

Mindful Self-Management Exercise: Managing Stress

This exercise will help you and your adolescent learn to manage stress by being present with strong thoughts and emotions without reacting or hanging onto them.

- Each exercise takes 10 minutes or less.
- Familiarize yourself with the exercise before using with your adolescent.
- Use the script to guide the exercise. Adjust language as needed.
- All exercises begin with **Breath Awareness** followed by a **Mindfulness Activity** that teaches a practical mindfulness skill.
- Each exercise ends with **Reflecting Questions** to discuss with your adolescent. Invite your adolescent to stay in mindful silence until the Reflecting Questions.

Breath Awareness

Let's begin our time together by getting into a comfortable posture to explore how to manage stress by being present with strong emotions without reacting to them. Sit up straight and place your hands on your thighs. Close your eyes, if that feels comfortable, or gaze softly downward. Begin breathing slowly and deeply, in and out. (pause)

Do a quick body scan, starting with your feet, calves, knees, and legs. (pause)

Notice the rise and fall of your belly and chest. (pause)

Relax your neck and shoulders. (pause)

Sense your face, the top of your head, and your back. (pause)

Feel your sitting bones, hamstrings, and feet. (pause)

Notice any thoughts and emotions that are popping up. (pause)

Mindfulness Activity

Thoughts and emotions come in and out of our minds and bodies all day like trains pulling into a station. (pause)

Sometimes powerful thoughts and emotions get stuck in the station and stay with us for a while before moving on. (pause)

The longer they stay in our minds and bodies, the stronger they may grow, causing discomfort. (pause)

Take a deeper breath and think of a strong thought or emotion that you recently experienced. (pause)



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Notice in your body where you feel it. (pause)

It might be a tension or a tightness. (pause)

Imagine these thoughts or emotions approaching your mind on a train entering your station. (pause)

The train may stop and be with you for a while. (pause)

Use your deep breathing and focus on your breath instead of your thoughts and emotions. (pause)

While breathing, imagine yourself physically taking a step back and allowing the train to pass. (pause)

You don't have to react to the thoughts and emotions. You don't have to get on board the train. The thoughts and emotions will move on to the next station as you let them pass through your mind. (pause)

As the train departs, feel the distance between you and those thoughts and emotions. Notice any easing of the discomfort as the train moves further away. (pause)

The next time you have a strong thought or emotion, practice noticing it but not reacting to it. Have you ever heard the phrase "train of thought"? It means the series of thoughts a person can have about a topic or emotion. You can say this sentence to yourself: When a train of thought is approaching, I don't have to get on board. (pause)

Let's take two deep breaths to finish the activity.

If you are able, share the **Train of Thought** handout.

Reflecting

Take this opportunity to have a conversation about your shared experience using the following reflecting questions:

Reflecting Questions

- What?** What did you notice in your body when you recalled a strong thought or emotion?
- So What?** Why might it be helpful to imagine strong emotions traveling through on a train?
- Now What?** How might you use the train image to help you when you are feeling stressed?



Lions Quest is a social and emotional learning program of Lions Clubs International Foundation.

Train of Thought



When a train of thought is passing,
I don't have to get on board.