



Stage 1 Unit Template

Subject Area: Wellness	Course: Life and Stress Management		
Unit 2 Title: Stress and the Brain	Grades(s): 11/12	Start: Date Week 3	End: Date Week 5
Unit Summary: In this unit, students will learn about the stress response (how our body physiologically and psychologically responds to a stressor). Students will also explore the relationship between chronic stress and mental and physical health.			

Stage 1: Desired Results

Massachusetts Learning Standards

Practice 1: Decision-making and Problem-solving. Make health-promoting, informed, responsible decisions and solve problems in a variety of health-related situations.

Healthy Relationships [12.1.HR]

3. Analyze the role of individual versus shared responsibility in building and maintaining healthy relationships. [HPE; SE]
7. Evaluate effective strategies for dealing with difficult relationships with family members, peers, and partners and demonstrate the ability to use these strategies to make health-promoting decisions regarding difficult relationships. [HPE; SE]

Physical Activity and Fitness [12.1.PF]

2. Choose an appropriate level of challenge to experience success through participation in a self-selected physical activity. [PE]



Stage 1 Unit Template

3. Evaluate opportunities and barriers for physical activity in a variety of contexts. [PE]

Practice 2: Self-management and Goal Setting. Set goals, engage in health-promoting behaviors, and avoid risky behaviors.

Mental and Emotional Health [12.2.MH]

1. Apply strategies to appropriately respond using different levels of emotions in routine interactions. [HPE; SE]

2. Apply coping and stress management techniques to manage a variety of stressors (i.e., school, personal life, relationships) and create a long-term plan for stress management. [HPE; SE]

3. Apply strategies, including developing protective factors and personal assets, to support positive mental and emotional well-being. [HPE; SE]

4. Assess health practices and overall health status across multiple dimensions of wellness (e.g., physical, emotional, financial, cultural, sexual, intellectual, occupational, spiritual, environmental, social). [HPE]

5. Set a goal, create a plan, monitor progress, and celebrate success for plans that maximize efficiency and minimize stress. [HPE; SE]

6. Apply strategies that support a growth mindset including in challenging settings. [HPE; SE]

7. Set personal short- and long-term mental and emotional health-related goals and create and execute a plan for monitoring progress. [HPE; SE]

Physical Health and Hygiene [12.2.PH]

1. Develop a plan and implement strategies based on an identified need or want to attain a goal that improves physical health. [HPE]

2. Create a plan that develops agency related to individual ownership of one's health and health care (e.g., locating a health care provider, scheduling appointments, taking medication properly, seeking support for medical issues). [HPE]



Stage 1 Unit Template

5. Describe external factors (such as social determinants of health) that can affect health and one's agency in addressing health. [HPE]

Physical Activity and Fitness [12.2.PF]

1. Assess personal strengths and interests and how they influence engagement in physical activity. [PE; SE]

2. Discuss the benefits of a physically active lifestyle across multiple dimensions of health and across a person's lifespan. [HPE]

3. Employ effective self-management skills to analyze and overcome personal barriers and appropriately modify physical activity patterns to maintain or enhance health. [PE; SE]

7. Determine a variety of physical activities that can be implemented independently or with minimal support for the purposes of personal enjoyment or challenge, or to maintain or improve fitness. [PE]

8. Create a goal and plan for participating in physical activity to maintain or improve health and monitor progress. [PE]

11. Select and participates in physical activities that meet a variety of personal needs (personal goals, strengths, interests, enjoyment, social interaction or self-expression). [PE]

Practice 3: Social Awareness, Relationship, and Communication Skills.

Enhance relationships, personal health, and the health of others through social awareness and effective communication.

Healthy Relationships [12.3.HR]

2. Use effective strategies (e.g., boundary setting, maintaining personal boundaries, respecting others' boundaries, I-statements, stating your needs, recognizing warning signs) to avoid negative relationships and improve or maintain positive relationships. [HPE; SE]



Stage 1 Unit Template

- 5. Demonstrate effective ways to communicate with trusted adults about bullying, harassment, abuse, assault, discrimination, or exploitation. [HPE; SE]
- 7. Demonstrate empathy (e.g., active listening, withholding judgement, compassion) toward others. [HPE; SE]
- 8. Demonstrate communication skills that account for the perspective of others while allowing for active and effective social engagement. [HPE; SE]

Mental and Emotional Health [12.3.MH]

- 1. Describe both positive (e.g., developmental assets, protective factors, resilience, supportive adult relationships) and negative factors (e.g., trauma, adversity, adverse childhood experiences) that can impact mental and emotional health and well-being. [HE; SE]
- 2. Discuss the benefits of trauma-informed approaches to relationships. [HE; SE]
- 3. Demonstrate strategies for expressing understanding towards those who hold different beliefs. [HPE; SE]
- 4. Evaluate how society and cultural norms, morals, and values affect personal interactions. [HPE; SE]
- 5. Evaluate the influence of peers, media, family, society, community, and culture on body image and the impact body image has on health. [HPE; SE]
- 6. Evaluate personal engagement in social situations at home, school, and in the community and create a plan for personal growth in social engagement. [HPE; SE]
- 7. Analyze power imbalances in relationships and demonstrate strategies that communicate your value, your right to say no, and hold others accountable for their actions. [HE; SE]
- 8. Apply appropriate boundary setting strategies (e.g., acknowledge feelings, communicate the boundary, target alternative) within authentic contexts. [HPE; SE]
- 9. Demonstrate a variety of culturally responsive strategies for collaborating with peers, adults, and others in the community. [HPE; SE]



Stage 1 Unit Template

10. Demonstrate strength-based strategies for implementing aspects of cultural humility, embracing differences, accepting others, and acknowledging others' perspectives. [HPE; SE]

11. Demonstrate the ability to communicate about mental health in culturally responsive ways that reduce stigma. [HE; SE]

12. Communicate non-judgmentally when there is a concern about one's own or someone else's mental well-being or where someone is considering harming or killing themselves. [HE; SE]

Practice 5: Self-awareness and Analyzing Influences. Examine how emotions, thoughts, needs, values, beliefs, and other factors (both internal and external) influence behaviors and articulate how these influences impact health behavior and outcomes.

Physical Health and Hygiene [12.5.PH]

1. Analyze how different cultural backgrounds, perceptions of norms, and social influences encourage or discourage health-promoting and risky behaviors. [HPE]

2. Analyze how health risk behaviors (e.g., lack of physical activity, lack of sleep, poor nutrition, texting and driving) and protective factors (e.g., school connectedness, meaningful relationships, access to health care, regular physical activity) can influence overall health and how environmental factors can impact those behaviors. [HPE]

Physical Activity and Fitness [12.5.PF]

1. Analyze the role of technology and social media tools in supporting a healthy, active lifestyle. [HPE]

2. Analyze the impact of a variety of factors (e.g., culture, life choices, economics, motivation and accessibility) on people's participation in physical activity. [HPE]

3. Recognize personal assets and demonstrate strategies that support growth mindset related to personal abilities to succeed, grow, and persist through physical activity challenges. [HPE; SE]



Stage 1 Unit Template

Public, Community and Environmental Health [12.5.CE]

- 1.Explore the impact of social determinants of health (e.g., education, social environment, socioeconomic conditions, public safety) on individuals at different levels (e.g., interpersonal, intrapersonal, community, policy). [HPE]
- 2.Evaluate the influence of social context/environment, not solely personal choices, on an individual's health. [HPE]
- 7.Analyze behaviors, policies and practices in the school community that promote dignity and respect and reduce stigma for all individuals. [HPE]

Practice 6: Information and Resource Seeking. Access, evaluate, and use valid and reliable health information, products, services, and related resources.

Healthy Relationships [12.6.HR]

- 1.Demonstrate how to access valid information and resources to help maintain positive relationships and get help if in negative or unhealthy relationships. [HE]
- 2.Demonstrate how to access valid information and resources to help or support someone else (e.g., who is being bullied or harassed or is a survivor of sexual abuse, incest, rape, sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, gender-based violence). [HPE]

Mental and Emotional Health [12.6.MH]

- 1.Discuss a variety of supports available at home, school, and community for maintaining or enhancing mental and emotional health. [HE; SE]
- 2.Evaluate the validity of and use resources from home, school, and community that provide valid health information on enhancing mental and emotional well-being, including effective coping strategies for loss and grief. [HPE]



Stage 1 Unit Template

3. Use valid and reliable resources to find information on risk factors for, and signs and symptoms of, mental health issues and conditions and access appropriate support for self or others. [HE]
4. Recognize the signs of behavioral addictions (e.g., gambling, overuse of social media) and demonstrate strategies for seeking help for self or others. [HE]
5. Use valid and reliable resources to find information on risk factors for, and signs and symptoms of suicide ideation or non-suicidal self-injury. [HE]

Transfer (Authentic, relevant application of learning to new situations)

Students will be able to...

- Transfer knowledge of how stress affects the brain and body, enabling them to recognize how prolonged stress impacts overall health.
- Gain insight into the long-term effects of chronic stress, including how it affects cognitive functions, mental health, and physical well-being.
- Understand the physiological and psychological responses to stress, students can apply healthier coping strategies to reduce the harmful effects of stress.
- Develop the ability to recognize stress responses in themselves, giving them tools to intervene early and manage stress before it becomes chronic.

Meaning

Enduring Understandings

Students will understand that...

- Stress triggers a complex response
- Chronic stress is detrimental
- Stress can be managed with awareness and

Essential Questions

Students will consider...

- How does the brain process and respond to stress?
- What is the difference between acute and chronic stress, and how does chronic stress affect the body

Stage 1 Unit Template

techniques • The brain plays a central role in stress	and mind? • How does chronic stress impact mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression) and physical health (e.g., immune system, cardiovascular health)? • What are the physiological changes that occur in the body during the stress response? • How can students manage the effects of stress on their brain and body? • How does our understanding of the brain's stress response help us in reducing the negative effects of stress?
Acquisition	
Knowledge Students will know... • Stress response (fight or flight, hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis) • Brain structures (amygdala, prefrontal cortex) • Types of stress (acute stress, chronic stress) • Effects of chronic stress (brain, body) • Hormones (cortisol, adrenaline) • Cognitive impact (memory, cognitive function, emotional regulation) • Mental health conditions (anxiety, depression, PTSD) • Physical health issues (immune function,	Skills Students will be skilled at... • Identifying physiological and psychological symptoms of stress, both acute and chronic, in oneself and others. • Being able to describe the brain's role in the stress response, including the activation of the amygdala, hypothalamus, and the production of stress hormones. • Assessing how chronic stress affects various aspects of mental and physical health, including cognitive function, emotional regulation, and overall well-being.



Stage 1 Unit Template

cardiovascular disease, digestion, sleep) • Neuroplasticity (brain adaptation, stress management)	• Applying specific techniques such as deep breathing, relaxation exercises, meditation, and cognitive reframing to manage the physiological effects of stress on the body and brain. • Practicing mindfulness techniques to increase self-awareness of stress triggers and responses, aiding in more conscious and effective management of stress. • Developing personal action plans that include stress management strategies aimed at reducing the harmful effects of chronic stress on mental and physical health.
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