

# Support Student Strategies: Stress Management to Resilience

## PURPOSE

These tools guide an asset-oriented approach to developing a repertoire of shared skill development strategies with students. Included are examples for supporting stress management and, in turn, resilience.

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Read through the approach outlined below.
2. Read through the sample. Consider what will work well for your students, and what you might want to adapt. Then, make your plan.
3. After completing the introductory activities, reflect on how they went. What did your students get from this time? How can you integrate the ongoing practice of stress management strategies?

## Considerations:

- We know that students bring knowledge and assets from their unique backgrounds, relationships and experiences. As with academics, before teaching students a new set of skills, we want to explore what they already know.
- As you support your students with these exercises, be sure to notice those who may need individualized supports. For example, a student who is not able to describe what they do when they are stressed or list adults that they can rely on for supports in the Stress Management Plan likely needs more targeted intervention.
- Teaching students coping strategies without confronting systemic sources of toxic stress exacerbates inequities. As you support students in developing stress management skills, be sure that all students have access to support that mitigates the impact of stress on their lives.

## Approach:

### Engage

*Prime students to pay attention to strategies that they use to manage stress.*

- Before asking students to brainstorm stress and emotion management strategies, you will likely want to give them some time to pay attention to how they manage stress.
- One way to do this is to share a stress management strategy you use, practice it together, and then challenge students to collect stress management strategies throughout the week.

### Brainstorm

*Generate diverse and authentic stress management strategies.*

- Prompt students to think about and share what strategies they use to manage their emotions and stress. You may ask students to jot them down on sticky notes or invite them to share strategies aloud while you take notes or use a virtual whiteboard tool such as Jamboard or Mural.
- You will want to revisit this phase over the coming days and year to add strategies to your students' repertoires.

### Categorize

*Analyze strategies to determine types.*

- Work with students to sort these strategies into categories, such as breathing, self-talk, movement, relationships, mindfulness, etc. This will support students in continuing to generate strategies and to notice what types of strategies seem to work best for them. Consider asking students to model some of their strategies over the coming days.

### Contextualize

*Support students in applying strategies across contexts.*

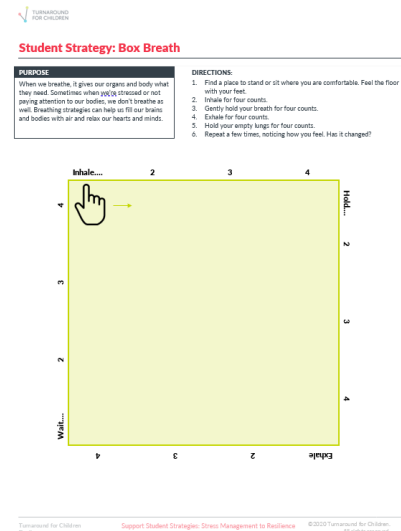
- Revisit your classroom's norms. Group strategies are based on whether they are compatible or incompatible with the environment your class hopes to create. You may also extend this activity to other contexts, ensuring students have strategies to draw on at home, during extracurricular activities, etc.

## SAMPLE Approach

**Engage** Prime students to pay attention to strategies that they use to manage stress.

### Teacher Notes:

I started by sharing the box breath strategy with students during our morning meeting. I noted that it is a strategy I like a lot because I can use it anywhere, no one else notices when I use it, and it works quickly. At the end of the day, I prompted students to think about stress management strategies they use or to see if there is one that they can learn from their friends or family.



**Brainstorm** Generate diverse and authentic stress management strategies.

### Teacher Notes:

The next morning, the class took time during morning work to jot down stress management strategies that they use. We continued to add strategies for the next few days, and I shared a few additional strategies with the class as well. Throughout the process, I encouraged students to learn more from each other about their stress management strategies.

My dad taught me to think about people I admire and what they would do if they were stressed, so sometimes I ask myself "What would Barack Obama do?" and I try to do that.

I use a stress ball to squeeze my stress out.

At home, cuddling my dog Sam helps me feel better when I am stressed.

I like to use alternate nose breathing to manage my stress.

One thing that helps my stress is if I play basketball with my friends.

A loud song and wild dance can get me out of any bad mood.

My sister taught me to talk to my feelings like they are my friends, so I'll say things like "Thank you nervousness, for letting me know how much I care about this!"

Breathing—If I am stressed, I take three super super deep breaths and it helps me calm down.

I see the social worker at school Ms. Jen. If I am super stressed, I know that I can ask to see her within two days and knowing that I will get to talk to her helps me stay calm.

## Categorize *Analyze strategies to determine types.*

### Teacher notes:

The following week, we began to categorize the strategies we used so that we could continue to add and learn which types of strategies work best for each of us.

Movement	Supportive Relationships	Breathing	Objects/Tools	Thinking Strategies
One thing that helps my stress is if I play basketball with my friends.		Breathing—If I am stressed, I take three super, super deep breaths and it helps me calm down.	I use a stress ball to squeeze my stress out.	My sister taught me to talk to my feelings like they are my friends, so I'll say things like "Thank you nervousness, for letting me know how much I care about this!"
A loud song and wild dance can get me out of any bad mood.	I see the social worker at school Ms. Jen. If I am super stressed, I know that I can ask to see her within two days and knowing that I will get to talk to her helps me stay calm.	I like to use alternate nose breathing to manage my stress.	At home, cuddling my dog Sam helps me feel better when I am stressed.	My dad taught me to think about people I admire and what they would do if they were stressed, so sometimes I ask myself "What would Barack Obama do?" and I try to do that.

## Contextualize *Support students in applying strategies across contexts.*

### Teacher notes:

After we sorted the strategies, we did a brief vocabulary lesson on the words "Compatible" and "Incompatible" using the analogy of a square peg in a round hole. Then, we went through our classroom norms and expectations and determined which strategies were always or sometimes compatible with our classroom, and which strategies were not. We created a classroom stress management strategies list with those strategies, and then students completed a Stress Management Plan for strategies they can use in other situations when they feel stressed.

Breathing—If I am stressed, I take three super, super deep breaths and it helps me calm down.

Class Decision: Always compatible.

Does not interfere with our learning environment.

A loud song and wild dance can get me out of any bad mood.

Class Decision: Sometimes compatible.

This strategy could work well for our whole class during a break, but not during work time because it would be distracting.

## SAMPLE Student Strategy: Stress Management Plan

### PURPOSE

It is important to have strategies to use to manage stress and difficult feelings in different settings, like at school, at home, and during other activities.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Complete the boxes below by listing some of the strong feelings you experience and some of the strategies you use to manage strong feelings.
2. Match the situations with strategies.
3. Finally, list some people that you can rely on when you're stressed.

When I feel *nervous*,

I can do box breath

When I feel *angry*,

I can get my stress ball

When I feel *sad*,

I can draw

When I feel *overwhelmed*,

I can do pushups

If I have strong feelings and do not know what to do, I know I can get support from:

My  
Neighbor  
Anna

Grandpa

Kelly at  
Church

Ms.  
Marshall

My  
Friend  
Noah

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When I feel \_\_\_\_\_ ,

I can \_\_\_\_\_ .

When I feel \_\_\_\_\_ ,

I can \_\_\_\_\_ .

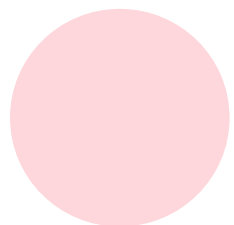
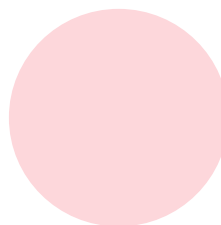
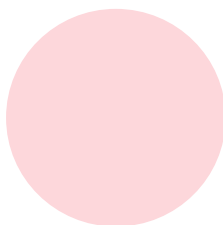
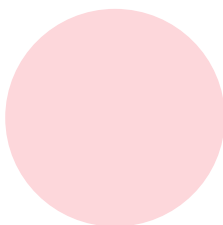
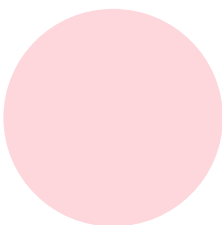
When I feel \_\_\_\_\_ ,

I can \_\_\_\_\_ .

When I feel \_\_\_\_\_ ,

I can \_\_\_\_\_ .

If I have strong feelings and do not know what to do, I know I can get support from:



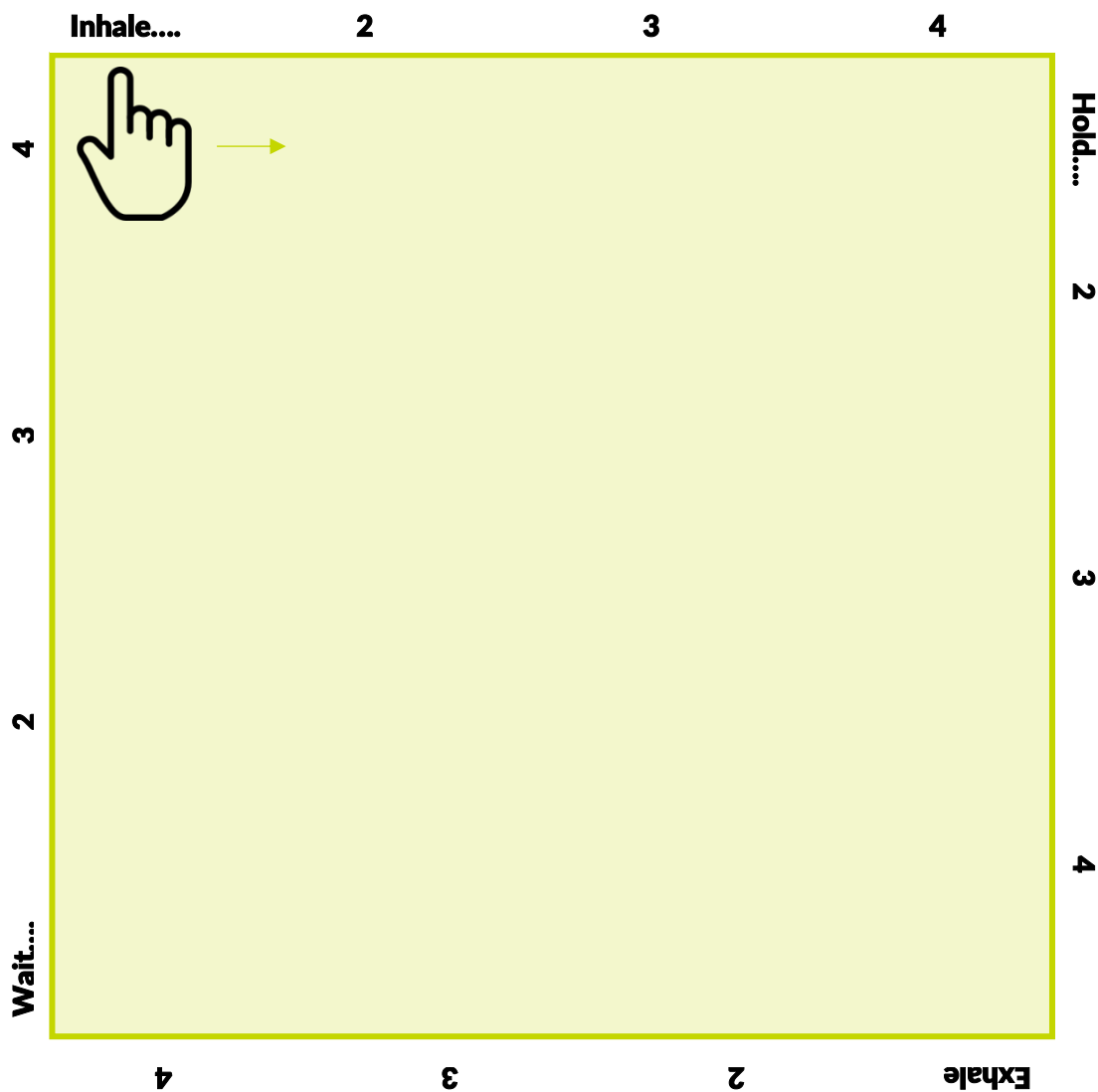
## Student Strategy: Box Breath

### PURPOSE

When we breathe, it gives our organs and body what they need. Sometimes when we're stressed or not paying attention to our bodies, we don't breathe as well. Breathing strategies can help us fill our brains and bodies with air and relax our hearts and minds.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Find a place to stand or sit where you are comfortable. Feel the floor with your feet.
2. Inhale for four counts.
3. Gently hold your breath for four counts.
4. Exhale for four counts.
5. Hold your empty lungs for four counts.
6. Repeat a few times, noticing how you feel. Has it changed?



## Student Strategy: Memory Game

### PURPOSE

Sometimes when we are stressed, angry, or upset, our minds get stuck on ideas even when they're not helping us. Memory games or challenges can help get our minds unstuck so that we can move forward.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Write three letters in the letter row below.
2. Choose three categories.
3. Try to come up with something from each category in each letter.
4. When you're done, notice how you feel. Has it changed?

Memory Game Board		PICK 3 CATEGORIES		
PICK 3 LETTERS				

### Example:

	CATEGORY: <i>Animals</i>
LETTER: <i>B</i>	<i>Bear</i>

### Example Categories:

- Animals
- People
- Places
- Snacks
- Desserts
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Movies and Shows
- Things Outside
- Things in the Classroom
- Sports Equipment
- Science Words
- Weather Words

## Student Strategy: Head, Heart, Hands

### PURPOSE

One technique for managing stress is connecting your mind and body. Use this tool to tune in to how you are feeling physically and how that connects to your emotions.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Find a quiet place where you can relax. Take a few slow, deep breaths.
2. Go through the questions about your head, heart, and hands.

### Head

#### Think

#### Draw or Write

What are you thinking about?  
Are your thoughts clear or jumbled?  
Is your mind racing or still?  
Are you aware of your breath?

### Heart

#### Think

#### Draw or Write

What do you notice about your heart?  
Is it racing?  
Pattering?  
Beating slow and strong?  
Does it feel tight or relaxed?

### Hands

#### Think

#### Draw or Write

What about your hands?  
Are they calm or jittery?  
Do they feel clammy or dry?  
Are they clenched or relaxed?



## Student Strategy: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

### PURPOSE

In the busyness of our lives, sometimes we lose track of the present moment and how we are feeling. Use this strategy to tune in to your body and surroundings.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Find a space where you can spend a few minutes undistracted by people or things around you.
2. Breathe deeply and slowly as you complete the following steps.

5



Notice five things you can see.

4



Notice four things your body feels.

3



Notice three things you can hear.

2



Notice two things you can smell.

1



Notice one thing you can taste.