Stress Management Lesson

I. Recognize Stress for What It Is
   How would you describe stress?
   Why is stress good or bad, in your opinion?
   How often do you feel stressed?
   a. Physical Reaction
      i. Chemicals like adrenaline, cortisol and oxytocin; accelerated heart rate and respiratory patterns, sweat, circulatory complications, etc.
      ii. Alarm – The body’s initial reaction: fight, flight or fright.
      iii. Resistance – Our body will try to cope or adapt to the stressor. If the body is able to overcome the stressor, the physical side-affects will disappear.
      iv. Exhaustion – If we can’t appropriately cope with the stressor, damaging effects can result in physical, mental and/or emotional problems.
   b. Mental Reaction
      i. Over Thinking – Stress can easily lead us into self-destructive thinking patterns. Overthinking can cause us to reexamine situations or decisions repetitively. This repetition has an escalating effect on our stress level.
      ii. Argumentative – When we feel stressed, it’s natural to release our emotions. Too often, it comes out in quick, thoughtless moments of anger or passion. If we can recognize our aggression and anger, we may be able to detect unnecessary stress.
      iii. Feeling of Control – Understanding that certain things are outside of your control is essential. Sometimes things will happen. We can only choose how we react to situations. If we feel desperate, anxious or frustrated because we aren’t in control, take a step back and analyze the reality of the situation. Try to let go of the need to control. Focus on your behaviors and personal decisions.
   c. Thinking Traps
      i. Negative Filter – You only see yourself through the perspective of the negative critic.
      ii. Fortune Telling – Assuming how the future is going to play out.
      iii. Mind Reading – You assume other people’s thoughts and feelings.
      iv. Polarizing (B/W) – Because I made a small error, I might as well make a big one.

II. How To Cope With Stress
   When was the last time you were stressed? What did you do?
   Are there ineffective ways to deal with stress?
   Why is stress difficult to manage?
   a. Change Your Way of Thinking
      i. Avoid - Learn to say “no,” avoid should tasks until you finish must tasks, avoid people who stress you out
ii. **Alter** – Express your feelings, learn to compromise, learn to manage time better

iii. **Adapt** – Reframe the problem, take a step back, focus on the positive

iv. **Accept** — Don’t try to control, forgive, share your feelings

v. Watch “How to Make Stress Your Friend” video

vi. 30,000 adults were studied for eight years. Based on two factors: 1. Your level of stress over the last year; 2. Do you believe stress is harmful for your health?
   1. People who believed stress was bad for you were 43% more likely to die.
   2. 15th largest killer of Americans—if the study is accurate, the belief stress is bad for you killed more (est. 20,231 deaths) people than homicide, skin cancer, HIV and AIDS.

vii. Viewing stress symptoms as helpful and healthy will literally convince your body that they are. Your body will believe your thoughts and help you be productive and efficient with your stress response.

b. **Support Network**
   i. Oxytocin tells us to connect with people. We should have people we can have honest conversations with. Talk with people to vent and express what you’re feeling. Being connected with people does not mean using Facebook, Twitter or other social media platforms. Face-to-face interaction, hand-written letters are more rewarding than electronic mediums.

c. **Timing**
   i. Doing the right thing at the wrong time is still wrong. Sometimes in order to deal with our stress, we need to be sensitive to timing. Some things will only be resolved or complete with time. Patience can be the key. Other times, we let stress linger as we procrastinate important decisions and responsibilities. Determination can help us make a plan of action, and then act. Without action we are perpetually stagnant.

d. **Daily Habits**
   i. **Exercising regularly**
   ii. **Eating healthily**
   iii. **Meditation**
   iv. **Self-expression**
   v. **Laughter**

III. **Effects of Stress Habits (See graphic below)**

a. **Positive**: When we understand and manage our stress positively, it can literally save our life. Using (and viewing) stress as a motivator, instead of a roadblock, can help us be effective. We can use daily skills to keep us focused, happy and optimistic about our challenges.

b. **Negative**: If we use poor self-management skills and negative self-talk, stress can be a serious health risk. Unmanaged, our stress response can deteriorate our body and cause us to be unhappy and incapable or performing in any capacity. Our relationships, job performance and overall satisfaction can all suffer.

IV. **Resources**
- How to Make Stress Your Friend  
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcGyVTAoXEU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcGyVTAoXEU)
- Ron donut desk: avoid stresses  
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awqvLlnCzmU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awqvLlnCzmU)
- Effects of Stress on your body  
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVTw4dypBN8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVTw4dypBN8)
- Stress Management  
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPFypLcEr5M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPFypLcEr5M)
- Change Your Way of Thinking  
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6402QJp52M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6402QJp52M)
- Cognitive Behavior Therapy  

### Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Symptoms</th>
<th>Emotional Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory problems</td>
<td>Moodiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to concentrate</td>
<td>Irritability or short temper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor judgment</td>
<td>Agitation, inability to relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing only the negative</td>
<td>Feeling overwhelmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious or racing thoughts</td>
<td>Sense of loneliness and isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant worrying</td>
<td>Depression or general unhappiness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Symptoms</th>
<th>Behavioral Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aches and pains</td>
<td>Eating more or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea or constipation</td>
<td>Sleeping too much or too little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nausea, dizziness</td>
<td>Isolating yourself from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest pain, rapid heartbeat</td>
<td>Procrastinating or neglecting duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of sex drive</td>
<td>Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent colds</td>
<td>Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>