

### Activity: Listening and Responding to Stress in your Body

The human body is amazing and often recognizes that it is undergoing stress before you are cognitively aware of it—and it will give you signs. Becoming aware of the signs your body gives is one of the steps in becoming stress resilient. Take the time to reflect on what your body is signaling to you in times of stress and practice reframing how you perceive the impact of stress.

- 1. We experience stress in different ways. How does your body let you know that you are experiencing stress?**
- 2. Which are you most likely to tell yourself when you realize you are experiencing stress?**
  - I have done it again! What is wrong with me that I can't stop from feeling stressed? Or...
  - Stress is a normal part of life's ups and downs; sometimes it can even be helpful.
- 3. What are two positive outcomes you have experienced as a result of feeling stress?**

Often our health habits change during times of stress. What patterns do you notice in the following three areas? Circle your answer.

- 4. What do you notice about your eating habits when you are stressed?**
  - I typically eat more foods that are less healthy for me.
  - I typically eat less food than I know I need to keep my energy up.
  - I typically recognize that I need to maintain a healthy diet when stressed to care for my body.
- 5. What do you notice about your physical exercise habits when you are stressed?**
  - I typically exercise less.
  - I typically exercise more to burn off some of the stress energy.
  - I do not make changes to my exercise based on the stress I am feeling.
- 6. How about your sleep pattern?**
  - I typically have a difficult time getting enough sleep.
  - I typically sleep more than I do when I am not stressed.
  - I typically am able to maintain my sleep pattern.



As you review your answers, identify:

- 7. What responses to stress do you want to do more of to build your stress resilience?**
- 8. What responses would you like to change?**

## Activity: Developing an Emotional Regulation Plan

We all experience times when we feel overwhelmed and allow our feelings to control our actions. But to successfully cope with stressful events, we must learn to inhibit some responses while employing other, more positive ones. The ability to identify and name emotions, assess internal strategies and external supports, and act to make our environment safer are key to regulating negative, reactive emotions.

### Answer the following questions to lay out what your own emotional regulation plan would look like:

1. When stressful events occur, what emotion(s) do I show that may be of concern or that I wish I had more control over? (e.g., fear, anger, jealousy, sadness, shame, etc.)
2. What do you see as your primary triggers and warning signs of stress? (e.g., not having a say or not being listened to, feeling lonely, feeling pressured, etc.)
3. What might other people notice me doing if I begin to lose control or my emotions? (e.g., pacing, becoming very quiet, being rude, isolating, etc.)
4. What strategies can you (or do you) use to increase your ability to calm down and regulate your emotions? (e.g., time to myself, humor, listening to music, talking to others, breathing, etc.)
5. What external social supports are available to you that may help?
6. What things do NOT help you keep calm or regulate your emotions? (e.g., being alone, being around people, not being listened to, etc.)

### Additional Strategies for Emotional Regulation:

One way of regulating our emotions is to manage our self-talk. By asking ourselves new questions we can come up with options when upset. Here's what a balanced conversation may sound like...

- What am I reacting to? What is it that's really pushing my buttons here?
- Am I jumping to conclusions?
- Is there another way of dealing with this?
- Is it fact or opinion?
- Is there a different point of view to see the situation through? Think bigger picture.
- What meaning am I giving this situation?



When feeling particularly overwhelmed or when dealing with intense emotions, try the STOPP technique to help you regulate your emotions and stay calm:

- **Stop.** Don't act immediately—pause for a moment.
- **Take a deep breath.** Notice your breathing as you breathe in and out.
- **Observe.** What am I thinking right now? What is your focus of attention? What are you reacting to? What sensations do you notice in your body?
- **Pull back.** Zoom out. Put in some perspective and ask yourself what is the bigger picture? Is this thought a fact or opinion? What is another way of looking at this situation and/or a more reasonable explanation? How important is this or will it be?
- **Practice your skills.** What is the best thing to do right now (best for me, for others, for the situation)? Do what will be effective and appropriate.