

Strategy

Instruction and teaching points

1. Knowing your triggers and how stress looks in your body

- Encourage students to talk about how they are feeling and how this looks in their body. For example: what physical symptoms do they notice in their body when they are feeling stressed or sad.

2. Double hand breathing

- Deep breathing helps to slow your heart rate and reduce the stress hormones pumping through your body.
- Give students time to practise the breath uninterrupted
- Give them the choice to close their eyes – some might not want to and that's okay
- When they finish – ask them how they feel

"Sitting at your chair, on the floor crossed legged or lying down. Making yourself comfortable and finding a still body. Ensuring your spine is nice and straight and taking three deep, slow breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Place one hand on your belly and one on your chest. Breathe in and fill your belly with air as if it is a balloon – feel your hand on your belly rise. When it is full, breathe into your chest and feel your hand rise. As you breathe out slowly, first feel your chest fall and then your belly. Repeat

3. Progressive muscle relaxation

- Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is a powerful strategy to relieve stress and anxiety.
- Example script: *"Sitting at your chair or on the floor crossed legged. Finding a straight spine and taking three nice deep, slow breaths. We are going to start by tensing our feet and curling our toes and holding them for 3 seconds, now release."* Moving onto your calves, tense the muscles and hold them for 3 seconds, then release (Continue through every body part).
- Ask students to explain how they feel after the PMR activity

4. Unhelpful vs Helpful

- Encourage students to have a growth mindset by challenging their unhelpful thoughts and making them more helpful.

Eg : “ I am so bad at Maths, I am never going to be able to do it” This is an example of a FIXED mindset.

“ Maths is not my strength, but if I work hard next time, I know I can do better” This is called a GROWTH mindset

HINT : Remind students to treat themselves like they would a friend. This is called self-compassion. Having positive self-talk can help reduce stress

5. Self-care

- Looking after YOU is vital for good mental health
- Knowing what self-care activities make you feel good and doing these regularly helps reduce stress and anxiety
- Remind students of this regularly – ask them what their self-care strategies are, especially during extra stressful times (Eg : NAPLAN)
- Model good self-care yourself (tell them your self-care activities)
- Encourage students to take self-care time during the day at school

6. SELF

- The following acronym is a great reminder of coming back to the basics to support your own wellbeing.

S = Sleep (8 hours or more)

E = Exercise (daily)

L = Leisure (something fun and engaging in your life)

F = Food (balance diet with lots of fruit and veggies)

7. AAAH

- When you are feeling stressed try following Aaah...
 - ✓ Ask What – What am I worried about?
 - ✓ Ask Why – Why am I worried?
 - ✓ ACT – What can I do?(Self-care?)
 - ✓ Help – Who can I turn to? Who can I tell

8. Being grateful

- Being grateful can help us think more positively and focus on the good things in our life
- Try : Writing down 3 things you are grateful for at the end of each day
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9. Random Acts of Kindness

- Being kind to others is scientifically proven to support your wellbeing and help you feel positive emotions more often.
 - Could you do a Random Act of Kindness every week?
- Eg :
- ✓ Holding the door open for someone
 - ✓ Letting a person in front of you in a line
 - ✓ Giving someone a compliment
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10. Help-seeking

- Remind students who your school counsellor is and where they can be found in the school
 - Conduct class discussions around how/ where to seek help
 - Refer students to their reflection journal
 - Teach students how to check in with their friends by:
 1. Asking them how they are
 2. Listening mindfully to them
 3. Encouraging them to seek help from a trusted adult
 4. Checking in again with them
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Additional Year 5/6 mental health programs and resources

Mental Health and Me <https://mieact.org.au/workshops/mental-health-and-me/>