



What is stress?

We all experience stress. Stress is how our body and mind respond when something difficult happens in life. Some stress can be helpful, like when you have a challenge coming up and you need to get ready. Too much stress makes us feel tired and overwhelmed and sometimes we take action too quickly, without thinking through the consequences.

Notice how you respond to stress:

- What types of situations or people tend to stress you out?
- What does stress feel like in *your* body (some people get an upset stomach or clench their fists)?
- What kinds of thoughts do you have when you are stressed?
- How do you respond to stress or try to handle it?

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness means paying attention to what is happening *right now*. A lot of the day we are stuck in our heads thinking about what happened before or what is happening next.

Mindfulness can help you to step back from the thoughts and emotions that stress can bring on, and get you unstuck if strong emotions or thoughts are pushing you around. Mindfulness can give you the space to make the kind of choices you want to make.

Examples of ways to be mindful:

- Focus on one thing at a time with 100% of your attention.
- Focus on only your breath. Notice what it feels like to slowly breathe in and slowly breathe out.

How do you relax?

It can be hard to make time to take care of ourselves when there are so many other people to take care of around us. When we are stressed it is even more important to take care of ourselves. Find specific ways to make sure you are taking care of yourself.

Examples of ways to relax:

- Take a bath or a hot shower
- Listen to music
- Dance

What is positive in your life?

There is more to life than just stress! Focus on the positive things in your life too. Notice positive feelings like happiness, excitement, pride, joy, and love by increasing positive experiences, actions, and relationships in your life. This can help you to enjoy life more, and build a wall of protection against stress so that if something stressful happens, you will have much more strength to bounce back.

Things to notice:

- What's going well in your life?
- What are your strengths?
- What in your life gives you a sense of "I did it!"?