

STRESSED OUT



1. How would you finish this? I think stress is—

- ☐ normal and healthy
- ☐ something you should avoid
- ☐ unavoidable and part of being human
- ☐ other—

2. Check any of the following situations that produce stress in your life, and then rate how often do you deal with these situations.

1—I deal with this a lot. 2—I deal with this sometimes. 3—I don't deal with this.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Returning home after curfew | <input type="checkbox"/> Being called on by the teacher and not knowing the answer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breaking up with your boyfriend or girlfriend | <input type="checkbox"/> Doing something you know is wrong |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Losing your best friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Having a pet die |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Studying late at night for an exam | <input type="checkbox"/> Being pressured to have sex |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lying to your parents and having them find out | <input type="checkbox"/> Being pressured to date |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flunking a test | <input type="checkbox"/> Being a victim of school violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being told your parents are getting a divorce | <input type="checkbox"/> Going out on your first date |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Giving in to peer pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> Arguing with your brother or sister |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Applying for a job | <input type="checkbox"/> Being stopped by a policeman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking your driver's license test | <input type="checkbox"/> Having no money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting bad marks on your report card | <input type="checkbox"/> Moving to another town |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing your parents argue and fight | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting a terrible haircut |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting with your parents |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other— |

3. Scott hasn't been doing well in his classes. He knows he's been slacking because he's been busy with work and baseball practices. Now his school counselor warns him that if his grades don't improve, he'll lose his shot at college scholarships and possibly admission. What would you do if you were Scott?

4. Choose one of the following Bible passages, and rewrite in your own words.

Psalms 55:22

Proverbs 3:5,6

Matthew 6:33,34

Philippians 4:6,7

1 Peter 5:7

STRESSED OUT [s t r e s s]

THIS WEEK

Stress is a fact of life for young people and adults. Unfortunately teenagers today have more stress than ever before. Most of these stressors are put on them by parents, peers, teachers, and the church. Media tells teenagers one thing, while their parents and church tell them another. They must balance friends, schoolwork, athletics, family and fun all at the same time. This TalkSheet will help your group talk about stress and how they can handle it as Christians.

OPEN

Have your group list the stresses that youth face today. Where do they feel pressure from? Make a list of these on a whiteboard or poster board. Now for each one, how do teenagers (in general) deal with these stressors? What are good ways of dealing with stress and not so good ways? How does dealing with some stress lead to more stress?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Let the group share their different views. Point out the fact that both answers are true at times; stress is normal and healthy (it's an internal warning to signal a problem that needs to be dealt with) and yet there are times when it should be avoided. Everyone needs a certain amount of stress-free time. Some people need more than others.
2. How do your kids feel when they face pressures? How do they handle each different situation? Don't force anyone to share their answers.
3. Use this tension-getter to lead into a discussion about the rationalization and avoidance techniques people use to avoid facing stress. What do your kids think about this situation?
4. Divide the kids into small groups, having each interpret one of these verses in regards to stress. Encourage them to be creative in their interpretations, concentrating on specific teenage problems.

THE CLOSE

Stress is normal—but too much unresolved stress can wear people down, both physically and mentally. Stress makes people sick and causes frustration and depression.

Make sure your kids understand that it's important to deal with stress, worry, or pressure. If they feel overwhelmed, to the point where they are feeling depressed or sick, they have to let it out. Challenge them to find a trusted adult who they can talk to and let the pressure out. Encourage them to

come to you with questions about stress in their lives. And if a parent or friend seems uptight, upset, or tired (and maybe takes it out on them), give the some space and encourage them. People can help each other deal with their pressures.

Encourage them to find other ways to deal with stress—to exercise, journal their feelings, play music, or read a book. Do something constructive to ease the stress and get their minds on something else. Take a study break, walk the dog, volunteer to do the dishes, or relax on the couch. Stress can be good, but don't let it make you lazy! Too much stress isn't always an excuse to get out of doing what you're supposed to do. Encourage them to ask God for patience and peace when they are feeling stressed out. Prayer is the best way to vent to God and lay situations before him.

MORE

- How do different people deal with stress? It's important to deal with substance and physical abuse. Some of your kids may have family members or friends who are abused by their parents or siblings. Stress, like anger, is never an excuse for anyone to hit or abuse anyone. Communicate that if your kids ever face an abusive situation, or know a friend who does, they must find a trusted adult immediately. Physical, sexual, and substance abuse is against the law—it's a serious crime.
- Plan a fun, de-stressing activity for and with your kids. Do something fun and spontaneous with the group. Surprise them with a dessert night, a movie night, or a trip to the beach. Make sure that everyone is welcome and included.
- When someone is stressed out, they need to be encouraged. Challenge your kids to encourage three people during the week—friends, family members, or teachers. Have them send an e-mail or letter, encouraging the person and telling them what they appreciate about them. Or draw names among your group challenge them to encourage and pray for the person who they drew.