

Life Skills for Success: *Stress and Anger Management Skills* Instructor's Guide

Overview

Conflict and adversity are unavoidable facts of life, and our emotional response to them often takes the form of stress or anger. These responses are natural, and if channeled and managed correctly, can even be beneficial, providing us with energy and motivation to face that adversity. For many, however, feelings of stress and anger become a liability that keep them from overcoming the problems that caused those feelings to begin with. This can lead to difficulties at work, cause problems in personal relationships, and have a direct impact on our health and well-being.

Stress is on the rise, according to surveys by the American Psychological Association and the American Institute of Stress. Over 75 percent of Americans report experiencing physical symptoms of stress (such as headaches and fatigue), and 80 percent of workers say they feel stress on the job. Unmanaged stress can lead to a host of health problems, including headaches, indigestion, ulcers, infections, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

Our ability to effectively handle feelings of stress, control our anger, and manage conflict are essential to our success, both on and off the job. This video offers practical ways to manage stress and anger and presents strategies for solving conflicts to reduce the sources of that stress.

Instructors and facilitators should be aware that stress and anger—and more specifically the sources and triggers that cause those feelings—can be highly personal and sensitive topics to discuss. While this guide offers suggestions for activities, instructors are encouraged to use their own discretion in terms of student interaction.

Presentation Suggestions

Start by taking an informal survey of your group. How many of them experience moderate to high levels of stress on a daily basis? How many of them feel the *physical* effects of that stress (headaches, insomnia, problems with eating, and so on)? Then ask them to make a list of all the things that stress them out or make them angry. You can choose whether this is something that can be shared as a group. Assure them that they are not alone, that the majority of Americans experience some level of stress, and that the same majority finds work to be a primary source of that stress. Explain that stress does not have to be a negative feeling, however, and that there are ways to manage it.

Alternatively (or additionally), you may have your students do the inventory and activities section for the stress and anger management segment in the *Life Skills Inventory* (available from JIST Career Solutions) in conjunction with questions above.

When you feel participants are ready to think about how best to manage their stress and anger, give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to watching the video. If you wish, allow the students to state their answers and discuss them.

Show the **video**. Encourage students to make changes to the answers they put down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the video. If you wish, allow students to do this section-by-section whenever the video suggests a pause.

At the conclusion of the video, ask students to discuss any changes they made to their answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of information in the video. Follow up the discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from students or assign the questions as homework essays.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and correct the quizzes as a group.

Assign the **Homework Option**, if desired.

Anticipation Quiz

Directions: Answer these questions as completely as possible. You will revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. True or False: Stress is a purely negative feeling that should be avoided at all cost.
2. What is chronic stress and what health problems can it lead to?
3. What is work/life balance and how does it relate to stress?
4. What are some strategies for being assertive when managing conflicts?
5. What are some common strategies for managing initial feelings of anger?

Answer Key

1. False. It is the body's natural reaction to adversity.
2. Answers will vary but might include: Chronic stress is stress that goes unmanaged for a long period of time. It can lead to heart disease, stroke, headaches, diarrhea, nausea, indigestion, constipation, colds, infections, arthritis, and high blood pressure, among others.
3. The balance between your work time, family time, social time, and downtime. Not allotting time for each can lead to increased stress.

4. Answers will vary but might include: Use “I” statements. Offer constructive criticism. Stay focused on the problem at hand.
5. Answers will vary but might include: Deep breathing. Taking time to gather your thoughts. Taking some time away from the situation.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Stress Busters

Format: Individual/Group

Time: 15-20 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. The video offers several techniques for positively managing stress, but your students probably have many more they can share. Challenge each student to write down five to ten ways that they personally deal with stress. They don’t necessarily all have to be positive.
2. Come together as a group and make a master list of potential stress busters on the board or smartboard. Be sure to discuss if each strategy is positive or negative, and if it is not positive, is there an alternative strategy that would work instead.
3. If possible, print out the master list and pass one out to each member of the class.

Activity #2

Title: Seeking Balance

Format: Individual

Time: 15-20 minutes

Materials: Paper and pen

Procedure:

1. Many people feel stress due to a lack of work/life balance. They do a poor job of allocating time for all the important arenas of their lives.
2. Ask participants to divide a sheet of paper into four columns: Work time. Family time. Social time. And Me time. Then have them imagine the upcoming week and write three goals in each column—essentially three things they’d like to accomplish

by the end of that week. For example, they might write *finish my project* for Work/School, *Call my sister* for Family, *Go out to dinner* for Social, and *Finish my book*, for Me. If you'd like, have them rank each item in order of importance and list the day and the amount of time each will take.

3. If you meet again the next week, ask students how successful they were at meeting their goals and what impact it had on their stress levels and general well-being.

Discussion Questions

1. The video suggests that stress is a body's natural response and can even be a positive force in your life. How can you use stress positively? At what point does it turn from something motivating and energizing to something debilitating and dangerous?
2. Stress and anger are often caused by conflicts with others, particularly on the job. How have you dealt with workplace conflict in the past? Did your actions resolve the conflict or just make it worse? What can you do to resolve conflicts more peacefully and effectively in the future?

Quick Quiz

Note: You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for students to respond, or copy and hand this out as a written exercise. If you read the quiz, write or project responses for the group to see.

1. Stress can lead to which of the following physiological changes in your body?
 - A) increased heartrate
 - B) faster breathing
 - C) tightening muscles
 - D) all of the above
2. Which of these is *not* an effective way to deal with stress?
 - A) exercise
 - B) withdrawing from family and friends
 - C) meditation
 - D) deep breathing
3. True or False: It is generally best to keep your anger to yourself at work rather than

finding a way to express it.

A) True

B) False

4. Unmanaged anger can lead to which of the following:
 - A) depression
 - B) substance abuse
 - C) low self-esteem
 - D) all of the above
5. The first thing you should do when you start to get angry is
 - A) raise your voice.
 - B) speak your mind.
 - C) stop and take a deep breath.
 - D) abruptly leave the room.
6. Being _____ means making your feelings, needs, and expectations clear while at the same time respecting the concerns and opinions of others.
 - A) angry
 - B) stressed
 - C) passive-aggressive
 - D) assertive
7. Which of the following is not an effective way to solve conflicts at work?
 - A) giving constructive criticism
 - B) seeking compromise
 - C) using “you” instead of “I” statements
 - D) maintaining your sense of humor
8. True or False: Trying to control every aspect of your life is a good strategy for reducing stress

A) True

B) False

Answer Key

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|------|------|
| 1. D | 5. C |
| 2. B | 6. D |
| 3. B | 7. C |
| 4. D | 8. B |

Homework Option

The video identifies several of the most common stressors that can trigger a stressful or angry response. To get a better sense of what their own triggers are, have students keep a daily journal or list of the stress triggers they encountered. At the end of each day, have students also record what strategies they used to manage their stress and anger. If feasible, have students pair up at the end of the week to compare their results and share strategies for effective stress management.

References

The following sources have been referenced in creating the *Life Skills: Stress and Anger Management* video. Instructors may choose to use this resource for research purposes or extend it to students for additional and/or advanced reading.

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