

Aura Body Stress Reduction Activity

This activity allows students first to visualize particular areas of stress in their bodies, and then learn ways to reduce stress in those particular areas. It works with full classrooms, small groups, and individual students.

Supplies

- One “empty body” printout for each student
- Colored pencils, crayons, or felt pens
- Soft music to play during part of the activity (optional, but helpful)

Step 1

Invite students to draw in where in their bodies they hold stress or anxiety. If you have colored pencils or felt pens available, invite them to choose the color it is. Have them draw it in a shape or an actual image or whatever feels most expressive for them.

Step 2: Classroom Use

For the sake of time, divide students into groups of two or three. Instruct each student to share anything they’d like about their picture with their partner or small group.

“Students, you might share where your body feels stress or holds anxiety. This could be in your brain or your tummy. Share whatever is true for you.”

After students share, suggest they each put a number between 1-10 in the corner of their paper to rate their current anxiety or stress level.

Let students continue for maybe three or four minutes. If you sense they’re restless, you might continue your narration through the whole time. To close the exercise:

“Now in two more breaths, we’re going to open our eyes and rejoin the room.”

Step 2: Small Group Use

Use above concept, but students may be able to share with the whole group instead of pairs or triads.

Step 2: Individual Use

The student reports to you. Consider completing your own picture so you can share with the student.



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Step 3

Give the following instructions:

“Now we’re going to practice a stress reduction exercise. We’ll do this with our eyes closed, but first, take one last look at our pictures. If you indicated more than one area where you hold stress or anxiety, choose only one area for this activity. Now let’s all close our eyes. I’m going to just speak in a quiet voice and suggest how you could breathe into that place and decrease your stress or anxiety. It is just as simple as that. There will be moments when it will just be silent in the room (or “you will just hear the music”). Keep your eyes closed and continue with the breathing. I’ll let everyone know when it is time to open our eyes.”

Pause and start your music.

“Get really comfortable. Keep your back straight, and take a deep breath in and, as you exhale, just relax.”

Help them to do this for two more breaths.

“This time when you inhale, imagine that the space where you hold the most stress is a big chunk of chocolate. When you breathe in this time, imagine you’re breathing in all the warmth of the sunshine. Imagine that it is melting some of the chocolate. It just melts away.

“Or maybe it works for you to imagine that stress as being like a bunch of popcorn kernels. When you breathe the warmth into them, some of them pop and that part of the stress just pops and floats away, out of your vision. It just floats off into space. As each one floats away, your stress calms down a notch.

“Let’s continue with an image for each breath — whatever image works for you — and let this calm music help us relax even more.”



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Step 4

“Now, check in with your body and see how it feels. Focus on that area where you were breathing in warmth. How would you rate your stress in that area now? Has the number changed?” You could invite students to share in their pairs/groups or with you if individual.

If You Have More Time

“Now, let’s take this a step further. See if you can envision a way of showing on your picture how you are melting the stress. It could be drawing a sun near your body and drawing the rays coming in to melt your stress. Can you draw what image you used to help calm your inner self?”

Give students time to share in pairs/groups or with you individually.

If You Have Even More Time

Classroom: Divide students into small groups and invite them to share ideas to help make this activity even more effective for one another.

Small group: Share ideas with the group to help make this activity even more effective for one another.

Individual: Generate new ideas to help make this more effective for the student.

Parting Thought

To end your time with students, invite them to identify when they could use this technique each day so they can become increasingly skilled at managing stress or anxiety. and then invite them to think of times they could use it on the spot because something is causing anxiety (like right before a test or when speaking in front of the class



ACTIVITY

