

# Managing Stress and Coping with Loss

## LESSON 2

## Managing Stress

### ● Before You Read

Imagine that you are stressed about an upcoming exam. What can you do to reduce or manage the stress? Write your ideas on the lines below.

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### ● Read to Learn

#### When Stress Becomes a Problem

Sometimes the cause of stress is clear. For example, you may feel stress when you are late for an appointment. Other times, causes of stress are not so clear. When you know the source of stress, you can find ways to resolve the problem. Many times, it may be difficult to recognize the stress in your life. You may not recognize stress until it has affected your health.

The effects of stress build up over time. Unless you find ways of managing stress, it will take a physical and mental toll on you. Many teens experience **chronic stress**. This is stress associated with long-term problems that are beyond a person's control. For these individuals, stress has become a constant burden that can last for months. You cannot eliminate stress from your life, but you can learn to manage it. ✓

#### Stress-Management Techniques

Stress-management techniques are skills that help you handle stress in a healthful way. Some skills involve strategies to prevent stress. Others focus more on coping with the impact of stress.

### BIG Idea

You can manage stress by learning skills to reduce the amount and impact of stress in your life.

### Study Coach

**Cluster Chart** Draw a circle and label it "Stress-Management Skills." Use surrounding circles to define and describe this term. As you read, continue filling in the chart with more details.



### READING CHECK

- 1. Explain** What is chronic stress and how does it affect teens?

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## How can you limit stress?

Sometimes you can avoid situations that cause you stress. Other times, you might be able to limit the amount of stress you are exposed to. Here are some strategies:

- **Use refusal skills.** Try not to take on projects or activities for which you do not have time. If the new project or activity will add to your stress, use refusal skills to say no. You will learn more about refusal skills in Chapter 8.
- **Plan ahead.** Manage your time wisely by planning ahead. Think about how stressed you feel before a test. The chart on the next page lists ways to reduce stress when studying for and taking tests.
- **Think positively.** You can't control everything in your life, but you can control how you respond to events. A positive outlook limits stress because the way you think often determines how you feel. For example, try to view a stressor, such as a big test, as a chance to learn instead of as a threat.
- **Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.** Tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs harm the body, causing more problems and more stress.

## How can you handle stress?

You cannot avoid some stressors. For these stressors, you need to find ways to reduce their negative effects. To lower the impact of stress on your health, try these tips:

- **Practice relaxation techniques.** Try deep breathing and thinking pleasant thoughts. You can also stretch, take a warm bath, get a massage, or even laugh to relieve your stress. These techniques can help you achieve a **relaxation response**. A relaxation response is a state of calm.
- **Redirect your energy.** Stress often creates intense energy. The best thing to do is to use that energy in a constructive way. Work on a creative project or do some physical activity to put your energy to good use.
- **Seek support.** Sometimes just talking about your problem can make you feel better. Try talking to someone you trust, such as a parent, guardian, sibling, teacher, or close friend. They can provide you with an objective view and valuable advice. ✓



### READING CHECK

**2. Explain** How can physical activity help to relieve stress?

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## Overcoming Test Anxiety

- Plan for tests well in advance. Study a little each night.
- Highlight and outline important material.
- During a test, do some deep breathing. Get comfortable in your chair. Use positive self-talk.
- Answer all the questions you are sure of, then go back and answer the ones that are more difficult.
- After getting your corrected test back, examine your mistakes. If you don't understand the correction, ask your teacher.

## Staying Healthy and Building Resiliency

Keeping your body healthy will reduce the effects of stress. These self-maintenance habits can help you deal with stress in positive ways.

### Get Adequate Rest

Too little sleep can affect your ability to concentrate. Use time-management skills to ensure that you get eight to nine hours of sleep each night.

### Get Regular Physical Activity

Physical activity can release energy and clear your mind. It increases your energy level and your endurance. It helps you sleep better, too.

### Eat Nutritious Foods

Poor eating habits can cause weakness, fatigue, and concentration problems. Overeating and undereating can also cause your body stress. Eating healthful foods and drinking plenty of water reduces the effects of stress.

These habits also help you become more resilient. This means you are able to recover from disappointment or difficulty. For example, you would probably feel disappointed if you didn't get the part you wanted in the school play. A resilient teen would bounce back from this setback and work harder for the next play. ✓

## Picture This

- 3. Explain** How are the teens in the photo reducing test anxiety?

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## READING CHECK

- 4. List** What three self-maintenance habits can reduce your level of stress?

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