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

Module 3: Resiliency Training: Coping and Relaxation Techniques

Lesson: Which Stress Strategies Actually Help Your Body?

Lesson Overview	
Students learn to distinguish between coping skills and relaxation techniques and analyze how each affects the body's stress response. They use evidence from the module to evaluate strategies and make informed decisions about how people can recover from stress and build resilience.	
Learning Targets	Vocabulary
Distinguish between coping skills and relaxation techniques. Explain how strategies affect the body's stress response. Use evidence to decide which strategies best protect health.	Coping Skills strategies that solve or manage a problem Relaxation Techniques strategies that calm the body Resilience the ability to recover from stress Relaxation Response the body's "calm mode" that reduces stress effects
Materials	Instructional Notes
Module Student response sheets Whiteboard or chart paper	This lesson completes the resiliency learning progression. The conceptual shift is from understanding what stress does to the body to understanding how people can intentionally influence recovery. Students should recognize that resilience is not avoiding stress. Instead, resilience involves recovering, adapting, and recharging after challenges. The resilience battery model provides a framework for thinking about stress and recovery over time. Students may believe that all stress-management strategies are the same or that relaxation simply means doing nothing. Through the module, they should discover that coping skills and relaxation techniques serve different purposes. Coping strategies help address stressors, while relaxation techniques activate the body's relaxation response and support recovery.



Learning Experience

8 min	Opening	The teacher displays the following situation: “You feel very stressed before a big test. Which action helps your BODY the most?” Options include: Ignore it, Talk to a friend, Take slow deep breaths, and Stay up late studying. Students rank all four options from most helpful to least helpful. They write a brief explanation and discuss their rankings with a partner. The teacher asks, “Which option actually changes your body?” Students rank all four options, explain their top choice, discuss similarities and differences with a partner, and make an initial prediction about what makes a stress strategy effective.
15 min	Module	Focus: Students gather evidence about resilience, coping skills, relaxation techniques, and the relaxation response. Guiding Questions: • What is the difference between coping and relaxation? • What happens in the body during relaxation? • How do strategies help the body recover? Use evidence from the module to revise initial predictions, including: • Resilience is the ability to adapt and bounce back from life's difficulties. • Coping skills help people manage stressors and challenging situations. • Relaxation techniques activate the relaxation response and promote calmness. • The relaxation response activates the parasympathetic nervous system. • Relaxation can decrease heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure, and cortisol levels. • Coping and relaxation strategies help recharge resilience. Quick Checks: • Determine whether a strategy is coping or relaxation and explain why. • Describe one change that occurs in the body during the relaxation response. Sentence Frame: At first I thought _____, now I think _____ because _____.
15 min	Application	The teacher displays the following scenario: A school district is creating a “Student Survival Guide” for incoming students. The district can only include TWO strategies on a one-page quick reference card because space is limited. Students review four proposed strategies: Deep Breathing, Time Management, Social Support, and Positive Reframing. The teacher tells students they are members of the Student Wellness Advisory Team. Their task is to recommend the two strategies that should make the final guide using evidence from the module. In Step 1: Evaluate the Options, students review all four strategies, determine whether each strategy is primarily a coping skill or a relaxation technique, and use evidence from the module to justify classifications.



		In Step 2: Consider Different Needs, students discuss how each strategy might help a student dealing with stress, evaluate which strategies address a stressor and which help the body recover, and use evidence from the module to support reasoning. In Step 3: Select the Final Two, students work as a team to choose the two strategies to include in the guide, ensure the recommendation is supported by module evidence, and prepare a brief explanation defending the choices. In Step 4: Defend the Recommendation, students share recommendations with another team, compare evidence and reasoning, and revise thinking if another group's evidence is stronger. Sentence Frames: This strategy is _____ because _____. We selected _____ because _____. The strongest evidence is _____.
2 min	Reflection	Why do effective stress strategies improve health?
2 min	Career Connections	Counselors, therapists, coaches, social workers, and health science specialists regularly help people select strategies that support recovery from stress. These professionals evaluate both the stressor and the body's response in order to recommend effective coping and relaxation techniques. Understanding how different strategies affect the body helps students make informed decisions about managing stress, maintaining resilience, and supporting long-term health.