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## **DECISION MAKING *con.t***

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# Stress Monsters

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 2-5

**DESCRIPTION:**

There are two kinds of stress—good stress, called eustress, and bad stress, called distress. Students have most probably heard the phrase “stressed out.” This lesson will help students identify stressors as well as positive ways to handle negative stress.

**OBJECTIVE(S):**

- Students will distinguish between good stress and bad stress.
- Students will recognize bad stress in their own lives.
- Students will identify positive ways to deal with bad stress.

**ESTIMATED TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIAL(S) NEEDED:**

- A balloon
- Drawing paper for each student
- Don't Let the Stress Monster Get You Down activity sheet found on page 48

**PROCEDURES:**

1. Tell the students about a student who has recently had some physical ailments: headaches, feeling nervous, tummy jittery, being “crabby.” Explain that this student hasn’t been “sick” but that he/she hasn’t felt well either.
2. Ask the students to share how they may have had similar feelings. Explain that our feelings inside, if not understood and dealt with, can sometimes lead to us having physical symptoms.
3. Show a balloon and blow it up more and more. Ask what would eventually happen. Ask the students if they can think of other things with this same concept.
4. Write the word “stress” on the chalkboard. Define it as a feeling of being uptight and nervous.
5. Explain two types of stress: positive and negative. Positive stress can provide energy to get a job done. For example, you’re getting ready to perform in a contest or game that you feel confident about. Negative stress can keep you from doing your best or from even trying at something.
6. Discuss these ways to turn negative stress into positive stress:
  - Talk to a good listener.
  - Do an activity you enjoy that is healthy and/or productive.
  - Make a list of steps to get a goal accomplished.
  - Know your warning signs and stay tuned into yourself for them.

# Stress Monsters

7. Describe stress as a monster that may be out to get you. Have the students draw their stress monster and then throw it into the garbage. Then have them complete the sentence on the activity sheet about a way that they know that they can get rid of their stress.

## **SUMMARY POSTER OR VISUAL REMINDER:**

Ways to Get Rid of a Stress Monster summary poster found on page 49.

## **VARIATIONS/MODIFICATIONS/EXTENSIONS:**

- Make a class list of “Common Stressors in Fourth Grade” (or whatever grade you’re teaching.) Then make a list of ways to relieve each of the stressors. For example, a common stressor may be “tests.” A relief for the stressor may be studying.
- Have the students trace a body outline of themselves. Then have them identify places in their bodies where they feel stress (butterflies in the stomach, clenched jaw, etc.)

## **JOURNAL ENTRY**



Write about the healthy activities you do to balance the stress in your life.

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## CLASSROOM GUIDANCE NEWS

Dear Parent,

Today's classroom guidance lesson focused on stress management. The word "stress" is used frequently these days. We often refer to ourselves as feeling "stressed out." As parents, we have many obligations that often leave us feeling stressed—children, household duties, careers, children's extra-curricular activities, our own extra-curricular activities, etc. Children also feel stress, and while the things that cause them to feel stress may seem petty to us as adults, they are as real to them as our adult stresses are to us. Growing up is not easy—think back to some of your own experiences as a pre-teen. These pressures were real to you then and the stresses your child faces today are real to him/her. Schoolwork is demanding. Friends are becoming more and more important, and day-to-day, off-again/on-again friendships greatly affect a child's feelings.

Today in classroom guidance we compared stress to a balloon: if you continue to inflate—put more stress into yourself—and not release any pressure, you will eventually "explode." We discussed two kinds of stress, good stress and bad stress. Stress, in its positive aspect, can help you to concentrate, focus, perform and can often help you to reach peak effectiveness. Many people, in fact, do their best work when under pressure. However, stress in its negative form keeps you "geared up" and unable to relax even after meeting a challenge. Bad stress inhibits productivity and effectiveness. When stress becomes a constant, on-going cycle, one's health and well-being can suffer. Negative stress can be linked with physical ailments like restlessness, headaches, appetite change, muscle aches, colds, digestive upsets, and more.

As a parent, you cannot protect your child from stress. But you can help him/her deal with stress in a healthy way. Below are some ways we discussed during classroom guidance today:

- Talk to a good listener.
- Do an activity you enjoy that is healthy and/or productive (exercise, draw, write, paint, play, etc.)
- Make a list of steps to get a goal accomplished (the goal may not be as hard to reach as you have it pictured in your mind.)
- Know your warning signs and stay tuned into yourself for these.

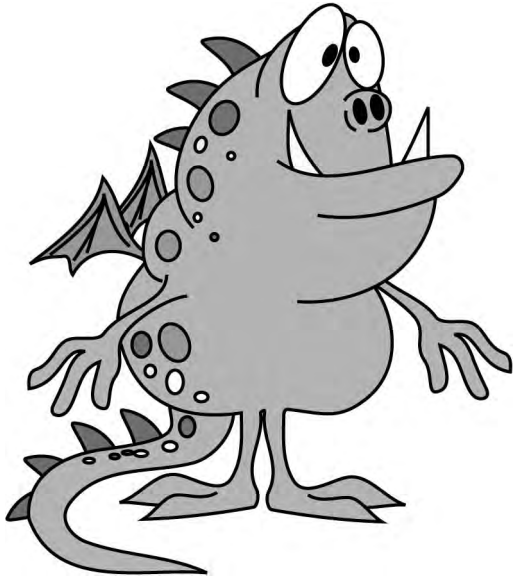
As parents, discuss ways that you positively deal with stress with your child. Talk about stressful times and how you handle them. Your actions speak volumes to your child.

As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns that you may have about your child, your child's school experience, or our school's elementary guidance and counseling program.

Sincerely,



# Stress Monsters



Don't let the **STRESS MONSTER** get you down!

I can tell when I'm feeling stress because I \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One way that I plan to deal with my feelings of stress is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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- **Talk to a good listener.**
- **Do an activity you enjoy that is healthy and/or productive.**
- **Make a list of steps to get a goal accomplished.**
- **Know your warning signs and stay tuned into yourself for them.**