

Lesson Plan: Recognizing the Signs of Stress

Objective:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to list and describe a number of different signs that they may be experiencing stress.

Beyond the immediate instructional objective, the ultimate goal is to provide students with the information they need to realize when they are experiencing stress themselves, so they'll develop the ability to determine when they are being affected by stress and know when to implement stress management strategies in their own lives.

Lesson Introduction:

While everyone experiences stress, it's not always easy to recognize the signs and symptoms. Stress can manifest itself in many different ways. By learning how to tell when you are in a state of stress, you can better implement stress management strategies and techniques to minimize its potential negative effects.

Instructional Approach:

This lesson is best delivered using a discussion format with the instructor asking students to contribute their ideas regarding what signs can indicate the presence of stress.

- As the instructor, you will function as a facilitator for the discussion, asking questions designed to encourage participants to contribute different types of stress signs, providing feedback throughout the conversation and categorizing the examples given under major headings as appropriate.
- Use a whiteboard to record student contributions, categorizing ideas under major stress management technique headings.
- Contribute ideas yourself as needed to facilitate student discussion and participation, asking probing questions and making suggestions as appropriate.

Content/Discussion:

Lesson Strategy:

Lead the students in a discussion focused on contributing signs of stress specific to each heading (specified below). Lists generated by your class may vary, though you should facilitate conversation to ensure that the examples listed below are included as a minimum.

Introductory Statement:

Not everyone experiences stress the same way - and it can manifest itself through a variety of signs. Let's talk about some of the ways that you can tell that you might be experiencing stress, as well as what to look for to see if stress may be guiding the actions of another person.

Questions to Ask:

Ask the following questions, placing the bold text on the whiteboard as a heading, leaving room to make a list of signs below each heading.

- What are some of the **physical signs** of stress?
 - The list generated by discussion might include the following, along with other relevant signs contributed by students in the course of discussion:
 - Racing heart
 - Shaking hands
 - Shaky legs
 - Clenching fists
 - Reddening of the skin
 - Headaches
 - Tenseness
 - Muscle spasms

- What are some of the **emotional signs** of stress?
 - The list generated by discussion might include the following, along with other relevant signs contributed by students in the course of discussion:
 - General feelings of anxiety
 - Feeling overwhelmed
 - Inability to focus
 - Avoidance behaviors
 - Inability to make decisions
 - Fight or flight response
 - Acting out

- What are some of the **health-related conditions** that can be brought on by stress?
 - The list generated by discussion might include the following, along with other relevant signs contributed by students in the course of discussion:
 - Inability to sleep
 - Excessive sleep
 - Binge eating
 - Loss of appetite
 - Irrational behaviors
 - Bouts with depression
 - Mood disorders

Learning Outcome:

Use the lists generated as a result of class discussion to create a signs of stress document that students can use as a tool for their own personal stress management purposes, as well as to serve a study guide to demonstrate knowledge of primary types of stress signs.