



# Relaxation Acclimation

Objective: To help youth recognize stress and practice healthy ways of reducing it.

Time: 20-30 minutes

Supplies Needed:

- Stress balls
- Paper, colored pencils, and a pencil sharpener
- Bubbles
- Radio/CD player and music (optional)

Ask the group to engage in a group conversation about stress.

- What does it mean to relax?
- How do you relax?
- Where are you most relaxed? At home? At school?
- What do you do that makes you feel good on the inside? Eat? Sleep? Watch TV? Play sports?
- Stress is a common word that everyone uses to describe feeling of being tense, worried, busy, or over-extended. Do you ever feel stressed?
- What is something that makes you feel stressed?
- What do you experience when you are feeling stressed? Are you irritable? Grouchy? Quiet?
- How do you handle stress? Ignore it? Spend time alone? Talk about it?

The steps you take to manage your stress are called coping skills. Coping skills can be actions that you take or ways that you think.

We are going to do three different things that may help us relax.

1. Blowing Bubbles – Pass out the bubbles, and instruct the youth to blow bubbles at an object. After the activity, debrief. → Why might blowing bubbles help reduce stress? Did you feel any different before or after you blew bubbles? If bubbles aren't readily available when you feel stressed in the future, how might you use this activity to practice reducing stress?
2. Playing with Stress Balls – Have the youth squeeze the balls and focus on the feeling of the balls and the feeling in the hand and arm muscles. Instruct the youth to squeeze the ball for 2-3 seconds and then release. As the hand and arm muscles relax, the tension will leave your hands and arms,

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relieving stress on the body. Stress balls also stimulate blood circulation which improves flow of oxygen. Allow the youth to continue playing with the stress balls as they complete the next activity.

3. Drawing – Pass out a sheet of paper to each individual and a box of colored pencils. Instruct the youth to draw a line down the center of their paper. On one side of the line, have them draw the worst thing that happened this week. On the other side of the line, have them draw the best thing that happened this week. If they are willing, encourage a few youth to share their best/worst moments. If extra time allows, have them turn their paper over and draw something that makes them feel happy. After the activity, debrief. → Why might drawing help reduce stress? Why do you think I had you draw your worst moment from the week? Why do you think I had you draw your best moment right after that? How might you use this activity to practice reducing stress?

#### Final Debriefing

- Which activity did you enjoy most?
- Which station did you like least?
- Which station are you most likely to try when you begin feeling stressed?
- What are some other ways you might be able to reduce stress?
- Why is it important to reduce stress?