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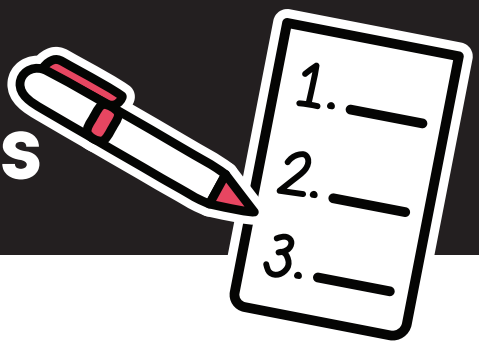
Reducing Test Stress

Mental Wellness Teacher Lesson Plans



Reflect and Practice

Reducing Test Stress



Hello, teachers!

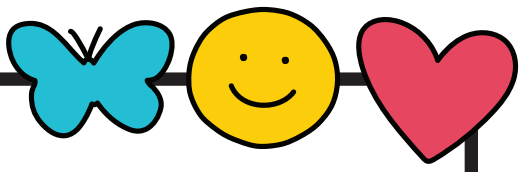
In this booklet, you will find: **on pages:**

Overview information about test stress 1-3
Instructions for student activity 4
Conversation starters with students about test stress 5
Instructions for student activity 6



Want to learn more about student mental health?

Sign up to receive emails with the latest on kids' mental health at KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org/Sign-Up or scan the QR code.



Questions? Comments?

You can reach out to us anytime by emailing us at **Educators@KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org**. Follow us on social media for the latest and greatest mental wellness news.

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Thank you for downloading this lesson from **The Kids Mental Health Foundation**, proudly founded by **Nationwide Children's Hospital**. The Kids Mental Health Foundation is on a mission to give free expert-created resources to all U.S. communities so everyone can understand and promote mental health for children.

Stress From the Test



Under Pressure

Testing is a part of school, but it can cause additional worry and stress in your students. That can impact you as well, wondering if you've prepared them enough.

It's important to name these emotions and not be afraid that your students are feeling them. Though students may feel nervous, it doesn't mean they will perform poorly. They need a cheerleader in their corner, encouraging them and providing a calming presence.

Managing Stress

How can you encourage your students during testing? Luckily, there are several ways you can help your students:

- **Identify feelings:** Challenges are often less intimidating when we name what we are feeling. Encourage your students to talk about the stress and worry they might be feeling. How is it making their body feel (sweaty palms, heart racing, etc.)? Is it affecting their eating or sleeping? Talking about these problems as a class can often help students feel less alone in their struggles.
- **Create a study plan:** Being prepared can help students feel more confident before their tests. Take some time to create an in-class study plan for your students, where you discuss testing strategies, take practice tests and even take time for relaxation.
- **Discuss "test day":** These tests might be a new – sometimes frightening – experience for students. When we're nervous about something, exposure to it helps decrease the nerves. Talking about what something will be like is great exposure and can help students cope with their nervous feelings. Even just knowing what the physical test will look like (on the computer, multiple choice, fill in the blank, etc.) can go a long way in calming students.
  - Consider discussing the practicalities of the test with your students – where will they take it? What will they take the test on? How long will it take?
  - More information is better in helping your students feel prepared for what lies ahead. Exposure to fears – in a safe, controlled environment – is a proven way to help people deal with their nerves.

Continued

- **Consider testing strategies:** Your students might not have much practice taking tests. Test-taking strategies can go a long way in helping your students achieve more and feel better before the big day. Here are a few sample tips for your students:
  - Read all directions thoroughly before beginning.
  - Read through the entire question and answers before responding.
  - If a question is taking too long to figure out, skip it and return back to it (if time allows).
  - If feeling stressed during the exam, check in with your body and take a deep breath.
  - If possible, and time allows, check over answers when finished.
- **Help students ground themselves.** Practice grounding with your students. Grounding means embracing the present moment and surroundings to calm your body and mind. Try out these techniques:
  - Have students breathe in and out while finding things around the classroom that are all the colors of the rainbow.
  - Have students use the 5-4-3-2-1 senses method, naming 5 things they see, 4 things they can touch, 3 things they hear, 2 things they smell, and 1 thing they taste (or tasted earlier).
  - Practice belly breathing.



Check out this video on Breathing Exercises:

Search "Belly Breathing" at KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org or scan the QR code.

(continued)

Don't Forget You!

Lastly, don't forget that you too may be feeling the stress of upcoming tests. Results from exams can often feel like a reflection on your performance as a teacher.

Be aware of your stressful feelings. Try connecting with your fellow teachers. You aren't alone in feeling stressed right now. If possible, look for ways to relax outside of school hours. It may just be a quick 15-minute deep breathing exercise, but it can go a long way in helping calm some worries.

Best of luck to you and your students. We believe in you!





Guided Body Scan

Objectives: This guided body scan activity will help students relax their bodies and calm tension. They can also do this activity before taking a test.

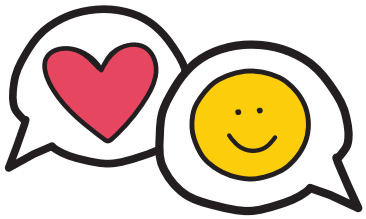
Directions:

- Explain that you will help students focus on where they are and how they are feeling. This can help calm our minds to embrace the here and now.
- Ask students for any examples of how they "ground" or relax themselves during a stressful situation. Examples may include deep breathing or imagining peaceful situations.
- Start the relaxation exercise. Ask students to close their eyes and take a deep breath. You'll give them a series of prompts and you want them to think silently about each one.
  - We'll now make our way through the body, from head to toe.
  - Ask them to focus on their heads. Does it feel heavy or light?
  - Then, move onto the shoulders. Notice how they are feeling. Are they up near my ears or down?
  - Next, do their arms and fingers. Are they touching anything? Do your hands feel warm or cool?
  - Notice what you're sitting on. Is the surface hard or soft?
  - Move to the legs and toes, paying attention to whether they feel wiggly or tired.
  - Finish up with one big deep breath and then open the eyes.
- When students have opened their eyes, ask for some reflection on the exercise.
  - Did you feel relaxed when doing this activity?
  - Was it hard to focus only on the activity?
  - When could you try this activity?
    - Suggest that it can be helpful when going to bed or before a test.



Keep the Conversation Going

Continue the conversation with students. Here are some conversation starters you can use.



Conversation Starters

What kind of tests make you the most nervous? What do you do to feel better?

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Conversation Starters

How do you prepare before a test? The night before? The morning of?

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Conversation Starters

How can our friends, teachers and parents support us when we're nervous before a big test?

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Conversation Starters

Are there times you thought you would do poorly but ended up doing well on a test?

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Conversation Starters

What have you done to prepare for a test? "

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Conversation Starters

What things help you be more successful on tests?

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Conversation Starters

How do you feel when you finish a test? Accomplished? Worried about how you did?

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Additional Resources

- **3 Ways to Deal With Pressure**
- **Helping Kids Handle Stress**

Use the QR code or search “Stress” at KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org



W2587000 (7/2026)