

NEXT ENGINEERS



ENGINEERING ACADEMY

Year 2 Stress and Time Management



GE Foundation



Stress and Time Management is part of the Engineering Academy series curated by FHI 360 for the GE Foundation's NEXT ENGINEERS Next Engineers is a college and career readiness program that inspires and develops the next generation of engineers. Adapted content and graphic design courtesy of FHI 360.



Stress and Time Management

Time	Academy year	Group size	Activity type
90 minutes	Year 2	Individual and partners	College & career readiness

Overview

In this activity, students will learn about the causes and symptoms of stress, as well as healthy coping strategies to manage it. This is followed by a discussion of time management and strategies that can improve overall well-being.

Learning outcomes

As a result of this activity, students will be able to:

- Understand what stress is, recognize symptoms, and explore how it can be helpful or harmful to performance.
- Learn about and apply various strategies for managing stress and time.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

- Self-Management

Materials

- Laptop/computer with Internet access and projector
- Student Worksheet: Stress and Time Management, *1 per student*
- Colored pencils or markers, *available to each student*
- Timer

Optional Materials for The Jar of Life Demonstration

- 1 Clear glass or plastic jar, approximately 1 liter or 32 ounces
- A mixture of the following items, enough to fill the jar:
 - Large rocks, approximately 2-3 inches wide
 - Pebbles or marbles, smaller in size than the rocks
 - Sand

Preparation

1. Review the key vocabulary.
2. Prepare copies of the student worksheet for each student or share a digital version.
3. Preview resources to ensure they are appropriate for your students. For The Jar of Life Demonstration, decide if you will do the demo live or show the video. For a live demonstration you will need the materials listed above.
 - **The Stress Bucket**
<https://youtu.be/FrYcNFKi3A>
 - **The Jar of Life**
https://youtu.be/cMBM7K_yHog



- **The Eisenhower matrix: How to manage your tasks with EISENHOWER**
<https://youtu.be/FrfYcNFKi3A>

Step-by-step instructions

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise (15 minutes)

- This session begins with a grounding exercise to help students focus their attention and lower any stress they may be feeling in the moment. Start by asking students to sit in their chairs with their feet flat on the ground and nothing in their hands. Everyone should remain seated and quiet throughout this exercise.
- Next, ask students to focus on their breathing, taking steady deep breaths. One by one, read the prompts below (slide 2). Allow a few moments before moving on to the next item:
 - **What are 5 things you can see?** Look around the room and notice 5 things you hadn't noticed before. Maybe a pattern on the wall or an object in the corner.
 - **What are 4 things you can touch?** Maybe you can feel the texture of your clothes or the firmness of the floor under your feet. Pick up an object close by and notice the texture.
 - **What are 3 things you can hear?** Notice all the background sounds you were filtering out, such as the air-conditioning, birds chirping, or cars driving by in the distance.
 - **What are 2 things you can smell?** Maybe you can smell coffee or the scent of leftover food. Hold up a scarf, jacket, or other piece of clothing to your nose and smell it.
 - **What is 1 emotion that you feel?** Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and try to identify what you are feeling right now. Perhaps calm, sleepy, or curious.
- Lead a quick debrief of this exercise by asking for a few volunteers to share their thoughts. How are they feeling afterwards? Is this a helpful technique for lowering stress? How many students will try this again?
- Share with students that the 5-4-3-2-1 exercise is an example of a **grounding technique**. These are strategies that can help us manage stress and anxiety and focus our mind on the present.
- Now that everyone is feeling a little more grounded, the session will move into a discussion about stress.

Stress (35 minutes)

- Ask the group: What is stress? (slide 3). Call on a few students to share their definitions.
- Show the definition of stress and stressor on slide 4. Stress is the emotional or physical tension we feel in our body. The internal or external events that cause us stress are called stressors. Slide 5 lists examples of internal and external stressors. Ask students to share any other examples they think should be added to the list.
- Move to slide 6 and note that not all stress is bad. There is a connection between our stress levels and our ability to perform. The graph demonstrates this relationship (Moving from left to right):

KEY VOCABULARY

Stress: A feeling of emotional or physical tension.

Stressor: An internal or external stimulus that causes stress.

Coping strategy: The thoughts and actions used to manage our response to stressful events. Unhealthy coping strategies may feel good in the moment but have long-term negative consequences. Healthy coping strategies may not provide instant gratification, but they lead to long-term positive outcomes.

Grounding techniques: Strategies to help us focus our mind on the present and relieve feelings of stress and anxiety.

Eisenhower Matrix: Also referred to as Urgent-Important Matrix, is a tool for prioritizing tasks by urgency and importance.



- When we have too little stress/stimulus, we may find ourselves bored and unable to focus. Think about trying to study when you are tired.
- As our stimulus level increases, so does our attention. Think about an athlete who psyches herself up before a game – she is channeling her nervous energy into her performance.
- If our stress gets too high or lasts too long, then we may experience anxiety. Too much stress makes it difficult to focus on the task and our body and mind can get overwhelmed.
- Direct students to turn to a partner and share about a time when their stress level impacted their performance – either positively or negatively.
- Distribute copies of the student worksheet. Explain that everyone experiences stress differently and it is important that we can recognize our own signs of stress. With their partners, students should discuss the various ways people exhibit physical, emotional, and behavioral signs of stress (slide 7). Allow students a few minutes to fill out the Signs of Stress section of the worksheet.
- Review slide 8 which shows examples of physical, emotional, and behavioral signs of stress.
- Now that students have a better understanding of stress and how to recognize it, the next portion of the activity will focus on relieving stress. Show the video [The Stress Bucket](#) on slide 9.
- The video names a few ways that we can stop our stress from building up and slide 10 also has a list of healthy coping strategies. Explain that coping strategies are the actions we take to manage stress.
 - Unhealthy coping strategies (such as procrastinating or eating junk food) may provide temporary relief, but they do not relieve stress in the long-term (and may create more problems later).
 - Healthy coping strategies may not provide instant gratification, but they address our needs and are beneficial in the long-term to minimize stress.
- Direct students to complete their own stress bucket and coping strategies on the student worksheet (slide 11). Allow about 10 minutes for them to write down the stressors they experience and a list of healthy coping strategies that will stop their bucket from overflowing.
- Wrap up this section by letting students know that the next part of the session focuses on time management, which is one of the best coping strategies for managing stress.

Time Management (30 minutes)

- To begin, have everyone stand up. Cover all the clocks and watches in the room, or have students close their eyes. Set a timer for one minute and instruct students to sit down when they think a minute has passed (slide 13).
- Start the timer and notice that students will sit down at various times during the minute. After the time expires, explain that the purpose of this exercise was to show that we all experience time differently (slide 14).
- To help us manage our time, we can use different strategies to prioritize our tasks. To demonstrate this concept, use [The Jar of Life](#) demonstration. Show the video on slide 15 OR do the live demonstration. Slide 16 summarizes the meaning of the demonstration and the value of prioritizing our time.
- To help students learn how to prioritize, show the video [The Eisenhower Matrix: How to manage your tasks](#) on slide 17.



- Review the parts of the matrix, also called the Urgent-Important Matrix, on slide 18. On the student worksheet, students should fill out the matrix:
 - First, make a list of your tasks and responsibilities for the upcoming week.
 - Next, review the tasks and determine the urgency and importance of each one.
 - Finally, organize and write the tasks into the four quadrants.
- Allow about 10 minutes for students to complete the matrix. If they are having trouble prioritizing, encourage them to talk through their tasks with a partner.

Conclusion (10 minutes)

- To end the session, ask students to respond to the reflection questions on slide 19. Ask students to write down their responses in their journals and return to these reflections when they are experiencing stress.
 - Why is it important to have multiple healthy coping strategies?
 - Think about the Jar of Life demonstration, what are the big rocks that you want to add to your jar over the next year? How will you create space?

References

1. Access Ideas Malaysia, "The Jar of Life", filmed September 7, 2016, YouTube Video, 1:30, <https://youtu.be/FrFYcNFKi3A>.
2. Developing Time Management Skills, Beverly D. Flaxington, Psychology Today, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/understand-other-people/201507/developing-time-management-skills>.
3. Grounding Techniques, Woody Schult, LMHC, Therapist Aid, <https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-article/grounding-techniques-article>.
4. I'm So Stressed Out! Fact Sheet, National Institute of Mental Health, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/so-stressed-out-fact-sheet>.
5. Mindwell, "The Stress Bucket", filmed November 9, 2020, YouTube Video, 1:47, <https://youtu.be/FrFYcNFKi3A>.
6. The Yerkes-Dodson law and Performance, Kendra Cherry, Verywell Mind, <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-yerkes-dodson-law-2796027>.
7. What is Stress?, The Partnership in Education, <https://resources.thepartnershipineducation.com/interactives/what-is-stress/interactive.html>.
8. What is the Eisenhower Matrix? Eisenhower, <https://www.eisenhower.me/eisenhower-matrix/>.



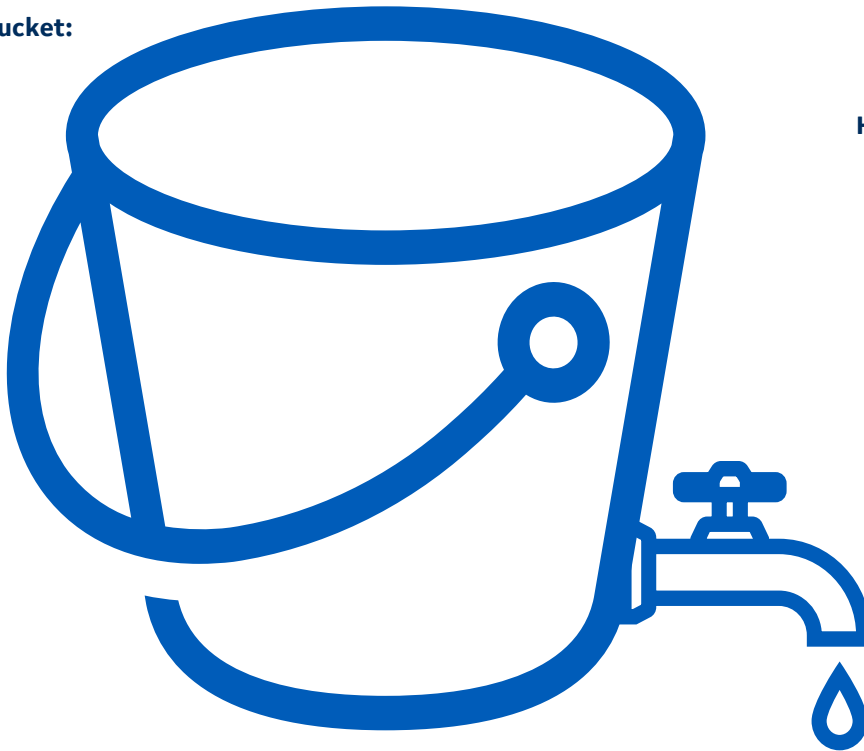
JOURNAL ENTRY

Encourage students to write down their reflections and questions in a journal. Have them refer back to this lesson later in the program to see how their views have changed.



- 

What fills my bucket:



How I empty my bucket:

Urgent-Important Matrix

Use this strategy for prioritizing and organizing your to-do list for the upcoming week.

1. First, make a list of your tasks and responsibilities for the week:

2. Next, review each task and consider its urgency and importance. Keep in mind, not every task is urgent or important. *Urgent* tasks must be completed by a specific deadline; *Important* tasks must be completed or there will be consequences.
3. Finally, write your tasks in the appropriate quadrant on the next page. Refer to the matrix throughout the week to determine which tasks you should focus on.



Do First Urgent and important	Schedule Less urgent, but important
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • •
Delegate Urgent, but less important	Don't do Neither urgent nor important
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • •

