

Medicating the Stress
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Overview

If there is one thing in life that is surely unavoidable, it is stress. Stress is a part of our daily routine. It is the response of the body to the demands of daily living. Each year health teachers across America begin teaching the individual health units from the text. The students are introduced to the dos and don'ts for healthy living. They are given definitions of terms and told how these terms are associated with each unit. Stress, however, is not usually stressed in these units. Stress is probably behind every statistical death in this country, yet it is not given its proper acknowledgment in each health unit.

Through a variety of films chosen by the teacher of this unit, the students will get a firsthand look at stress-related issues and the harm they cause when they are not properly addressed. There are literally hundreds of films, music lyrics, and videotapes that can be a part of this unit. Using media, the teacher can help students to explore and develop ideas for learning more about their own stress issues.

Rationale

It is important for the students to be in control of their own health issues. There should be a definite power exchange between the students and their parents towards autonomous living. High school students will soon be out of school and expected to take full responsibility for their health status. Based upon their heredity, the quality of their environment, random events that happen in their lives, health care, and behaviors they choose, all of these will have the deciding factors on how well they cope with life's many pressures. The development of resistance skills, the kinds of risks they take, and their resiliency will all help to determine their life expectancy.

However, before they can understand any of the previous health awareness issues, they must understand what they are responsible for and what they are not responsible for, what they can control and what is not in their control. These issues seem to start the whole stress ball rolling. For many, stress snowballs into hidden anger issues that are triggered by comments and actions on the part of an unsuspecting party. Because many issues go without proper explanation and modeling, young people are left to seethe in their frustration. These frustrations lead to a variety of anger issues, which in turn lead to stress-related illnesses.

Many people have the same stress-related issues, but they medicate them instead of resolving them. They talk about them, they argue about them, they are angered by them, they are frustrated by them, but are they working towards an answer to them? Are they moving in a positive direction to alleviate the pressure, or are they unconsciously spiraling in a downward self-destructive pattern? Are they clueless about the actual amount of stress in their lives? Can they be self-motivated through media to become more aware of their stress-related issues and be inclined to take a more positive, healthy approach to a resolution of these issues?

People learn to medicate their emotional feelings as early as infancy. As they move into different stages of life, they continue to medicate with the same behaviors or switch to others as a way of coping with their emotional feelings. When people switch a medicating behavior, it is usually because the new behavior is more socially acceptable or it is tolerated with the least bit of resistance. These behaviors are repeated over and over again in an effort to alleviate the stress that a person is feeling. Some of these behaviors are harmless over a short period of time, but others ultimately cost people their lives. Repeating a pattern of behavior over and over again does not guarantee that the stress will be alleviated. It can prolong the stress and thus cause irreparable damage. This unit allows the student to see the stressors, recognize a pattern of behavior or substance use, and observe the outcome. It gives the students a chance to share their observations with others and discuss healthy strategies for prevention and, in many cases, change.

Overall Objective

The overall goal of this unit is to encourage the students to develop a deeper understanding of critical health issues depicted in the daily programming they view and/or listen to. It is to make them more aware of the messages those media send through the airwaves, and how to depict and decode these messages to enhance their lifestyles or make the necessary changes for a more responsible way of living.

Key Terms For the Student

Abandonment, abuse, addiction, alcohol, anger, behavior, coping, decision, defenses, depression, disease, drugs, evaluate, healthy, holistic effect, independence, knowledge, medicating, nutrition, prevention, projection, prolonged, psychosomatic, resistance, respect, responsible, risk-taking, self-motivation, stress-management. These terms will be used during the unit by the teacher in lecture form, dialog with students, and in any accountable talk series to reinforce each student's use of these terms. The student will become more familiar with the terms and easily associate them with the unit.

What We Need To Understand About Stress

It is perfectly natural to experience stress. Stressors come in many forms. Stress is a way the body responds to a demand put upon it. A stressor can be physical, mental, or social. Power Walking, for instance, is a physical activity in which the body is involved in stressful exercise. Exercise through sports is a healthy type of stress. It has many benefits such as cardiovascular fitness, which in turn helps lower blood pressure, which in turn lowers the pressure on the heart and major blood vessels.

Mental stress is a mental activity such as preparing for a test. Here again, exercising the mind is healthy without undue negative pressures.

Social stress is dealing with others: dating someone for the first time, peer pressure, being in front of a crowd, etc.

Whatever the stressor, there are positive or negative consequences. How we accept and cope with these consequences is the key.

Stress has a holistic effect on the body and initiates a chain-reaction effect. If a student stresses over a test, he/she may experience loss of sleep and/or loss of appetite, which in turn minimizes the effectiveness of the immune system, which in turn makes the body more susceptible to bacterial and viral infections. The way in which the student chooses to cope with the stressor has caused an illness. Thus, the student has a choice in the way he/she handles the stressor.

Prolonged stress can cause **psychosomatic illnesses**. These are illnesses such as migraine headaches, stomach aches, ulcers and other common disorders. Sometimes stress agitates disorders that already exist. Any alcohol, tobacco, or drug use impairs the part of the brain responsible for reasoning and judgment. It is quite possible for decision-making skills to be affected.

During the puberty years, some teens find it difficult to cope with all the physical changes taking place within their bodies. They are very vulnerable to peer-pressure and the influence it places on them to fit in. They may choose to cope through illegal/unnecessary chemical agents or behaviors, which puts undue pressure on them to get with the in-crowd, and stay with the in-crowd. Teens who find it too difficult to adapt resort to unhealthy ways of coping. This is usually when the decision to medicate comes about.

What Is Self-Medication?

When people think of self-medication, they think of over-the-counter pain relievers. Those are forms of medications available to us, but there are others that are less obvious and seem to have the same effect. The medications I speak of are not just over-the-counter. They can also be behaviors that people choose that act as pain relievers. When we respond to stress in a healthy way, we experience a positive feeling, success. This positive response motivates us to want to have similar experiences. We tend to practice these positive responses.

When we respond in a negative way, we have not dealt effectively with the stressor. The stressor remains and we begin to medicate it. We medicate the stressor by with choice behaviors that **temporarily** disconnect us from the stress or satisfy us short-term. The stressor or emotional issue is not resolved, but set aside or stored in our emotional closet, the brain. It will continue to surface from time to time until it is completely resolved. Many of the medicative behaviors are harmless over a short period of time, but do not allow the person to deal directly with the stressor. They simply waste time and act as avoidance-mechanisms. The risk involved in even these short, seeming harmless behaviors is that a person can switch to a more powerful negative behavior without realizing it. Some of these seemingly harmless behaviors are rocking actions, thumb sucking, hair twirling, pencil tapping, excessive talking (phone), pacing, eating, watching television, playing video games, cracking gum, etc.. These behaviors establish themselves in a repeated pattern. A person can have one or more of these patterned behaviors active at the same time. As the stress mounts, a teen may be influenced by another peer or media to switch to another behavior such as sex or a chemical agent such as alcohol. As time goes on and the

stressor/s continues not to be resolved, tension and frustration build and yield to the emotion anger.

Classroom Activities

Activity # 1 Library Research Paper

The students will go to the library to do research on new and innovative Anger Management Programs and why it is so important to have anger/stress management skills in place. The students will investigate what management skills seem to work and tips that can be applied in daily living. They will be assisted by the teacher and librarian. The students will be given a mini lesson on library etiquette: how to most effectively use the library in a short time, politeness, being quiet, respect for others, and following technology guidelines.

Using the computers, the students will be given explicit directions of how to log on to the **Power Library**. Once in the Power Library, the students will click onto the **EBSCOhost Web**. Experienced students may work at their own pace while the others follow detailed cards. During the search, the students will browse through ten articles on **anger management** and choose one to their liking. This will not only fill a technology requirement, but also give the students some variety and decision-making practice. Upon making their choice, the students will fill out a RECORD OF ARTICLES card to record: author's name, title of the article, name of the magazine, date of publication and page number, the date that the student visited the publication and name of database. This will enable them to relocate the article.

After rereading the article of choice, they will begin taking notes from the article and transferring them to Word Pro by the copy and paste method. This will further increase their technology skills. While their article is open, the students will log onto Word Pro. This will enable them to flip back and forth from the article to Word Pro. They will find an important fact that they want to use in their summary, highlight it, go to edit, copy it, flip to Word Pro, and paste it into their notes. They will be required to have at least five notes, but no more than ten. When all factual notes are completed, the students will begin a short 1-2 page summary of the article based upon the notes they have taken. They will be using the spell check and any other technical support available. This project can not only be used for Health class credit, but also be put into their English portfolios and be accredited for English writing.

Before a final print out is to be handed in, the students will go through a peer check process. They will seek out another student to proofread their assignment. The peer checkers will sign-off at the bottom of the summary. The instructor will assess the final paper according to the classroom **writing rubric** and how well they were able to link the article to the unit of study.

The writing rubric has four levels. The fourth level is the "A" grade level. It indicates the paper has a sophisticated arrangement of the content. The main point(s) has been made about the specific topic. The sentence(s) is well constructed. The student uses sophisticated grammar and all spelling is correct. The third level is the "B" grade level. It indicates that the paper has a clear arrangement of the content; a logical order. There is functional use of a variety of words. The sentence structure is correct. There is a functional level of grammar usage and few spelling

errors. The "C" grade level indicates that there is an inconsistent arrangement of the content. The focus of the paper is unclear. A generic choice of words is used and there is limited control of sentence structure. There are spelling errors. The overall objective was only partially met. The "D" grade level indicates that there is little evidence of a logical focus. There are many spelling errors. The sentence structure is poor and the content is severely limited. The objective was not met.

Since most classrooms are filled with students of various learning levels I have developed some summary sentence tips to aid them in creating their summaries.

Summary Sentence Tips

These are all samples of how you may start sentences in a summary.

1. According to the article...
2. The article explains...
3. As I read the article I realized...
4. According to the author...
5. The author alludes to the fact that...
6. The author states that...
7. The author tells us that...
8. The article gives information about...
9. This article has been written to....
10. I strongly recommend...
11. I believe that...
12. I understand that...
13. In conclusion...
14. In this article I was surprised, shocked, compelled, elated, intrigued, by... Or to...
15. This article allows us to...

The student will rehearse the completed summary to be presented in oral fashion in front of their classroom peers and instructor for grade. Here they will practice the art of public speaking. This will introduce them to a new set of communication skills.

Activity #2 Pyramid Challenge

The students will be divided into small groups of four. They will be asked to discuss and choose words that are appropriate to the unit of study and build a pyramid out of them. For instance, if the unit is, **Medicating Through A Sexual Avenue: Sexually Transmitted Diseases**, they could choose the following words for their pyramid. Words associated with sexual abstinence can also be added from their article summaries. This will ensure a constant review and focus on the importance of sexual decision-making skills.

DISEASE
CHLAMYDIA CANCER

SYPHILIS CONTAGIOUS MUCUS GENITAL HERPES AIDS GONORRHEA HEPATITIS B

This game is modeled directly after the television game show, "**10,000 Dollar Pyramid.**" It is loads of fun and a great review of unit terms.

The students will challenge another group to solve their pyramid in 30 seconds or whatever time is agreed upon. The solving group will choose two players from their group. These two players will sit face-to-face in front of the challenging pyramid. The player facing the pyramid will give verbal clues to the other player until that player solves the word. As one word is solved another is quickly turned over and the player giving the clues starts to give new clues for the new word. One member from the challenging group will turn the pyramid cards over as they are to be solved. If the solving group players solve the pyramid within 30 seconds, they win the round. The solving group will then challenge the other group to solve their pyramid.

This activity gives the students a review of the unit vocabulary, and a chance to use terms that were not introduced by the teacher. In both films that will be used in this activity, ("**Double Platinum**" & "**He Got Game**"), the key characters are vulnerable to sexual activity. Sexually Transmitted Diseases could be introduced at this time to support the message of anger getting in the way of good sexual decision-making practices. It gives them an opportunity to be selective and diversified in creating their word pyramids. They also have a say in what order the words will be placed. There must be complete cooperation from the students to make this activity successful. The instructor will explain the basic rules, but the students will be in charge of their own creative processes. Prizes, points, and/or certificates can be used as incentives. This activity can be used with any and all other units.

What We Should Know About Anger

Anger is defined as being annoyed or irritated. This sounds simple enough, but anger is behind some of our most deadly assaults reported by the media. It is fueled and triggered, it has cues, and in many instances is hidden from plain view until a violent eruption occurs. In the aftermath, authorities usually discover that there were hidden anger issues that went undetected or were ignored.

Anger is a normal and healthy response to many everyday situations. It can be a very valuable tool if used properly. It can provide you with information about yourself. It directs your attention to something deeper within yourself. It can also be very destructive when expressed in an inappropriate way.

Anger masks itself by taking on different forms. It is somewhat of a chameleon. We call this "**hidden anger**". Boredom, being sarcastic, being depressed, sighing, and tardiness are all signs of hidden anger behavior. This type of anger can create mild physical problems such as a stiff neck or shoulder, tooth pain from grinding teeth during sleep, stomach upset, or headaches to more life-threatening illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes, migraine headaches, heart attacks, strokes, and some types of cancers.

Some people are angry all the time. Their bodies are always in a silent state of emergency. They get very little rest. We call this condition, "**Hostile Syndrome**". Teens with hostile syndrome are at high risk for medicating their anger. They express their anger in inappropriate ways. Projection is one of those unhealthy ways. **Projection** is blaming someone for something that they are not responsible for. Another expression may be **displacement** in which the person unleashes his/her anger on someone holding him or her responsible for something that they did not do. Thus they repeatedly use these inappropriate self-destructive actions interchangeably and unknowingly. Most teens don't know they have hidden anger.

Activity #3 Film Study of TV movie, Double Platinum

The TV movie "**Double Platinum**" was chosen to depict some instances of hidden anger. In the movie, Kayla is a teenager growing up without a mother. Living with a father who hated her mother, Kayla is lacking the responsible adult figure in her life to share intimate thoughts and desires with, lacking parental nurturing, etc. The movie also gives good clear examples of projection and displacement. Kayla blames her mom for abandoning her as a baby and holds her father responsible for lengthening the abandonment. She also has arguments with her mom about her decisions and strives for independence as she searches for the truth. The film also shows how important it is for teens to learn to control their anger and to express it in appropriate ways. It especially cites the importance of asking questions to get a clearer understanding of the issue. The more reliable information a teen has, the better his/her chances are of resolving these anger issues. There are a host of **anger cues** which are the body changes that occur when a person is angry such as rapid breathing, increased heart rate, sweating, tense facial features, restlessness, irritability, inability to sleep, etc.

The students will view the film, **Double Platinum**. During certain parts of the film, the instructor will stop the film to check for understanding and introduce unit terms. Since **Double Platinum basically deals with a teenager's anger towards her mother**, the teacher will use key questions to elicit responses from the students about hidden anger issues on both the mother's and daughter's parts. They will have to be able to define words like abandonment, rejection, afraid, frustrated, lonely, guilt, stressed, surprised, happy, depressed, anxious, resentful, risk, emotional issues, inherited, betrayal, emotions, medication, excited, envious, sad, shy, disgusted. These are all emotions that are expressed in the film. They will identify the character with the emotion and be able to present, in theory, an explanation of the character's emotional state. The teacher can ask leading questions to help the students.

This film was chosen partly because of its mother-daughter relationship. It depicts the struggles of a young female African-American teen who grows up without the nurturing and love of her mother. It was also chosen because Westinghouse High School is a predominantly African-American school and the film has predominately African-American actors. Many films are not multicultural and this can be difficult for some students.

The students will be graded according to their **accountable talk rubric**. This rubric has four levels, four being the highest. Within their groups, the students will discuss the terms mentioned above and how they were expressed in the movie. They will discuss in depth each character and apply the unit terms to them. They will also be able to link each character's actions to another's

and explain any chain reactions. Finally, the students will apply their own anger management skills and discuss ways that these characters could have resolved their issues or expressed their anger in an appropriate manner.

Rules For Classroom Discussion

1. RESPECT one another during the discussion.
2. ALLOW someone to finish what they are saying before you speak.
3. DISCUSS your topic in a calm manner.
4. REMEMBER that everyone is entitled to an opinion.
5. REMEMBER that you do not have to agree with someone's opinion, but must respect his or her right to have one.
6. REMEMBER that a discussion is just that, a discussion, not an argument.

Activity #4 Film Study of the movie, He Got Game

The students will view the film, **He Got Game** directed by Spike Lee. In certain parts of the film, the teacher will stop the film to check for understanding and review the unit terms. This film basically deals with the anger a male has towards his father who, in a moment of rage, causes the death of the boy's mother. The students will use key terms in the unit to enter into accountable talks in an attempt to explain each character's emotional situation. The teacher will act as a guide in these talks by asking questions and helping students to make comparisons. This film was chosen because of its **father-son connection**. This film was also edited for television. It depicts the struggles of a teenage boy (Jesus) who excels in basketball. Throughout the film, he not only has to deal with the emotional torment of his father's involvement in his mother's death, but must maintain good grades in school, and take primary care and responsibility for his little sister. These stressors cause him great psychological chaos and confusion, which mask his anger. Although he is using basketball as his primary form of exercise and a potential for future earnings, he is drowning in a sea of anger, frustration, and confusion. Among the many peer pressure situations are various other pressures from family members, coaches, and media. Constant streams of sexual and financial lures are set before him. Like Kayla, he lacks the parental nurturing and guidance he so desperately needed during part of his childhood and teen years. His momentary, abrasive visits with his father are a sign that even though Jesus has not come to terms with his anger for his father, he listens to his father's career advice.

The students will be graded according to their **accountable talk rubric**.

This rubric has four levels.

The **fourth level** is equivalent to an "A". On this level the student has **answered questions** in a **clear** and **concise** manner. They have used unit **vocabulary** in a **sophisticated** dialog. They have clearly demonstrated their **understanding/knowledge** of the film and how it applies to the unit of study. They are also able to link it to previous units of study.

The **third level** is equivalent to a "**B**". On this level the student has **answered most questions** in an **acceptable** manner. They have used **some unit vocabulary** in dialog. They clearly demonstrated their **understanding** of the film and how it relates to the unit of study.

The **second level** is equivalent to a "**C**". The student has inconsistently answered questions in discussion. They use minimum unit vocabulary in dialog. They have a minimum of understanding of how the film applies to the unit of study.

The **first level** is equivalent to a "**D**". This student infrequently answered questions in discussion. They demonstrated little or no use of unit vocabulary. They showed no real understanding of the unit of study.

The Dangers of Medicating Our Stress Through A Sexual Avenue

Our **immune system** is at risk when we are overwhelmed by prolonged periods of stress. It becomes suppressed and unable to handle the pathogen load entering the body. As a result, we are more susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases or infections. Some of these STDs in turn leave us open to certain cancers.

Besides sexually transmitted diseases, **unwanted pregnancies** are another concern. Teens are ill equipped to handle all of the parental responsibilities associated with child rearing. The physical labor and birthing of a baby usually takes a toll on the mother's physical health. Many teen mothers are left to raise a child by themselves. They become overwhelmed with stress and anger, which is passed onto the child. Thus starts a vicious cycle of stress/anger syndrome.

Psychological consequences are still another concern. Many teens who enter the sexual arena too early are devastated emotionally. They do not have the protective skills in place to recognize the skillful art of manipulation. They are left to deal with rejection after a sexual encounter. They lack self-confidence, settle into further low self-esteem, which results in an anger-stress cycle that spirals them further downward emotionally. They lose themselves in the chaotic aftermath and many never quite find their way back to an acceptable level of confidence. The true sadness is that the door that was once open to a certain promising future has closed and through stress-related choices, doors to an uncertain less promising future have opened. It usually all happens one decision at a time.

Practicing Sexual Abstinence

When a person refrains from sexual intimacy, he/she is practicing sexual abstinence. Teens who practice abstinence are more likely to learn how to develop healthy relationships that are not based upon sex. They learn skills necessary to say and mean "no". They are less likely to involve themselves in risky situations. They can concentrate on other life skills that they will need to become a responsible adult. Choosing abstinence also lessens the pressure on teens. Less pressure allows them to be more honest with themselves and their trusted adults. They increase their independence with each decision they make.

Activity #5 "Critical Thinking Discussions" Movie: "No Laughing Matter"

The movie "No Laughing Matter" was chosen because it demonstrates how medicating anger leads to addiction, enabling, and codependency. As a mother in the movie develops an addiction to alcohol after the tragic loss of her husband, her son medicates his issues with sex. Amid the chaos and confusion, he finds himself in one of life's most challenging roles, parenthood. Both mother and son medicate their anger/stress issues, but in different ways.

The students will be involved in a number of "critical thinking" assignments. They will be divided into 4-5 groups. Each group will elect a recorder to write down the group's ideas. Each group will be asked to critically think and discuss among themselves several critical points from the movie: How did the mother (Emma Pulsky) medicate throughout the film? (alcohol, power, control, etc.) What statements do you remember hearing from different people in the film about her? Did she medicate by herself? How did the son (Charlie) medicate throughout the film? Why were their medications so dangerous? What did they avoid by medicating? What were they getting from the medication? Discuss Charlie's plans for the future. What were they? Did his girlfriend have the same type of planning? What do you think attracted Charlie to Lauren in the first place? Were they both on the same emotional page? How was Lauren medicating throughout the film? Looking very honestly at the film, what was Charlie's actual relationship with his mother? What was Lauren's relationship with her mother? Do you recognize any patterns of behavior in the film? Describe both fathers' roles in the story. Was there a connection? If so, what was it? How do Charlie and his mother begin to address their anger/stress issues in the film? Do you get the feeling that there is light at the end of their anger/stress tunnel?

Each group will present its ideas to the class.

Strategies

Dealing With Anger

From the unit the students will learn that successfully coping with anger/stress issues takes time and practice. It is not learned overnight. It is not always comfortable. Remember that an angry person's comfort zone is in anger. He/she has practiced that for a long time. It is not going to feel comfortable at first to begin these new skills. The path from anger to healthy coping is not always clear and there may be a few setbacks in the beginning, but with repeated encouragement and reinforcement of the skills, you will begin to see progress. Dr. Philip C. McGraw said it best in his book, "Life Strategies".

1. **Acknowledge your anger.** You cannot begin to cope in a healthy way if you do not accept responsibility for your part. Remember that you are in control. You have choices. You decide what action you will take.
2. **Getting real with you.** What is at the bottom of all this anger? What is the real issue? Is it really about the present situation or did that trigger a deeper memory?

3. **Physically distance yourself from the situation or person** to give yourself some time to calm down. You will be more rational and able to think. Time will give you a chance to make a plan of action and determine how to approach the situation or person. It will also give you a chance to go over the details of the incident.

4. **Discuss the situation with a trusted responsible adult** who will take the time to acknowledge your feelings. This person can help you examine all of your options. This person should be a good listener.

5. **Make your needs and intentions known.** What are your expectations? Will you be able to compromise if necessary? How will you feel if you are not able to resolve everything? Communicate your feelings to the other person, why you feel the way you do, and what you want to see happen.

Activity #6 Making A Commercial - (How to alleviate from an active day)

The students will be divided into 4-5 groups. Each group will be given the challenge of creating a commercial that they think would be fun and informative for viewing audiences. Each commercial will be a 60-second message about how to alleviate the stress of a hard day at school or work. The students would have to show the type of stress, the effect the stress was having on its victim, and a solution to the stress. This will involve writing dialogue and rehearsing it. The group's first objective is to decide what the stressful situation will be. After the stressor is decided, the group will discuss how they will portray the stressful situation to the audience. They may include dialog, make up jingles, a song, or rap. The group will then show their solution to the stressful situation. The commercials would be presented to the class. This is a group activity that gives the students plenty of opportunity to be creative.

Eleven Ways To Lessen The Stress

There are definite measures we can take to lessen the stress load. These can be added to our toolbox of anger/stress management skills. Stress strategies given by David Engen that were published in the Parade section of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette October 2000 edition, were so well developed that I left them in their original form.

1. Plan ahead. Leave early for an appointment. Give yourself extra time to be somewhere. **ASK QUESTIONS.** This shows your desire to do a good job. If the workload is too much, say so! Do what you can in one day and leave the rest for the next day.

2. Avoid Gossip. Negative self-talk can play over and over again in your mind like a tape recorder. You have enough to think about.

3. Seek out positive people. People who are encouraging create positive self-talk.

4. Set priorities. Determine what is important and what is less important; what is in your control and what you can not control; what you are responsible for and what is not your responsibility.

5. Refocus. Take a serious look at where you are right now. Have you surrounded yourself with negative people? Are you basically leading a negative lifestyle? Are you giving off a negative aura? Is it working for you? If not, make a change; One change at a time. When one starts working, make another. If you fall back into a negative pattern, **TRY AGAIN!** It will come about. Remember it takes time.

6. A job is a job. Do what you can in a certain time frame and leave the rest. It will be there tomorrow.

7. Reward yourself for what you accomplish to encourage yourself for the rest. Reward with positive self-talk.

8. Rest. Get enough sleep. At least 8-10 hours of sleep a night. Learn to shut off the TV, phone, computer, etc. These are all sources of chaos, and stress related. If you find it hard to do, it's a message to you of just how much stress is in your life.

9. Set aside time for yourself. Walking gives you great exercise and time for positive thoughts. Leave all negativism behind. If you find that you can't escape the stress, listen to music. If it is loud, you are still in stress. Stress should subside with time and skill development. It may take a while.

10. Change you scenery. Rearrange your living space. Take a mental health day from work. **READ-READ-READ!!!** Read about stress, about anger, about abuse, about addictions. Acquaint yourself with others' opinions and research data. This will broaden your knowledge about stress and give you a better understanding of other people's stress situations and how they coped. You can't claim what you don't understand. You will also find that you are not alone, but you may be the only one around that is taking a positive step forward.

11. Don't forget counseling! This has helped a great deal of people to understand themselves and their personal situations better.

Using Resistance Skills When You Are Pressured To Be Sexually Active

To cope with the stress of being pressured to be sexually active, you should avoid being in situations that put you at risk in the first place. We all like to have a good time whether we are with friends or on a date. Teens should avoid isolating themselves from the group. There is less chance of pressure with others around. Do group activities that can be shared and fun. Avoid parties with alcohol and drugs. Studies show that these parties are usually the setting for the most sexual pressure.

Practice resistance skills. You don't owe anyone an explanation for your abstinence, but you can give good, healthy reasons for choosing abstinence. Some examples listed below are from the Health and Wellness textbook.

1. I practice abstinence to promote my health. I don't want to contract AIDS or any other STDs.

2. I don't want to become a teen parent. Teen parents are usually stressed and are at high risk for abusing and/or neglecting their children.
3. I practice abstinence to follow laws. I don't want to be involved in any underage sexual activity. I don't want to be accused of date rape.
4. I have high self-esteem and good character. Through self-respect I show good judgment, and preserve my good reputation as well as the reputations of others.
5. I follow guidelines set forth by my parents/guardians. I want my family to be proud of my good decision-making skills and me. This upholds my personal value system. I do not want to disappoint myself or others who have my best interests at heart.
6. I do not want to have guilt-related feelings. Postponing sexual intercourse would allow me to grow as an individual first and make me better equipped to handle sexual decisions on an adult level. It would provide me with the time to gain access to more knowledge and understanding of sexual matters.
7. You can repeat your reason several times. This will ensure that you are serious about your decision.
8. Actions speak louder than words, so physically distance yourself from the situation. This will provide evidence that you are firm in your decision.
9. Date people in your age category. Older people may be more apt to pressure you.
10. You may want to share your thoughts with your friends. Encourage them to practice abstinence also.

Set new guidelines for expressing affection. There are no hard and fast rules. Anyone can choose abstinence at any point in his or her lives. Reinvent your sexual guidelines with the help of a trusted responsible adult

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Activity # 7 The Hearts Tree

The students will address the issue of choosing abstinence supported by resistance skills by creating a tree in the school hallway. This will get the attention of other students. Each student will create his or her own heart for the tree. The hearts can be made from construction paper or any other sources suggested by the students. On the heart, students will inscribe their personal resistance messages. This message can be in the form of a phrase, poem, jingle, etc. The hearts will be placed on the tree for the rest of the student population to read. The word abstinence will be on the trunk of the tree in large letters. We will use hearts instead of leaves because these messages are well intentioned from the heart.

Glossary of Terms

Abandonment - to leave; desert

Abuse - to use wrongly; misuse

Addiction - developing a dependence on something or someone

Alcohol - a mind-altering drug that depress the central nervous system

Anger - the feeling of being annoyed, irritated, and furious

Behavior - the way a person conducts himself or herself

Coping - to deal with; problems, troubles, etc.

Decision-making - a process by which a person comes to a conclusion

Defenses - a mechanism that a person uses to protect themselves from harm, painful feelings

Depression - an emotional condition characterized by feeling of hopelessness, inadequacy, etc.

Disease - a condition of not being healthy; illness in general

Drugs - a substance other than food that changes the way the body or mind functions

Evaluate - to judge or determine the worth or quality of;

Healthy - condition of the body or mind; physical or mental well being

Holistic Effect - the influence that something has on the body as a whole

Independence - freedom from the control of another

Knowledge - an awareness or understanding of the facts

Medicating - a way for relieving pain

Nutrition - the study of what people eat and eating habits and how these affect health status

Prevention - to keep from happening

Projection - to blame other for something they are not responsible for

Prolonged - something that is lengthened in time

Psychosomatic - a physical disorder that is caused by or made worse by one's emotional problems

Resistance - the ability of someone to ward off another's advances

Respect - to think highly of; show honor or courtesy to

Responsible - held accountable; answerable

Risk-taking - a behavior that involves taking a chance of injury, hazard

Self-motivation - the desire that encourages one to do something

Stress - the response of the body to any demand put upon it

Stress-management - a plan developed to prevent and deal with stressors

In conclusion to this unit I would like to add that as stated in the beginning, life is full of problems. No matter what the problem is, there is a way to resolve it. Success in problem solving is not something that is inherited. It is something that successful people work at. They choose to deal with the problems, not deny them, ignore them, or blame someone else for them. They confront their problems head-on and find constructive ways to resolve them.

You can let things happen to you, or make things happen for you. The students will one day be totally responsible for their own lives. They can allow stress to carry them into risky situations as a grain of sand allows the ocean currents to carry it to unknown destinations, or they can learn skills to manage the stress and act as a compass to guide them on their lifetime journey.

This unit will act as a compass to give the students some direction and focus in managing the stress in their lives. They will have a greater awareness of how they can empower themselves when dealing with stressful issues.

Health, Safety and Physical Education Standards

1. All students develop knowledge of injury prevention and treatment, and the ability to respond appropriately in emergency situations.
2. All students recognize and demonstrate the ability to apply various dietary guidelines to meet nutritional needs at various stages of life.
3. All students demonstrate their knowledge of the benefits associated with physical fitness and good personal health habits, including health promotion and disease prevention.

4. All students identify the advantages of avoiding, and develop the skills to avoid, tobacco, alcohol, and substance use.
5. All students demonstrate individual development in motor fitness and physical fitness, including aerobic fitness and skills in lifetime sports and outdoor activities to promote lifelong physical activity.
6. All students demonstrate leadership skills and the ability to work cooperatively in team sports or other developmentally appropriate group activities.
7. All students demonstrate an understanding of the part good mental health plays in leading successful lives and of the practices and resources that support personal mental health needs

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