be affecting her.

[Allow time for participants to respond.]



[Slide 4]

Ok, now, let's brainstorm a list of healthy ways to handle stress.

[Allow time for participants to respond. List may include: hobbies, exercising, spending time outdoors, spending time alone to clear your head, spending time with friends, managing time wisely to meet deadlines, setting boundaries in your life and dividing up priories (e.g., family, school, work, friends, extracurricular activities, etc.), taking care of your body, and identifying the stress relievers that work best for you.]

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Educator states:
The character in the video had several big stressors in her life. We also learned that these stressors detracted from her physical and emotional needs being fulfilled. She wanted to give up. However, we have talked about several healthy alternatives to coping with stress in a positive way. It is important for you to find what works best for you since everyone is different. Remember, there are a lot of healthy ways to manage stress and trusted adults to turn to. Hurting yourself should never be the solution.

Educator highlight: The topic of depression and suicide may come up in discussion. It is important to offer help to anyone who may be struggling with these issues. Provide the number to a local hotline for teens wrestling with suicidal thoughts. In order to avoid anyone feeling singled out or uncomfortable, request that everyone in the class take down the phone number.

If you or someone you know is struggling with depression and/or suicidal thoughts, please seek out help. Here is the number of a hotline that will be able to talk things out with you: 1-877-968-8454. I am going to ask that everyone pull out a piece of paper and pen/pencil and write this number down regardless of whether or not you feel you need to use it. You may not need it, but you may be able to provide it to someone who does.

Notes:

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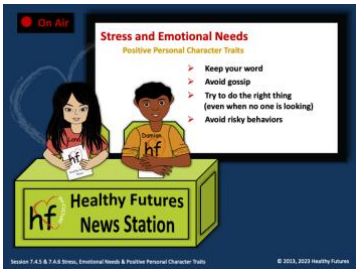
Educator states:
Stress is part of life. We can't always avoid stressors but we can work on developing our positive personal character traits and avoiding unnecessary stressors. By focusing on your positive traits you will find yourself better able to avoid drama or handle it when you are faced with it.



[Slide 5]

If we always keep our word, we will avoid the stress of strained relationships with people who are upset that we did not follow through with our actions.

If we avoid gossip, then we will not have to worry about hurting our friends or family members by spreading hurtful things, or tearing others down.

If we always try to do our best, then we will not feel unnecessary stress or pressure to perform better because we know we put forward 100%.

If we avoid risky behaviors then we do not need to worry about our actions or the potential negative consequences.

[Play Teen Interviews on Stress video.]

[Slide 6]

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Educator states:
Recently we talked about the importance of choosing positive friends. Remember, that you are the one making this choice about whom you want in your life. These individuals can help or hinder your journey to being successful in life. We talked about important characteristics and qualities to look for in a good friend, including trust-worthiness, respect, loyalty, communication, and so on.

However, in life we might encounter friends who ask us to say or do things that make us uncomfortable; this is called peer pressure. We still have the choice to engage in these actions or to tell our friend no. Today we are going to talk about some of these uncomfortable situations and what you can do.

Educator highlight: Read the following scenario aloud. This scenario illustrates how one bad choice made as a result of peer pressure can lead to a series of other bad choices.

Educator states:
One of your friends is relentlessly harassing another student. Every day you sit by and watch your friend say awful things to this student. You feel sorry for them, but you don't want to make your friend upset, so you continue to witness the harassment.

Eventually, your friend is not satisfied with you just observing. They want you to participate in the harassment and bullying. You worry about how you will be treated by this friend if you don't join in the bullying, so you do it. You tease the student and say hurtful things.

This harassment escalates to online bullying. Other classmates start posting nasty comments on this student's social media and also start harassing this student at school.

You stood by and watched all of this happen.

It all started with one choice. This one choice led to a series of additional bad choices, and soon, you have been completely taken off your path to success.

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Educator highlight: It is important to provide the participants with a firm understanding of what peer pressure actually is and how they can recognize when they are being pressured by a peer. Once this has been explained, the participants will be provided with the resources and skills of how to say no when faced with peer pressure.

Educator states:
How could this person have said "no"?

To recognize when you should say no, it normally starts with a feeling of conflict or uneasiness. You know that something is wrong with what your are being asked to do, but you worry about what other people will think if you say "no." When this happens, take a moment to remember what your dream is. Ask yourself, is this a choice that is going to take me down that path of success, or will it lead me away from that path? If this choice is going to lead you away from success, you will need to know how to say no. Saying no is setting a limit or boundary that you are not willing to cross.

When it comes to setting limits and boundaries you need to understand that sometimes you will have to say no. Saying no may not be easy. With your hand raised, and please be honest with me, how do you usually say no to your friends? (Allow the participants to provide their responses to the question and evaluate how effective it would be in actually communicating "no" to another person). What you need to remember is that what you say is just as important as how you say it.

Now that we understand what peer pressure is, we are going to provide you with three steps to follow when saying no:

1. Speak up (Have participants repeat this after you.) If someone is pressuring you or telling you to do things that you do not want to do, you have to be able to speak up. Make sure that you use a clear tone of voice; say it firmly and clearly. If they are your real friend, they will respect that "no."

If the pressure keeps on coming, follow the second step:

2. Stand up (Have participants repeat this after you.) Stand up for yourself by firmly saying "no" again and offering an explanation for why you are refusing their offer (e.g., No thanks, I don't want a cigarette, it is bad for your health.).

If that doesn't work, follow the last step:

3. Walk away (Have participants repeat this after you.) Separate yourself from that situation. There's no point in arguing any further if they won't listen to your "no." This is the best way to say "no." By a show of hands, who has heard the saying, "Actions speak louder than words."? It is very true. Once you walk away, they will know that you are serious. And you don't want to put yourself in that situation so it's best to leave.

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Educator highlight: Pass out the Refusal Scenarios (Handout 7.4.9). Explain to participants that there are five different scenarios among their classmates. Give participants 4-5 minutes to read through their scenario and complete the dialogue using the three steps to say "no." After participants finish, each group will come up and act out the scenes. Read the scenario for them before they begin acting. Once the participants have acted out their scenarios, make sure to remind participants that their choices have consequences. Emphasize that these choices lead to more choices and could ultimately lead them toward or away from their path to success.

Educator states:
Alright, you guys did a great job acting! Give yourselves a hand. I'm glad you enjoyed this, but it is important to recognize that two stories were about being pressured to have sex. One was about the guy pressuring the girl and the other story was the girl pressuring the guy. Is that possible, for the girl to pressure the guy? (Yes.) If that guy/girl is being pressured by someone they are physically attracted to, can he/she say "no"? (Most likely some participants will say yes, others no.) Is it impossible for that guy/girl to say "no"? (No.) Okay, so if it isn't impossible, then he/she can say "no." Should he/she be able to say "no"? (Yes.)

A lot of time society says guys can't say "no," but just to let you know, guys can be pressured, and they should be able to say "no." Don't ever let someone tell you that guys can't say "no." As much as the girl should say "no", the guy should also say "no." When these pressures come, you have to be able to say "no" so ultimately you can say "yes" to your future. If you don't say no, you are taking the risk of contracting an STI or pregnancy. Understand it is your choice to begin with, and the choices you make…NOW will affect you…LATER!

Another scenario addresses the use of drugs. Can using drugs or alcohol one time really affect your future? What about stealing one time or cheating one time? (Answers might be mixed. Talk through some scenarios in which doing these things just one time have a far-reaching effect.) Think about it this way: you never know what might happen with that "one time." Will that "one time" lead to more times? Will that information get back to your parents? What about your teachers? What about the police? Is that "one time" worth more to you than your dream?

Notes:

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[Answer all question cards from Sessions 7.1-7.3 as well as any other questions.]

Notes:

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Educator states:
In life, we have many sources of stress ranging from our home, school, extracurricular, and/or work environments. At times the stress can seem overwhelming as we have so many demands and expectations being placed on us from others. The most important thing is to remember that to be successful in life, you have to work on *you* first. You have to continue to discover who you are, build up positive character traits, learn to identify good stress and bad stress in your life, avoid situations that cause unnecessary stress, and be confident in who you are. If you are confident in who you are, then nothing and no one can stay in the way of achieving your dreams! You are worth it!

You now know what you want in life and you have begun to think about what it takes to get there. The friends you choose to have on this journey are important. They should always respect your decisions and never force you to do anything that you do not want to do. If you are faced with a situation where you feel conflicted or uneasy, and recognize that this choice will not lead you on the path to success, then you need to be firm and say "no." Saying "no" is not easy, but it is the right thing to do in this situation. Remember to speak up, stand up, and walk away. What you say is just as important as how you say it!

[Remind participants of the question cards and to place them in the question bag. Pass out Parent Connection Form Session 7.4: Stress, Positive Character Traits, Peer Pressure and collect completed forms from sessions 7.1-7.3.]

Notes:

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