

GLS10 Unit 2: Personal Knowledge & Management Skills

Activity 3: Emotional and Self-Care Skills

Overview

This activity is designed to help you learn more about yourself. Learning more about yourself will help you cope with change, stress and social pressure, which in turn will make you a successful learner and help you become more productive in your everyday life.

Lesson

The Challenge of Change



Change can be very difficult for some people to handle. This is because to some people change means a change for the worse, but this is not always the case. Change can be very positive. It can mean new opportunities and challenges. It can mean new friends and adventures.

When some people encounter change, they react in a negative fashion. They fear the change or are angry about it, or look for all the things that could go wrong as a result. These are valid reactions, meaning that we should never tell people that what they are feeling is wrong. But there is another way of reacting to change – in a positive way. When one reacts positively to change, one is seeing all the possibilities that were not there before.

This is not always easy, as the unknown is scary. Just think of the last horror movie you saw: waiting to see what was behind the door was much scarier than what was actually there. The same is true with change. The path leading up to change is usually much scarier than the change itself and can cause a great deal of emotional stress.

Stress

Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain. Too much stress in our lives can make us ill, but some stress in our lives can actually be helpful. Some stress helps us to stay alert and interested. For example; being a little anxious before an exam can increase our competence and alertness, thereby helping us to perform better on the exam. However, too much stress, especially dealing with stress over long periods of time, can lead to both physical and mental health problems. To maintain a healthy lifestyle, we need to learn to deal with stress in positive ways.



Teen Stress

Adolescence is a time of considerable stress. Teens face real stress from dealing with sexuality and identity, drugs, peers, family conflicts, their own future goals, and personal expectations. Being able to manage stress is prerequisite for being a good learner.

Self-Care



Taking care of yourself can often be a challenge. Eating right, getting enough rest and exercise, finding time for family, friends and commitments, and dealing with change can be very difficult. Demands of life and responsibilities can be stressful, sometimes overwhelming. Our emotions can help or hinder us in dealing with stressful events in our lives. Dealing with our emotions in positive ways can help us deal more positively with life's stressful events.

What habits do you have? Taking care of yourself regularly gives you more energy and confidence in dealing with life's challenges.

Below are some techniques and behaviors that can help you reduce the effects of stress in your life:

- **Exercise and eat regularly.**
- **Avoid excess caffeine** intake which can increase feelings of anxiety and agitation.
- **Don't use illegal drugs**, alcohol and tobacco.
- **Learn relaxation exercises** (abdominal breathing and muscle relaxation techniques).
- **Develop assertiveness training skills.** For example, state feelings in polite, firm, and not overly aggressive or passive ways ("I feel angry when you yell at me" "Please stop yelling").
- **Rehearse and practice situations which cause stress.** One example is taking a speech class, if talking in front of a class makes you anxious.
- **Learn practical and effective coping skills.** For example, break a large task into smaller, more attainable tasks.
- **Decrease negative self talk.** Challenge negative thoughts about yourself with alternative neutral or positive thoughts. "My life will never get better" can be transformed into "I may feel hopeless now, but my life will probably get better if I work at it and get some help."
- **Learn to feel good about doing a competent job** rather than demanding perfection from yourself and others.
- **Take a break from stressful situations.** Activities like listening to music, talking to a friend, drawing, writing, or spending time with a pet can reduce stress.
- **Build a network of friends** who help you cope in a positive way.

Dealing with Emotions

Sometimes we feel stress from a conflict in our life. Most people don't enjoy dealing with conflict, since it often creates many uncomfortable feelings of anger, fear and frustration. These emotions can interfere with finding a solution to the problem. Often, it is better to take time to calm yourself in a difficult situation. Try the following strategies when you find yourself in a conflict situation:



- **Relax.** Breathe deeply and slowly. Repeat a calming word or phrase like "take it easy" or "it will be okay". Release tension from your muscles by stretching and then resting them.
- **Stay Positive.** Visualize the problem being solved. Think of yourself in the future, happy because the conflict is over;
- **Communicate with care.** Slow down and think carefully before you react and say something you might regret later. Listen carefully to what the other person is saying and seek to understand their message first;
- **Change location.** Sometimes removing yourself from the stressful situation can help you calm down and think more clearly about the problems you face.

Internal and External Influences

Our behavior and attitudes are affected by internal as well as external influences. **Internal Influences** are your private values and attitudes. **External Influences** come from family, friends, your culture, religion. Sometimes these influences are negative and prevent us from reaching our goals and achieving success.

Below are examples of internal and external influences that prevent us from learning effectively:

Internal Influences	External Influences
Bored	Problems with friends
Unmotivated	Problems with family
Dislike school subjects	Lack of resources
Dislike of teachers	Lack of money
Fatigued	Peer pressure
Low self-esteem	Problems with school schedule
Lack of confidence	Can't see the blackboard

Assignment

1. Create a timeline outlining five major events in your life. Write a reflection on this timeline, which includes your emotional reactions and your behavioral response to these changes.
2. How would you define the word 'stress'?
3. List six things that cause you stress.
4. Explain one occasion when you feel you benefited from stress.
5. Explain how your body reacts to stressful situations.
6. What are some ways you use to deal with stress? Explain which of these ways are positive ways to deal with stress? Which are negative ways?
7. What is the difference between internal and external influences? Provide an example for each.
8. Taking care of yourself regularly will give you more energy and confidence in dealing with life's challenges. Check the self-care habits below that you practice day-to-day. In what areas could you make improvements? What improvements or changes could you make?

Self-Care Habits Checklist

Diet

- Eat three healthy meals per day
- Include lots of fruits and vegetable in your diet
- Eat a healthy breakfast every day
- Restrict the amount of sugar and fat in your diet

Exercise

- Walk and climb stairs as often as possible
- Do at least 30 minutes exercise three times per week
- Participate in sports or hobbies
- Do stretching exercises – they are good for the body too

Rest and Relaxation

- Get a good night's sleep, seven or eight hours per night
- Arrange quiet time for yourself each day
- Use relaxation techniques before bedtime (deep breathing)
- Avoid caffeine drinks a few hours prior to bedtime

Balancing Priorities and Recharging Your Energies

- Set long and short-term goals for yourself
- Set aside regular time for family and friends
- Reflect on your accomplishments from time to time
- Reflect on the number of commitments you have at any one time