

BODY RELAXATION

OBJECTIVE: Students will be able to relax by focusing on different parts of their body using a mindful technique that they can use in the future during stressful situations.

WARM UP

Start the activity by playing *Simon Says*. Remind students that they have to follow the instructions only if they hear the phrase *Simon Says*. Give instructions for students to stand up, sit down, raise one or both hands, clap, shout, etc. Try to use body parts to activate their previous knowledge of this vocabulary for the activity.

STEP BY STEP

- 1 It is a good idea for students to print the worksheet for this activity beforehand. Ask students to sit straight on their chairs, or to sit on the floor next to their chairs, or to lay down, however they are more comfortable. Explain that this experience helps them train their self-perception in a mindful way. If possible, bring some relaxing music and a music player for the class to listen to as they do the activity. Make sure everyone feels comfortable before giving instructions. It is important that you establish a respectful environment and that you remind students that they can repeat this experience whenever they are stressed.
- 2 Ask them to close their eyes and to concentrate on their breathing. You can guide them by instructing them to inhale deeply through their nose, and exhale softly through their mouth. They should do this three times and then breathe normally.
- 3 Give them the instructions using a slow pace and a relaxed voice. Tell them to breathe in and to concentrate on their feet, ankles, calves, and then to exhale. Make a short pause and instruct them to breathe in again and concentrate on their knees, thighs, stomach, and then slowly exhale. After another pause,

ask them to breathe in and concentrate on their lower back, waist, abdomen, and then slowly exhale. Continue telling them to breathe in and concentrate on their back, chest, shoulders, and then slowly exhale. When they finish, ask them to breathe in and concentrate on their arms, elbows, hands, fingers, and then slowly exhale. Next, tell them to breathe in and concentrate on their neck, throat, chin, and exhale. Finally, ask them to breathe in and concentrate on their mouth, nose, eyes, forehead, and head.

- 4 Tell them to take another deep breath and to exhale softly. Pause the music and ask them to cover their eyes and to open them slowly. Tell them to stretch out and then stand up. Give them some time to assimilate the experience and then ask them to write how they feel in the space provided in their worksheets.

WRAP IT UP

- 5 *When do you need to relax? How do you feel after the activity?*

Ask students to discuss the questions in pairs. Ask some volunteers to share their answers with the class. Elicit from them the importance of relaxation to handle stressful situations like exams. Tell them that they can take advantage of relaxing to overcome hard times. Tell them it's really important to identify the situations that cause them stress so that they are always aware of when they need to do something about it.

TEACHING TIP Practice meditation and relaxation at home so that you can explain to your students its importance. Remember that the key to meditation is to guide our thoughts consciously to focus on specific things in our environment and inside our minds. Relaxation comes when we are paying attention to the present surroundings without judgments or reactions.

WHERE CAN I GO WHEN I FEEL...?

OBJECTIVE: Students will be able to recognize a strategy to reduce or relieve stress so that they can overcome one of the hardest obstacles in everyday life.

WARM UP

Think about some school or personal goals that you feel your students can relate to. Write them on the board. Ask them what obstacle could make it difficult for them to achieve that goal. After sharing some ideas as a class, tell them that stress is one of those obstacles.

STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure students have the printed worksheet or paper to write their answers. Set students into small groups and tell them to read and answer the questions in the space provided: *Do you know when you are stressed? What makes you feel stressed? What do you do when you feel stressed? Where can you go when you feel stressed?* You may ask some volunteers to share their answers with the class.
- 2 Tell them to think about places where they can go to and about activities they can do to reduce stress. Suggest some ideas: you can go to the park, to the library, you can listen to music or meditate, etc. Give them some time to write their lists. Walk around and help with any vocabulary they may need. When students finish with their lists, you could lead a class discussion focused on helping students become aware of what makes them feel stressed and whether they actually do something to deal with it. Try to create a comfortable environment for students to share their thoughts. If you feel they are open to it, you could ask some students to share experiences in which stress has been an obstacle for them.

WRAP IT UP

- 3 *How does stress affect your everyday activities? What activities to reduce stress do you do now? What activities to reduce stress do you want to do in the future?*

Ask students to discuss the questions in small groups. Give them some time and then ask them to discuss with another small group. Ask some volunteers what they learned from each other. Ask them if they are surprised about what they learned from their classmates. Ask them if they learned something new about themselves. Hold a class discussion to help students realize that some stress can be useful because it helps us achieve goals if we channel it correctly and use it to become aware of the real difficulties we are going to find in our way to success. However, when stress is too much, it becomes one of the most dangerous obstacles that can deeply affect us and we need to learn ways to deal with it.

TEACHING TIP It is important that you handle stressful situations in the classroom with the appropriate techniques for your class. For example, approach difficult tasks by dividing them into smaller, simpler steps. Keep in mind that students who are stressed are not in the right mindset for learning, but you could positively direct students' stress towards a goal so that they use stress in their favor.

A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

OBJECTIVE: Students will be able to recognize healthy and unhealthy behaviors and relationships, and share tips to improve their well-being.

WARM UP

Start by organizing a class game. Tell students they have to mention a type of food they like (such as pizza, apples, cake, etc.), but without repeating food previously mentioned by other classmates. After a while, change the category to physical activities (such as running, walking, swimming, etc.). Finally, ask them to mention relationships between people (mother, father, cousin, friend, neighbor, etc.). Then you can ask them about the effects that food, exercise, and relationships have on our well-being.

STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure everyone has a printed copy of the worksheet and the handout provided with it. Explain to students this activity will help them identify healthy and unhealthy habits and relationships, and to get tips to improve. You could then ask them why they think it is important to identify what we eat, how often we exercise, or how good our relationships are. After listening to some ideas from volunteers, explain that it helps to improve our health and channel our emotions adequately.
- 2 Tell them to use the printed handout with the graphic organizer. Review the words with them and solve any doubts they may have. Ask your students to work in pairs and give them some minutes to complete the graphic organizer individually. Remind them to be as honest as possible. Once the time is over, tell them to get into pairs, show their answers to each other, and comment about healthy and unhealthy points of every aspect of their lifestyles. Before they start, it is essential to remind them to be respectful. You can emphasize the fact that this is not an activity intended for criticism but for

awareness. You can explain that sometimes we need an external perspective in order to identify our own healthy and unhealthy habits. Moreover, talking with other people can help us feel more responsible for our actions. Be attentive to nervous students. If they do not feel comfortable sharing their answers, you can ask them to write a reflection explaining why instead. You should not force them to do the activity.

WRAP IT UP

- 3 *How can you improve your physical and mental well-being? Are there any helpful tips you have actually tried and proved to be effective? How can you help each other to get healthier lifestyles and relationships?*

Get students into small groups. Read the questions out loud and allow groups enough time to discuss them and exchange opinions. Then invite some volunteers to share with the class what they learned. Ask them if they got useful tips from their classmates which they can put into practice to improve their lifestyles. Write some on the board. It can be a good idea to remind them that some tips work for some people, while they do not work for other people. The only way to know if something can help them is to try it. Suggest that they write several of their classmates' ideas and make notes as they try them. Tell them they can keep a written record of the improvements they make.

TEACHING TIP Identifying, understanding, and managing eating and exercising habits are useful skills you require as a teacher. The more you help students notice their positive and negative habits and emotions, the more effectively they will manage them. Stretching activities such as yoga can be helpful to relax and have fun at the same time. If you can do them in the classroom, use them once in a while to reduce stress in your students and have better class management.