Stress

**Aim:** To give young people an insight into stress, and its physical effects on the body. To encourage young people to discover coping and distraction techniques for when they are experiencing stress in their lives.

**What you will need:**

Flipchart paper and pens, Cornflour, Balloons, Water, Funnels, Bowls and Spatulas.

**Activity 1**

Using the flip chart paper and pens, draw a gingerbread person figure (if you have enough paper and space you could also draw around one of the young people) ask the young people to describe physical effects of stress on the body e.g. feeling sick, headaches and dizziness. Write these effects on the flip chart paper where the feeling would occur e.g. feeling sick would be written in the stomach area.

Using a second gingerbread person figure ask the young people to think about the internal effects stress can have e.g. mood swings, disturbed sleep. Ask the young people to write these inside of the gingerbread person.

Ask the young people to identify areas in their life that might cause them stress e.g. exams. Then ask the young people what could help combat these stresses e.g. for exams it could be creating a study timetable.

Ask the young people to think about ways that they could help to manage their stress. The young people could make a personal list of these to help them in stressful times. Talk through distraction techniques with the young people and encourage them to share ideas of what they are already doing e.g. going for a walk, listening to music etc.

**Activity 2 – Making Stress Balls**

Take two parts cornflour to one part water and mix this into a bowl, this Oobleck mixture will be the inside of the stress ball. Blow up the balloon and release the air again, this allows the balloon to stretch before filling it. Using a funnel, insert this down the neck of the balloon and into the main part of the balloon. Begin to slowly pour the Oobleck mixture into the funnel. You may have to use the spatula to push the mixture right to the bottom/fullest part of the balloon. Tie the balloon securely. To reduce the risk of the balloon bursting insert the filled balloon into an empty balloon and then tie this. This will reduce the chance of the stress ball bursting or leaking.

**Anger**

**Aim:** To give young people an insight into Anger and ask them to consider the idea that they are in control of their own anger.

**What you will need:** Paper, Pens, ‘Trash’ or objects that the young people can use to make drums and drumsticks, music or you can use Youtube.

**Activity 1** – Ask the young people to ‘Map their Anger’ ask them to discuss, write or draw their anger. Ask the young people to give examples of what they might say and do when they are angry e.g. hit walls, shout. Give the young people scenarios that help to show that they are in control of their anger. Young people can write out their answers or talk them through with the group.

**Scenario 1** – You are are excited about your friend’s birthday party, but you then discover you are not invited. Their parents have said they are only allowed 3 people there, and you were not one of the three your friend has chosen to attend. *How do you respond?*

**Scenario 2** – You have been asked to put a large pile of books away in alphabetical order, just as you finish someone knocks them over. *How do you feel?* You then discover that it was an accident, and someone had slipped on the floor and knocked the books over. *How do you feel? Are you less angry than before? What made you now less angry?*

**Scenario 3 –** You are playing a game on your console and your parent/carer comes home from work. They unplug the console and tell you to go and do your homework – even though you have already done it. *How do you respond?*

**Scenario 4 -** Josh is late home one evening because he lost the key to his bike chain and had to walk home. His parents automatically assume that he just decided to stay out later with his friends… Josh loses his temper at being mis-judged and punches a hole in the door. *How could Josh have handled this better, what could you suggest?*

**Activity 2** - Using trash they have or pots and pans etc, give the young people the drumsticks/beater and play some music and ask them to play along or just bash their drums!! The drumming action should help to release anger.

**Resilience**

**Aim:**  To look at resilience and how young people can move forward and rebuild themselves after life event/ hard times.

**What you will need:** Paper, Pens, glue, a breakable piece of pottery, a gold metallic marker, gardening gloves, a plastic bag

**Activity 1 –** Start the session by asking the young people to draw a timeline of their life and ask them to write down positive and negative situations that they have faced throughout their lives. Offer the young people a chance to talk/discuss this within the group setting if they want to, but this is not essential. Suggest that all people face positive and negative times in their lifetimes and our ability to bounce back from this is called resilience.

**Activity 2 –** Give each of the young people a piece of the chosen pottery and ask them to put in into a bag and break it. Ask the young people to carefully empty the bag of broken pieces onto the table (offer gardening gloves to prevent cutting themselves) The young people are then asked to put all of the broken pieces back together and glue them in place. When this has been done and the glue has dried, give the young people a gold marker or gold paint and ask them to trace over the broken lines. This method is taken from the Japanese Kintsugi, the art of putting broken pottery back together with gold. This is built on the idea that in embracing flaws and imperfections, you can create something more unique, beautiful stronger and more resilient than before.

**Self-Care (Mindfulness and Relaxation)**

**Aim:** To give young people an insight into self-care, and why it is important.

**What you will need:** Pens, paper, Guided Meditation Soundtrack, Laughter Yoga instructions.

**Guided Meditation Soundtrack**: If you do not have a guided meditation soundtrack there are many available online. A shorter guide may be suitable to begin with an example can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7iBnp8T6nY>.

**Laughter Yoga Instructions**: If you have no previous experience with laughter yoga then some exercise examples can be found here: <https://www.wikihow.com/Do-Laughter-Yoga>.

Alternatively, you could choose a YouTube video and show it to the young people, a good introduction to laughter Yoga can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVkG3L79sL4>

**Activity 1**

Ask the young people to make themselves comfortable and to close their eyes, then play the guided meditation soundtrack. Once they have finished the guided meditation, ask them how they feel? Did they enjoy it, do they now feel more relaxed than when they came in?

**Activity 2**

Discuss the idea of self-care with the young people, what do they do to look after themselves? Things to include might be eating well, getting enough sleep, exercise, socialising with friends…The young people can make a suitcase of self-care using the template attached.

**Activity 3**

Ask the young people to sit comfortably and end the session with a Laughter Yoga Session.

Self-Care Kit

Fill the suitcase full with Self-Care ideas!!

 **Happiness**

**Aim:** To allow the young people to explore their emotions, positive and negative using an ‘emotional wheel’ as a visual. To explore the positive effect of music on the young people’s mood.

**What you will need:** Music through an app or computer, pens, paper

**Activity**

Ask the young people to make an ‘emotional wheel’ and write down a time in their lives when they felt or experienced each emotion e.g. happiness could be a memory of a Birthday or maybe Christmas time. Anger could be their favourite football team losing a game. The ask the young people to write a distraction technique alongside this, then they can use the emotional wheel as a tool.

Ask the young people to then focus on a time that they were happy and invite them to share with the group (only if they are comfortable to do so).

At this point you could then talk about the effect music can have on your mood and ask the young people to compile a happiness soundtrack. This could simply be done on paper and referred back to as and when required, or using an app such as Spotify or Youtube. This compilation should be made up of songs that the young people identify as uplifting music that makes them feel happy.

 **Anxiety**

**Aim:** This session can be used to give Young People an insight into the physical and mental effects of anxiety.

**You will need –** Pens, paper, coloured pens/pencils Mandala Art (these can be sourced free on the internet or you could encourage the young people to draw their own), Relaxing Music, Flip chart

**Activity 1**

At the start of the session ask the young people what they think anxiety is. Note their responses on the flip chart. Alternatively, it can be done similar to the Stress activity where they draw round one and other and look at the effects of anxiety on the body. Their responses can then be written on the sheet of paper to coincide with which part of the body is affected e.g. Heart palpitations, draw the word on the part of the body where the heart is.

While you are doing this activity talk about anxiety with the young people and discuss with them ways in which they can reduce their anxiety.

Look at breathing techniques, and how breathing exercises can help reduce anxiety. Ask the young people to breath in deeply through their nose and hold their breath for 4 seconds, ask them to slowly release their breath over 6 seconds (repeat for 2-3 minutes). Explain that this is a breathing exercise that can be used when someone feels anxious. Breathing techniques are simple and can be done discreetly at any time or place.

It is important however to remind the young people that a certain amount of stress in their lives is normal and to be expected e.g. before you sit an exam

**Activity 2**

Colour in the Mandela Art pictures, and play the relaxing music to promote calm while discussing the effects of anxiety on the mind and body.