

Stress & Me

Teacher and Caregiver Resource



The following ideas and discussion points may help teachers and caregivers facilitate further conversations around mental health and wellbeing with young people who have completed MIEACT's **Stress and Me** program.

Australian curriculum links

Year 5-6

- Investigate community resources and ways to seek help about health, safety and wellbeing (ACPPS053)
- Plan and practise strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing (ACPPS054)
- Practise skills to establish and manage relationship (ACPPS055)
- Examine the influence of emotional responses on behaviour and relationships (ACPPS056)
- Investigate the role of preventive health in promoting and maintaining health, safety and wellbeing for individuals and their communities (ACPPS058)

Years 7-8

- Practise and apply strategies to seek help for themselves or others (ACPPS072)
- Investigate the benefits of relationships and examine their impact on their own and others' health and wellbeing (ACPPS074)
- Investigate and select strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing (ACPPS073)
- Analyse factors that influence emotions, and develop strategies to demonstrate empathy and sensitivity (ACPPS075)
- Evaluate health information and communicate their own and others' health concerns (ACPPS076)
- Plan and use health practices, behaviours and resources to enhance health, safety and wellbeing of their communities (ACPPS077)

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Program outline

Stress & Me is an online program for yr 5-9 students. Students will learn about understanding and managing stress. This course has been co-designed with our lived experience volunteers and backed with the latest evidence about stress and anxiety in young people. Stress & Me is jam packed with information to better understand stress, worry and anxiety and what it means for us. Students will complete interactive quizzes, watch videos including powerful lived experience stories, try out some stress response techniques and finish off by creating their very own personal stress response plan.

Time required: 1 – 1.5 hours

Independent work

The program is designed to be student led and completed in their own time.

Group work

The teacher may like to give the students the option to discuss some of the activities in small groups. Having a friend to speak with about the content can help them to digest concepts that may be unfamiliar. For example: after listening to the real life lived experience stories the teacher may like to ask the students to discuss their thoughts and feelings with each other.

Follow up

After completing the program a young person may like time to reflect and digest the learning that has taken place. Speaking about mental health can sometimes feel uncomfortable or overwhelming so checking in and seeing how the young people are feeling is a good starting point. This initial reflection may take the form of:

- Encouraging a young person to speak with a class member or friend about their experience engaging with the program.
- Giving the young person time to write independently in a journal
- Asking the young person to share their thoughts and ideas through a group discussion.
- Encouraging the young person to choose an area they would like to do further research on
- Asking the students to choose a project to focus on from the list below

Example reflection questions:

- How do you feel after completing the program?
- What did you find most interesting or helpful?
- Are there any questions that have come up that you would like answered?

Learning intentions

The following are some questions you might like to ask a young person to prompt consolidation of their learning based on the program outcomes.

1

Students will identify ways to respond positively to challenging situations using appropriate strategies including; early help-seeking and optimistic thinking.

- Can you identify some things that cause stress in your life?
- What are some new strategies you have learnt from the program?
- Do thoughts affect the way you feel?
- Do you believe you can change your thoughts? How?
- How can we make our thoughts more helpful?

2

Students will begin to develop an understanding of stress and how it can have an impact (both physically and emotionally) in their lives.

- What is stress?
- How can stress effect you physically and emotionally?
- What does stress look like in your body?
- Is all stress bad for you?

3

Students will participate with community resources and investigate ways to seek help about health, safety and wellbeing in relation to stress tolerance and the ways we are affected by stress levels.

- Did you find any resources in the help seeking section that you found useful?
- Which one is your favourite and why?

4

Students will plan, practice and formulate simple strategies to promote health, safety and well-being in relation to stress.

- Which strategies would you use regularly and why?
- What does self-care look like for you?

5

Students will practice and apply strategies to seek help for themselves and others.

- How does it feel when you reach out and speak about your feelings?
- What would encourage you to open up about your feelings more often?
- When you are going through a tough time what do you find helpful?
- How can you show empathy to another person?
- Do you know the difference between empathy and sympathy?

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Project ideas

1. Choose a mental illness you have heard about today from the real life stories. Write as many questions down that you would like to know the answers for and research each one. When you have finished share what you have learnt with the class.

2. Write a list of actions you could take to support a friend going through a tough time. This website is a great place to get some ideas and resources for further research : <https://mieact.org.au/portal/>. In a small group draft, write and illustrate a children's book aimed for students in Year 1 which teaches them about how to support someone experiencing challenges with their mental health.

3. Create a resource that will assist you to practise self-care regularly. What this looks like is up to you. Be as creative as you like.

For example :

- A list of apps or websites that you can easily access (saved in your phone or computer?) that can support you if you are down. Here is a good place to start : <https://mieact.org.au/portal/where-to-go-next/>
- A weekly schedule where you record what self-care you will do everyday
- A design of your own self-care app
- A book where you remind yourself of all the things that help you when you're feeling down e.g. 'Dear James, I know you're feeling down and that's okay, I am going to remind you...'
- A song reminding you of all the self-care activities which work the best for you.

(Remember: these are just ideas. Feel free to create one of your own.)

4. Think of a time in your life where you felt really happy, mentally healthy and supported. Can you create an art work which expresses what this felt like? Use any medium you wish (paint, pen, pencils, paper etc).

5. Role Plays. Organise students into small groups and encourage them to role play different scenarios which involve managing stress. Some groups may like to role play in front of the class. After the role plays, encourage group discussions around stress management techniques.

Ask students to come up with their own scenarios involving stressful situations. Here are some examples:

- Beth has gone home and her mum appears very stressed. She is pacing up and down and speaking very fast. Beth is already very stressed about an assignment she has to do. What can Beth do to take of herself?
- Adam finds that he spends most of the day worrying. He worries about issues with his friends, family and school. His good friend Jo has noticed this worrying is causing him to act differently. Adam is withdrawing and not wanting to participate in school. How can Jo help?
- Carly finds lunch time really stressful because her friendship group always seems to be fighting. She isn't sure what to do because she doesn't want to lose her friends but she isn't enjoying hanging out with them anymore. What should Carly do to help reduce her stress?