SESSION 3
MANAGING STRESS
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To learn what stress is and how it feels for us

To develop some new ways of helping ourselves when we feel stressed

MATERIALS NEEDED

• SHEETS OF A4 PAPER WITH THE NUMBERS 1 TO 10 DRAWN ON EACH (ONE NUMBER ON EACH SHEET, ENSURE THERE ARE 10 IN TOTAL)

• FLIP CHART

• COLOURED MARKERS

• PRINT OUT OF THE WORKSHEETS AT THE END OF THIS MODULE

• PROPS / DRESS UP FOR A PLAY (OPTIONAL)
**SESSION TIMETABLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNDERSTANDING STRESS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHEN I GET STRESSED I...</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ABC OF MANAGING STRESS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOOD STRESS BAD STRESS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTHY / UNHEALTHY REACTIONS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRESS LESS PART 2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 HR 20</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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**TRICKLE IN**

The session begins with a warm-up activity.

Trick in, Warm Up and Closing exercises are suggested, although facilitators are encouraged to choose activities to suit their group.

**FACILITATORS NOTES**

**STRESS**

Stress is often a significant and on-going problem experienced by young people living in higher stress family environments, including homes where drugs or alcohol are causing a problem. The aim in this session is both to acknowledge this, and to build resilience.

**MENTAL HEALTH AND COPING ISSUES**

Coping mechanisms, stress and similar topics may create a space where young people discuss serious mental health concerns, self-harm, suicide etc. Ensure that facilitators are familiar with their organisation’s policy regarding disclosure of self-harm, and are ready to respond to any challenging situations around this issue should they arise.

**WARM UP**

Activities include:

- **Trick in:** The Web
- **Warm Up:** Stress Reduction
- **Closing:** Don’t Forget to Breathe
To help participants understand that if they have negative feelings, if they feel like there are demands on them, if they feel worried, tense, upset or angry that this is what being ‘stressed’ is, and that it is a common thing for young people.

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

**UNDERSTANDING STRESS STEP 1: FEELINGS ON THE FLOOR**

1. Lay some sheets on the floor, numbered from 1 to 10.

2. Ask the group; ‘have you ever been asked to rate something, for example have you ever been asked ‘on a scale of 1-10 how much do you like Rhianna / Man Utd etc.’? A ‘1’ usually means that you don’t like it at all, and ‘10’ means you absolutely love it. A ‘3’ means you don’t really like it but you don’t hate it, and a ‘7’ means that it’s pretty good, but you don’t love it. A five is that you are not pushed either way or you think it’s a bit average.

3. Explain ‘we’re going to do some ratings now. I’m going to read a statement to you and tell you what a ‘1’ means and what a ‘10’ means, and you go and stand beside the number to rate how you feel about the statement. Let’s start with the very important issue of pepperoni on pizza. If you LOVE pepperoni on pizza, go to ‘10’. If you HATE pepperoni on pizza, go to ‘1’.

4. Ask a couple of participants to discuss why they rated pepperoni the way they did. Ask on or two more example questions to get everyone moving and used to rating things using this game.

5. Now that everyone has got the general idea, explain that now you want to get their feelings on some other things.

6. Explain that living in a family where there are problems with drugs or alcohol can be extra stressful, especially for young people. Ask them if they agree?

7. Ask everyone to name one or two things in life that causes them to get sad, angry, annoyed, worried, tense or upset, i.e. something that causes them stress. Write these things on a flip chart.
Now, read out a statement from this list and get the group to rate them by standing in the position from 1 to 10. 1 = this doesn't cause me stress, and 10 is this causes me lots of stress.

Statements could include things like the following:

- My family member making a show of us by fighting on the street /being stoned etc.
- My family shouting at each other and fighting.
- Having friends come over to the house.
- My friends in school slagging of my family member.

The statements don't have to relate to the substance use issue only, but can deal with other issues.

After each participant has chosen their place on the scale, allow a space for people to discuss their reasons for choosing a place before moving on to the next issue.

Make sure everyone is clear that they do not have to talk about why they have chosen to stand where they have, but that it's great if they want to as it helps the group understand that different things affect people differently. Being aware of this helps us support each other a little better.

**Understanding Stress Step 2: Discussion on Stress**

As a group, reflect on the following:

- Did you score high on many of the ratings?
- What do you think ‘stress’ is? (Hint: people feel stressed when they feel like the demands or pressures on them are more than what they can cope with). Stress is a normal part of every day life. Being young and being a teenager can be a stressful time for anyone, but this can be much harder when you live in a home where there are problems caused by drugs or alcohol.
- What are some of the ways that stress can affect us? (Hint: emotional can include feeling irritable, sad or not being able to concentrate and physical can include sleeplessness, appetite problems, headaches, stomach aches, tiredness).
- Were there some things that everyone found stressful, and were they the things you expected?
This activity is designed to give people an opportunity to think about what it is that they normally do to cope with stress.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. The facilitator may want to remind everyone that sharing is welcomed but not compulsory.

2. The facilitator should look at the *Stress Less* worksheet (page 12). For this exercise, the group will answer question one. Question two is addressed later.

3. Discuss: Think about the things you normally do when you get stressed. Try to be honest about what you do, we all have different ways of coping.

4. Give all participants a copy of the *Stress Less* sheet.

5. Take a few minutes to compete question one in your sheet or in pairs to think of 5 things you do when you get stressed.

6. Get everyone back together. Ask if anyone would like to share and remind everyone that they don’t have to. Once someone has shared, thank him or her and ask if anyone else does this or wants to comment.
The ABC of Managing Stress

**Aim**

This exercise is to help participants understand that there are ways to respond to stress that can make them feel better, and ways that can make them feel worse and try to explore case studies.

**Instructions**

1. Write a large A, B and C on three rows on a flip chart.
2. Explain: When we look at stress and how we deal with it, we can look at it in three stages:
   - **A** the action or the thing that made us stressed.
   - **B** our behaviour, the way we react to the stressful thing.
   - **C** the consequences of our behaviour – what happened after? Has it made things better or worse for us?
3. As you discuss what each thing means, fill in the words ‘Action’ ‘Behaviour’ ‘Consequence’ beside the appropriate letter.
4. As a group discuss the following scenarios and after each one try to identify the A, B & C.

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**Joanne’s Story**

Joanne’s sister is sent back into prison (Hint: A). Joanne’s family are fighting all the time and she doesn’t know how to cope. She spends a lot of time in her room (Hint: B) and doesn’t talk to any of her family or friends, sometimes for a long time. This makes Joanne far lonelier and she doesn’t feel close to anyone. (Hint: C).
Ask the group if these behaviours were useful. For this exercise, we'll see if the group can identify more useful behaviours that would have resulted in better consequences.

Now, divide the group in to three or four, and ask them to write / draw out a new ‘ABC’ for Neil and/or Joanne using the ABC Spells Stress (page 14) sheet below OR if numbers are small, there are issues with reading and writing or for any other reason you would prefer a discussion rather than written exercise, this can take the form of a full group discussion.

As a large group discuss the new ‘ABC’ that they wrote / drew / discussed, and why it is healthier and ends up in a better result for them. Some hints:

A Neil could have negotiated with his brother to share the time, he could have waited for his brother to get bored and leave, he could have ignored him and pretended he didn't care, he could have convinced him that something good was on another channel

B Joanne could have spoken to her friends or family online if she didn't want to talk in person. She could have told a friend ‘I’m in a bad mood, I don’t want to talk about it but I feel like watching a movie / going for a walk etc.'
This is to look at healthy and unhealthy stress behaviours and practice them in role plays. Note, that this can be good fun, particularly if the participants are responding in an unhealthy way. There should be fun and learning in whatever they choose.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Break participants into smaller groups. Explain that this next exercise is about looking more at healthy and unhealthy responses to stress.

2. Each group will be given a scenario that they have to invent the end of.

3. They will act out a reaction to a stressful situation and the other groups have to decide whether it was a healthy or unhealthy reaction and why.

4. Give each group a scenario and tell them whether they have to make it a healthy or unhealthy behaviour. Here are some example scenarios:

   **A** Your friends at school come over and start telling you that your brother is a waster.

   **B** Your sister steals five euro from your room and your mam tells you that she won’t replace it for you.

   **C** Your teacher gives out to you for not doing your homework but your family were shouting at each other in the house last night, so you had to get out of there.

5. Each group take three minutes to come up with a little play, showing how their lead character will react, include some consequences.

6. One by one, the groups perform a 3 minute play. The other groups have to guess whether it was a healthy or unhealthy reaction. After each play, hold a short discussion:

   - How do you think the young person will feel after they reacted in that way?
   - What would have been another healthy way to handle the situation?
This is a simple exercise where young people will have an opportunity to list what stress reaction behaviours are healthy and what are less so. It will not always be perfectly clear if a reaction is healthy or unhealthy.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR GROUP**

As a group, try to identify 10 healthy reactions to stress and 10 unhealthy reactions to stress. Write these on a flipchart. Some healthy reactions could include:

1. Saying ‘No’ when you don’t want to do something, but a friend is pressuring you.
2. Talking to a relation, teacher or friend about what’s on your mind.
3. Taking responsibility for your feelings and communicating this to the other person: rather than saying ‘you are making me annoyed’ saying ‘I feel annoyed when you…’
4. Doing something creative, like singing, painting, making music or writing.
5. Doing something physical like sport, running, yoga, dancing.
6. Standing in a field and yelling.
7. Going for a walk somewhere beautiful or peaceful.
8. Listen to some music you love and sing along really loud.
10. Get good sleep.
11. Eat less sugar and more healthy food.
12. Find something funny to laugh at.
13. Treat yourself – go see a friend, watch a movie.
To identify what healthier reactions the participants will try to use in future. Beating stress means changing your usual habits for something better and more positive.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Now that we have talked a lot about healthy and unhealthy reactions to stress, go to the second part of Stress Less worksheet and write down or draw some new ways that you think you might deal with stress in the future.
STRESS LESS

QUESTION 1: WHEN I GET STRESSED I...

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.
Next time I get stressed, I will try to ...

1

2

3

4

5
1 Fill in the ‘consequences’ of the old ABC.

2 Help Neil and Joanne to develop a healthier reaction by filling in the NEW behaviour and consequence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEIL</th>
<th>OLD</th>
<th>NEW</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Brother took the remote</td>
<td>Brother took the remote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOANNE</th>
<th>OLD</th>
<th>NEW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Sister goes to prison &amp; family fights</td>
<td>Sister goes to prison &amp; family fights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequence</td>
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