



Education Staff, Your Summer Lesson Plan!



Yes, this is a trick. There are no summer lesson plans. Take that off your “to do” list immediately. As June progresses and education staff are deep into learning goals, meeting expectations, exams, marking, report cards, getting students where they need to be, taking care of those important administrative details, maintaining our facilities, and excited students, it’s difficult to stay regulated and flourishing. However, as we wrap up the academic year, we can look forward to summer as a time to repair and care for our stress response.

Know Your Stress Cycle:

This is the time of the year when stressors are high. There are multiple stressors to manage and the deadline is fast approaching. Observe the figure below. We all have a multitude of stressors that can be activating us and our stress response at any given time. Take a moment to review your specific current stressors (work and personal).

How many arrows would you have activating your stress response?



It can be confronting when we truly reflect on all the current demands we are juggling. This may offer a reasonable explanation for the reactions and stress symptoms we are experiencing.

Managing Your Stressors:

Our stressors are the situations, demands, and events that occur in our daily lives. Here’s how we can manage them:

Prioritize: Are you able to take any of these stressors off your plate until the school year concludes? Determine which ones are the most pressing and tackle them accordingly.

Mindset: While this might be the heaviest time of the year, remind yourself that it has an end. It might be busy and challenging now, but it’s not permanent.

What do I actually have control over? The reality is that many of the stressors we have little influence over. We can’t change the deadline. The expectations are set and the situation is just the way it is. In that case, protect your precious and limited energy and effort from trying to change what can’t be changed and use your resources to manage your stress response.

Your Summer School for Stress Reset:

Managing Your Stress Response:

When our stress response is our internal reaction to external stressors, how do we care for our body and mind when our stress response is activated? This summer take some time to enroll in your personal program to practice strategies that actually deal with your stress levels.

Phys Ed Class:

Moving our bodies is one of the most effective ways to discharge the stress that gets built up in our bodies. Engage in running, walking, dancing, stretches, tense and release, jumping ... the intention is not to focus on burning calories but to allow your body to cycle out stress, tension, and stuck emotions.

Recess:

Gather with those you love and trust. Finding time to be with “our” people fosters an internal sense of peace that combats feelings of isolation and disconnection. Bonus points if you have some big, hearty, feel-it-in-your-soul laughter which will activate positive hormones.

Maybe you take a big tumble on the “playground”. Allowing ourselves to cry provides a release of stress and helps us move through our emotional reactions. Anyone who says “crying doesn’t solve anything” doesn’t understand the difference between dealing with the stressor vs. the stress response. Crying isn’t a problem-solving practice, it’s an honest, vulnerable, physical way to connect with our emotions, discharge them and move on feeling more emotionally regulated.

Health Class:

Deep belly breathing is an efficient way to bring calm to our activated nervous system. Be present and engaged in a deliberate slow breath in through the nose and out through the mouth and repeat.

A deep connection with a loving presence is another way to move through the stress cycle. We can practice this with affection (a hug, cuddle or kiss) with a loved one or a pet. It can also be felt in the intangible ways we express gratitude, kindness and appreciation with our fellow humans. Making others feel good, can in turn, make us feel good.

Lunch:

Don’t forget to take care of the basics. Nourish your body with good food for energy. Take a break to tend to your physical and emotional needs.

Music/Art/Language Class:

Find ways to engage in creative expression. This isn’t about skill and talent, it’s about creativity being an amazing way to transform our stress and emotions. Try something tangible like creating art, making music, learning a new language, writing or dancing, or something intangible like guided imagery, daydreaming, cloud watching and notice how the stress stored is able to dissipate.

While engaging in these practices take a moment to observe the way your body and brain feel when the stress response is activated (tense, jittery, foggy, disconnected, etc.) versus how it feels after you’ve worked to discharge the stress (calm, light, relaxed, connected, etc.) Most likely you’ll notice that you feel incrementally better and that even though more stressors may arise, you are more resourced and resilient when meeting them.

Take care and create a summer you will enjoy.

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