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Week 6: Behavioral Health: Physiology, Choices, & Community Impact

Module 1: Resiliency Training: Physiology of Stress Part 1

Lesson: Why Does Stress Make It Easier to Get Sick?

Lesson Overview	
Students develop an understanding of stress as a body system involving the brain, hormones, and physical responses. They use evidence from the module to explain how stress can be helpful in some situations and harmful when it lasts too long.	
Learning Targets	Vocabulary
Identify different types of stress using evidence. Sequence how the body responds to stress. Explain how stress affects the body over time and make a health decision.	Stress the body's response to a challenge Chronic Stress stress that lasts a long time Fight-or-Flight Response the body's quick reaction to danger Hormones (Cortisol) chemical signals that control body responses
Materials	Instructional Notes
Module Student response sheets Whiteboard or chart paper	This lesson builds on students' prior understanding of health and body systems by introducing stress as a connected system involving the brain, hormones, and body responses. Students move beyond viewing stress as simply an emotion and begin to understand its physiological effects. A common misconception is that all stress is harmful. The module introduces multiple forms of stress and explains that some stress can improve focus and performance, while chronic stress can negatively affect health. Students should discover that the impact of stress depends on its type, intensity, and duration.



Learning Experience

8 min	Opening	The teacher displays three scenarios: giving a presentation, being chased by a dangerous animal, and feeling stressed every day for months. The teacher asks, "Which situation causes the biggest reaction in your body?" Students rank the scenarios and explain their thinking. The teacher invites students to briefly act out one body reaction, such as faster breathing, increased heart rate, freezing, or moving quickly. The teacher then asks, "What causes your body to react inside?" Students choose one response: muscles decide, brain sends signals, or heart decides. Students write an initial prediction about how stress moves through the body. Students rank the scenarios from greatest to least body reaction, write and discuss their reasoning, participate in the body reaction simulation, and create an initial prediction about how stress affects the body. Sentence Frame: My body reacts because the _____ sends _____, which causes _____.
15 min	Module	Focus: Students gather evidence about different types of stress, how the stress response works, and how chronic stress affects health. Guiding Questions: • What types of stress exist? • What happens first in a stress response? • What happens when stress lasts too long? Quick Checks: • Identify one example of helpful stress and one example of harmful stress from the module. • Explain whether the fight-or-flight response is helpful, harmful, or both. Sentence Frame: At first I thought _____, but now I think _____ because _____.
15 min	Application	The teacher displays the following scenario: <i>A team of student engineers has been selected to represent their school in a national innovation competition. For three months they have balanced school, practices, travel, deadlines, and presentations. At first, the pressure helped them stay focused and motivated. As the competition approaches, several team members report headaches, poor sleep, trouble concentrating, and getting sick more often.</i> The teacher tells students they are behavioral health consultants. Their job is to determine what is happening inside the students' bodies and make a recommendation using evidence from the module. Students begin with Step 1: What Kind of Stress Is This? Students determine whether the scenario includes eustress, chronic stress, or both, and use evidence from the scenario to support their claim. Next, students complete Step 2: Follow the Stress Response. Students use evidence from the module to explain how the stress response moves through the body and sequence the system: Stressor → Hypothalamus → Pituitary Gland → Adrenal Glands → Cortisol/Adrenaline → Body Response.



		Students then complete Step 3: Make a Recommendation. Students decide whether the team should reduce stress, maintain stress, or create a better balance. Students explain their recommendation using evidence from the module and include at least one benefit and one risk of stress in their explanation. Sentence Frames: The stress type is _____ because _____. The stress response begins with _____. We recommend _____ because _____.
2 min	Reflection	Why can stress improve performance in some situations but become harmful when it continues for a long time? Students revisit and revise their opening prediction.
2 min	Career Connections	Health science professionals, behavioral health specialists, counselors, and physicians regularly analyze how stress affects the body. They use evidence about hormones, the nervous system, and physical symptoms to help people make informed health decisions. Understanding how stress moves through the body also helps students recognize when stress is helping performance and when it may be affecting long-term well-being.