



Promoting Resilience and Mental Health in Young Adolescents



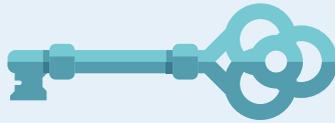
Session 2:
Coping with Feelings and Stress

Coping with Feelings and Stress

Let's Get Prepared!

1. Get an empty backpack
2. Ensure access to YouTube for *Hooked on Stress* video.
3. Copy:
 - *Positive, Negative, and Neutral* wall signs. Cut and paste onto construction paper, and laminate if you wish (optional)
 - *Stress Busters Bingo Cards* (one per student)
 - *Gratitude Flower* (one per student)
 - *Learn to Chill* handout (one per student)

Key Messages For the Session



- There are different types of stress which affect everyone differently.
- It is important to ask others for help with stressful situations
- There are ways of thinking about things, and actions we can take, that can help us feel better, and help us to handle our feelings and stress (more positive self talk, positive coping and learning to relax).



Session Outline

- 5 minutes: Stress Backpack
- 5 minutes: *Hooked on Stress*
- 10 minutes: Good vs. Bad Stress
- 15 minutes: Coping Strategies
- 10 minutes: Stress Busters
- 5 minutes: Gratitude Flower
- 5 minutes: Learn to Chill

Additional activity: Crossword



Stress Backpack

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Be introduced to the topic of stress.
2. Recognize that there are many different causes of stress and that stress can effect everyone differently.
3. Appreciate that sometimes we need help from others when our stress becomes too difficult to handle by ourselves.

Structure: Large group activity

Method:

1. Ask the teacher to wear a backpack to help with this activity.
2. Ask students to name causes of stress for either themselves or others. For every cause of stress, students must place an item into the backpack that represents the size of the impact created by the stress (binder, pencil case, book, etc.).
3. As the backpack gets heavier, ask the teacher how it feels to wear all of that stress? Is it starting to hurt? Where (neck, shoulders, lower back)?
4. Ask the teacher if they can continue to wear the backpack. If yes, continue asking students to place items into the bag. If no, ask the teacher if they need help with all that weight/stress.
5. Ask students if it would be easier to remove the whole bag all at once or to remove items separately.
6. Ask students if it is possible to remove all stress from our lives completely.
 - It might not be possible to remove all stress from our life.
 - Some stress is normal and necessary to help us be alert and energized. For example, preparing for a test or playing a hockey game.
 - It may be more difficult to remove the whole bag, with all of the weight, all at once; removing one element of stress at a time might make it more manageable and easier to carry.
7. Ask students if dealing with stress is easier to do by ourselves or with help.
 - This depends on how much stress there is, what is causing the stress, and the person's ability to handle the stress.

Option: Teacher could ask a student to help with removing the backpack and/or items from the backpack.



5 min.

Hooked on Stress

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Recognize that stressful situations can trigger different behavioural responses.
2. Recognize that they have choices in how they respond to stressful situations.

Structure: Video clip and group discussion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYyoor5Hk4>

Method:

1. Before watching the clip, ask students:
 - Has someone ever said something that bothered you and you snapped back without really thinking?
 - Have you ever felt bad about snapping back at someone and wished you had reacted differently?
2. Tell students that it can sometimes be hard not to be hooked into reacting in a negative way. Luckily, we all have choices and we can all choose to react in a different way if we know how and have a plan.
3. View *Hooked on Stress* video clip and ask students to reflect on which fish they would rather be.
4. After viewing the clip, ask students:
 - How would you describe the fish that got hooked?
 - Why didn't the second fish react to the hook?
 - Do you think the second attitude (taking a moment to think before reacting) could help you avoid getting hooked when someone says something that bothers you?
5. Conclude by telling students that we can't control what others say or do to us, but we can control our reactions to these triggers and avoid "getting hooked" on stress.

Note:

If time is available, brainstorm other stress hooks or triggers that may cause a **non-thinking negative reaction**. For example, a sibling kicks or pokes you, a teacher asks you to do something you don't want to do, someone makes fun of you, or you get in trouble at home. Next, come up with **"the smart fish" alternative reaction** - changing thoughts and feelings to change behaviour and create a more positive reaction/outlook.

Video developed by the Psychology Foundation of Canada.

Discussion adapted from Stress Lessons toolkit,

https://psychologyfoundation.org/Public/Public/Programs/Stress_Lessons1/Educators.aspx



10 min.

Stress

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Define the term stress.
2. Understand the difference between good and bad types of stress.

Structure: Large group discussion

Method:

Facilitate a brief discussion by asking students the following questions:

1. Has everyone heard the term stress or feeling “stressed out”? What does it mean?
 - Stress is a normal part of everyday life and effects everyone.
 - Stress is what you feel when you are worried or uncomfortable about something; can be anything that threatens us, challenges us, or scares us.
 - Some stress in our lives is necessary to help keep us alert and energized, to help us get things done.
 - Too much stress or bad stress that continues over time can interfere with our ability to perform tasks and can make us sick.
 - You may not feel like sleeping or eating, or you may feel cranky, or have trouble paying attention at school.

Note: Reinforce that strong emotions can have a real impact on our bodies physically but can also cause:

- Trouble sleeping
- Trouble concentrating
- Nail biting
- Mood changes
- Poor school performance
- Feeling worried/anxious

2. Can stress be good for us? (List some examples of good and bad stress)

Examples of good/short term stress might include things like:

- Learning a new activity
- Scoring a goal in soccer
- First day of school
- Taking a test or presenting in front of a group
- Excited about going on a family vacation
- Too much homework

Examples of bad/long term stress might include things like:

- Sudden loss of a loved one (family member, pet)
- Bullying
- Parent's divorce
- Illness
- Poverty

3. How can we take control of our stress?

- Do a stress check – what is going on in my life?
- Recognize signs – how am I feeling?
- Learn what triggers are – what is making me feel this way?
- Have a plan to help deal with every day stressful situations and manage those feelings – What coping strategies can I use? Use some simple stress relievers including thinking positively, talking to a trusted adult, practicing deep breathing and relaxation exercises, getting enough sleep, and eating healthy food.

Coping Strategies

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Appreciate the value of handling stress and strong feelings in a positive way
2. Recognize positive, negative and neutral/time out coping strategies

Structure: Large group discussion

Method:

1. Tape Positive, Negative, and Neutral coping wall signs to the wall or board.
2. Ask students to share 'what students their age do' when they're feeling stressed, worried, sad or angry.
3. Ask students if the action represents positive, negative or neutral coping. Write the coping strategy under the appropriate 'coping' header. You may have a student volunteer assist with this.
4. Facilitate a brief discussion of each coping method described (use the definitions below to help) by asking students:
 - Why is this method positive/negative/neutral?
 - Would there be negative consequences to using this method?

If listening to music is mentioned as a coping strategy, ask students if the kind of music they listen to would make a difference (some music might make us feel better, but some music might make us feel worse). Mention humour as a coping strategy if students do not. Also discuss the impact screen time can have on our health. See examples in "Definitions for Facilitators".

5. Remind them that talking to others, and getting help if needed are good strategies for coping with feelings and stress. Discuss any negative coping strategies raised in terms of feeling better and consequences.
6. Remind students that relaxation is a positive coping strategy. Refer to *Learn to Chill* handout.



15 min.

Materials:

- Flip chart paper
- Markers
- Positive, Negative and Neutral wall signs



Definitions for Facilitators:

Positive Coping

- Helps to restore emotional balance and/or feel better about yourself
- Respectful of you, others and property
- Helps you to solve the problem

Examples:

Talk to a friend or a parent, keep a journal, exercise

Text a friend (helps you connect with someone, but to be used in moderation)

Negative Coping

- Does not restore emotional balance, and may make strong emotions (like anger) even worse
- May be harmful to you, others or property
- Does not solve the problem
- May create more problems

Examples:

Break something, yell at someone, use alcohol or drugs

*According to the Canadian Pediatric Society (2019), overusing screen time of 3+ hours unrelated to school work can interfere with a healthy lifestyle which can negatively affect physical activity, mental health, social interactions and school performance.

Neutral

- Not positive or negative, but could lead to problems if used too much
- May help to calm you and restore emotional balance
- Are temporary strategies, and should be used with a positive coping strategy to solve the problem

Examples:

Walk away from the situation, take a hot bath

* It is important to mention that all screen time activities (watching tv/movie/YouTube, playing video games, etc.) can become negative coping strategies if used in excess (3+ hours)

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 **Positive** 

 **Negative** 

 **Neutral** 



10 min.

Stress Busters

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Recognize positive, negative and neutral coping strategies.
2. Appreciate the value of handling stress and strong feelings in a positive way.
3. Understand that there are ways of thinking about things and actions we can take that help us feel better, and help us to handle our feelings.

Structure: Large group activity

Method:

1. Distribute the *Stress Busters* handout and tell students to select one of the Busters cards. Tell the students to put an X through the unchosen card.
 2. Ask students to look at the strategies on their card and put a **star (*)** on the ones they like to use when they are feeling stressed or upset about something.
 3. Now ask students to **circle** the strategies they haven't used as a coping strategy but are willing to try the next time they are faced with a difficult situation.
- **Depending on time and group dynamics, the facilitator can chose to continue with steps 4 and 5 or skip to group discussion in step 6.**
4. The facilitator can choose to use the same cards and play a game of BINGO by calling out different coping strategies found on the Stress Busters cards. Students to put an **(X)** on the called coping strategy.
 5. Inform the students how they can win. For example, one line, four squares or full card.
 6. Facilitate a brief discussion of some of the coping strategies on the cards, either during the game or afterwards.
 - Review coping strategies on card and under which category it falls (positive, neutral or negative), explaining why.
 - Would there be any negative consequences to using this method? Refer to screen time messaging discussed in Coping Strategies activity. Mention that all screen time activities (texting, watching tv/movie/YouTube, playing video games, etc.) can have a negative impact on our health if used in excess (3+ hours).
 - If listening to music is mentioned as a coping strategy, ask if the kind of music they listen to would make a difference. Some music might make us feel better, but some music might make us feel worse.

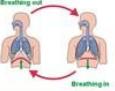
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Stress Busters

<p>Play a card or board game</p> 	<p>Dance</p> 	<p>Say "I can do this"</p> 	<p>Watch YouTube</p> 	<p>Text a friend</p> 
<p>Listen to music</p> 	<p>Watch a movie</p> 	<p>Play an instrument</p> 	<p>Count to 10</p> 	<p>Use positive self-talk</p> 
<p>Call someone you trust</p> 	<p>Ask an adult for help</p> 	<p>Take a nap</p> 	<p>Cook or bake</p> 	<p>Put a puzzle together</p> 
<p>Play video games</p> 	<p>Write in a diary</p> 	<p>Do something kind</p> 	<p>Do school work</p> 	<p>Play basketball</p> 
<p>Talk to a parent</p> 	<p>Play soccer</p> 	<p>Eat a healthy snack</p> 	<p>Doodle on paper</p> 	<p>Say something kind to yourself</p> 

Stress Busters

<p>Use a stress ball</p> 	<p>Play a card or board game</p> 	<p>Read a book</p> 	<p>Text a friend</p> 	<p>Listen to music</p> 
<p>Watch a movie</p> 	<p>Call someone you trust</p> 	<p>Take a nap</p> 	<p>Play an instrument</p> 	<p>Go for a mindful nature walk</p> 
<p>Take deep breaths</p> 	<p>Use positive self-talk</p> 	<p>Ask an adult for help</p> 	<p>Play video games</p> 	<p>Drawing/ coloring</p> 
<p>Do something kind</p> 	<p>Do school work</p> 	<p>Play basketball</p> 	<p>Talk to a parent</p> 	<p>Play with a pet</p> 
<p>Practice yoga</p> 	<p>Say something kind to yourself</p> 	<p>Clean or organize something</p> 	<p>Take a bath or shower</p> 	<p>Doodle on paper</p> 

Gratitude Flower

Objectives:

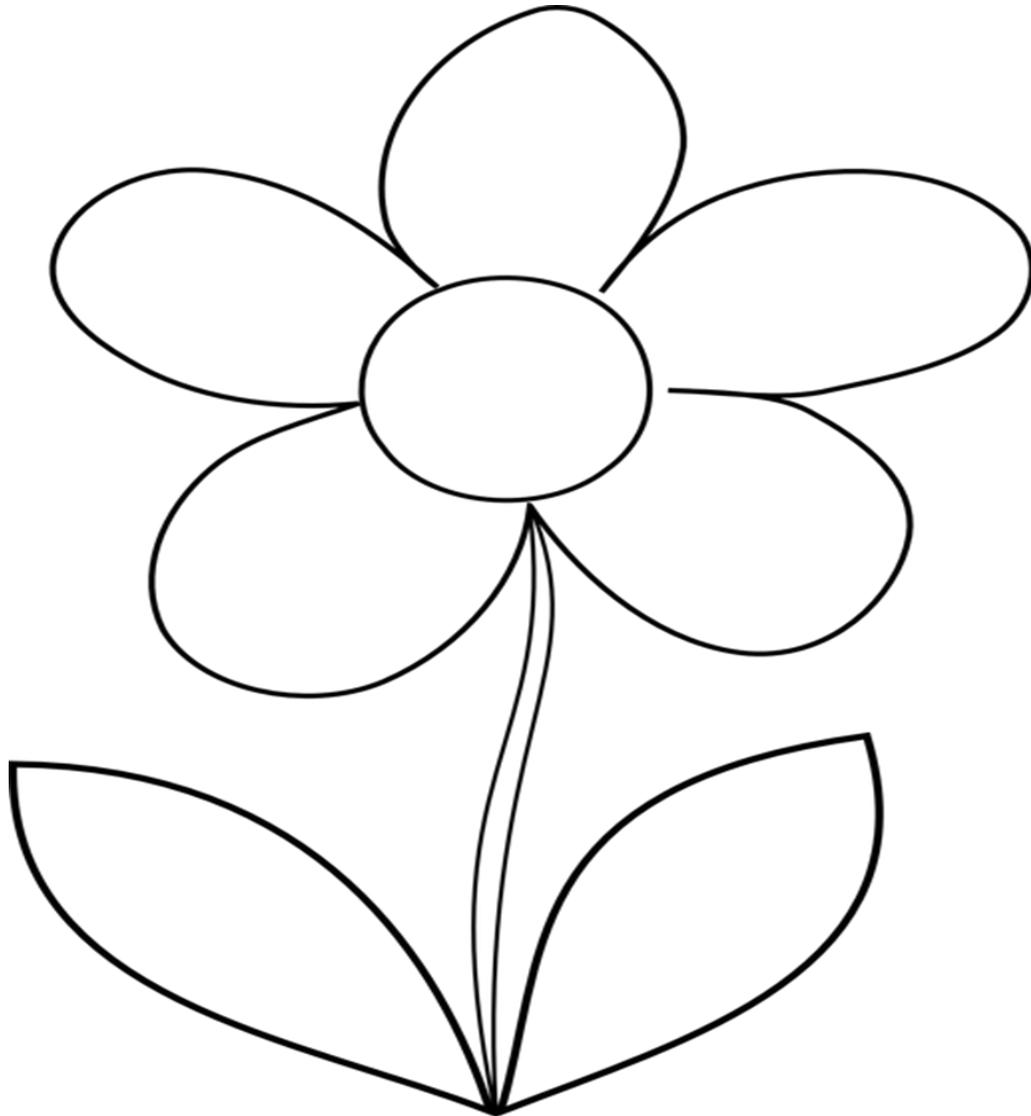
Students will:

1. Think of things, people, or events for which they are grateful.
2. Refer to their gratitude flower as a coping strategy when dealing with difficult situations.

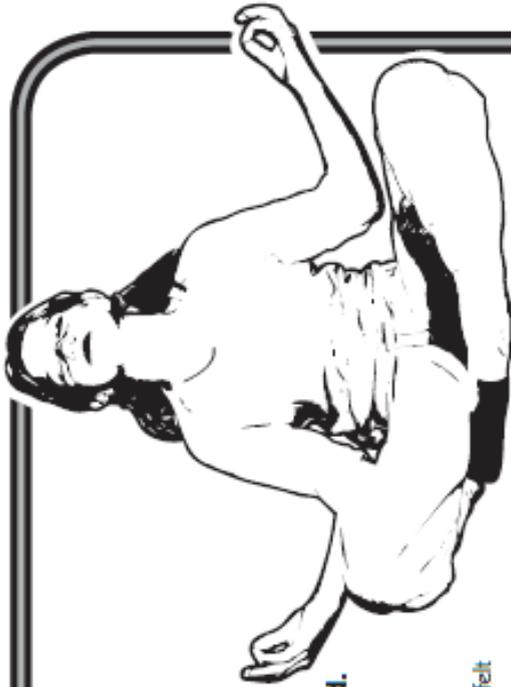
Structure: Individual activity

Method:

Write something that you are grateful for in each flower petal. For example, I am grateful for my family and my home, or my friends who made me laugh today. Ask if any students would feel comfortable sharing with the class.



Learn to chill



Use this relaxation technique when you're feeling angry, worried or stressed. It can also help if you're having trouble falling asleep.

1. Find a comfortable spot. Lie down if you wish.
2. Think of a peaceful place. Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a place where you have felt peaceful and relaxed (for example: under a tree, a park, beside a lake etc).
3. Breathe. Breathe in slowly through your nose, and out through your mouth. Put a hand on your stomach. It should rise with each breath in.
4. Begin by clenching your toes and tightening the muscles in your feet-hold for 3 seconds, then completely relax. Feel the tension leave your feet. Think about your feet being heavy and warm.
5. Repeat the muscle tightening and relaxation (and warm, heavy feeling), moving up your body:
 - Calves
 - Thighs
 - Back and stomach
 - Hands and arms
 - Chest, shoulders and neck
 - Face and jaw
6. Rest quietly. Bring your thoughts back to your peaceful place if they start to wander.

the mini chill

You can help yourself calm down quickly through out the day with this exercise.

- Breathe in through the nose, making sure your abdominal muscles move out as the breath comes in.
- Breathe out slowly through the mouth
- Take 3 breaths like this
- Do a quick check of your face (eyebrows, jaw), shoulders, neck and hands, and consciously relax these areas.

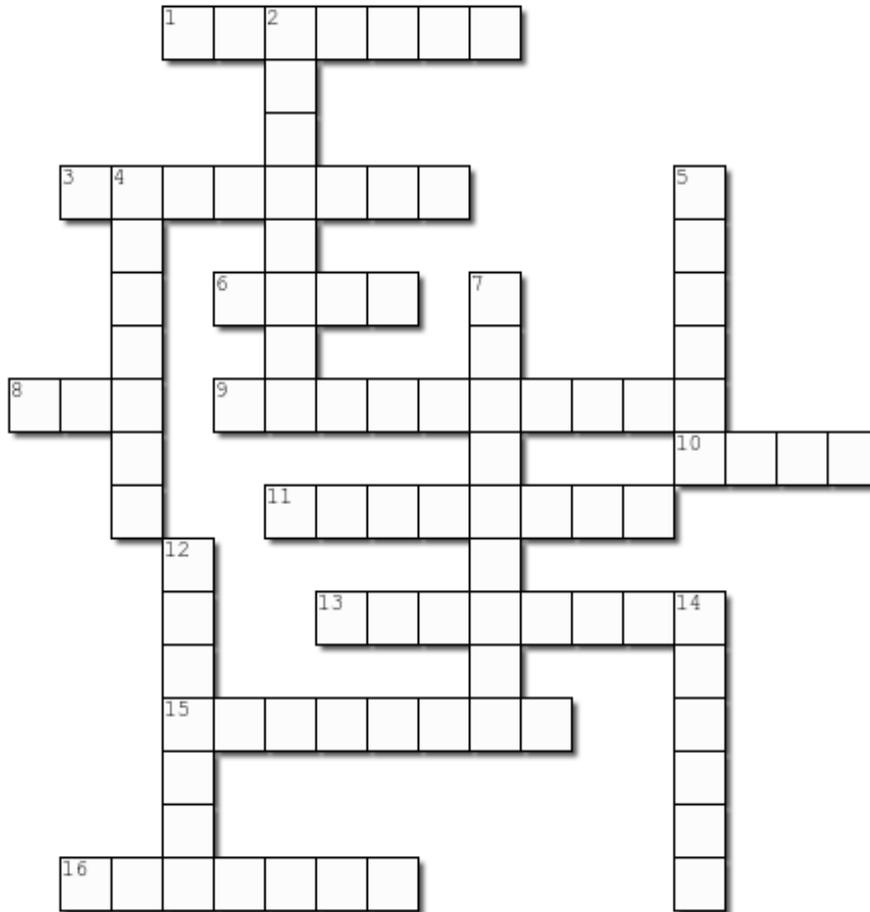


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Name: _____

Complete the crossword puzzle below using the clues provided.



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

1. We all need people in our lives to turn to for ____.
3. Children need at least 60 minutes of ____ activity every day.
6. Say something ____ to yourself.
8. If we change the way we think about things, we can change the way we feel and ____.
9. Breathing exercises are a good ____ technique.
10. You can have ____ stress and bad stress.
11. It is just as important to take care of our mental health as it is to take care of our ____ health.
13. Our ____, feelings and actions influence each other.
15. Children can be ____ to their screens (phone, TV, computer, video games).
16. In the film Boundin' the sheep became sad once he was ____.

Down

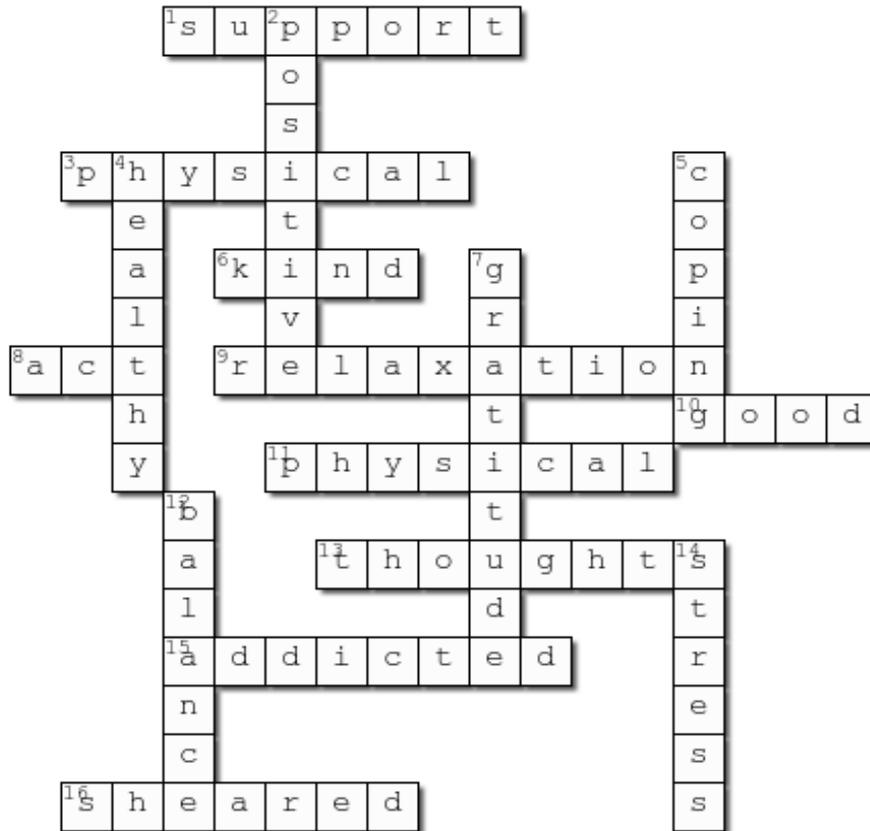
2. ____ self-talk may help you to feel better about an upsetting situation.
4. Too much screen time can interfere with a ____ lifestyle.
5. Using positive ____ strategies can help us feel better and help us to handle our feelings.
7. Refer to your ____ flower as a positive coping strategy.
12. ____ screen time with a healthy lifestyle involving exercise, sleep and face to face interactions.
14. ____ is a normal part of everyday life.

healthy transitions

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Name: _____

Complete the crossword puzzle below using the clues provided.



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

1. We all need people in our lives to turn to for _____. (**support**)
3. Children need at least 60 minutes of _____ activity every day. (**physical**)
6. Say something _____ to yourself. (**kind**)
8. If we change the way we think about things, we can change the way we feel and _____. (**act**)
9. Breathing exercises are a good _____ technique. (**relaxation**)
10. You can have _____ stress and bad stress. (**good**)
11. It is just as important to take care of our mental health as it is to take care of our _____ health. (**physical**)
13. Our _____, feelings and actions influence each other. (**thoughts**)
15. Children can be _____ to their screens (phone, TV, computer, video games). (**addicted**)
16. In the film Boundin' the sheep became sad once he was _____. (**sheared**)

Down

2. _____ self-talk may help you to feel better about an upsetting situation. (**positive**)
4. Too much screen time can interfere with a _____ lifestyle. (**healthy**)
5. Using positive _____ strategies can help us feel better and help us to handle our feelings. (**coping**)
7. Refer to your _____ flower as a positive coping strategy. (**gratitude**)
12. _____ screen time with a healthy lifestyle involving exercise, sleep and face to face interactions. (**balance**)
14. _____ is a normal part of everyday life. (**stress**)