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Improving 5th Grade Students' Stress Management Skills

Daniela Cortes Gomez

A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

Introduction

Some children may not have yet learned how to manage stress and regulate their emotions. Stress during childhood may affect children's physical and mental health. It may impact their learning, and may cause them to develop certain problems in their behavior. When children develop stress coping strategies, they will be better prepared to deal with future stressors. In order to address this issue, I created a two-day lesson on stress management techniques for a 5th grade class at Sherwood Elementary School in Salinas, California.

Need Statement

Children may experience a range of stressors including homework, problems with friends, a parent's divorce, illness in the family, or bullying. Stress can affect the child's health such as having difficulty concentrating in school, body aches, sleep problems, hyperactivity, aggression, depression, anxiety and low self-esteem (Washington, 2009). Children might experience these stressors at home, at school, or with their peers.

Children may find themselves under stress at home for various reasons. Liu and Merritt (2018) found that caregivers who reported high levels of financial stress said their children had more internalizing behavior problems rather than other caregivers with less financial stress. Exposure to severe and persistent child adversity during critical developmental periods may have an effect on the stress response regulation (Bucci et al., 2016). Children who are stressed as a result of financial challenges, trauma exposure, or ongoing child adversity may have negative health outcomes.

Children may also undergo stress at school. Social interactions (e.g. during class, recess or lunch) with peers and the teacher; as well as learning new material in class and homework

may elevate children's stress. Several studies have shown that homework could be a stressor for students (Holland et al., 2021). In a study, they found that students felt overwhelmed and stressed by the amount of homework that was assigned to them (Holland et al., 2021). This is of course depending on the amount of homework a child is assigned. Also, the interactions children in elementary school have with their teachers are fundamental and influence children's adjustment and experiences, such as problem behaviors at school and internalizing indicators of feelings of stress in the classroom (Holland et al., 2021). It's possible that the children don't communicate very well with their teachers, which can result in stress in the school setting.

Stress involving peers may be a result of bullying or peer victimization. In a study conducted by Litman et al. (2015), social victimization was experienced by 38.7% of children in the study, and 36.8% of children experienced attacks on property. Students who were less liked by teachers and peers were more likely to be victimized than students who were more preferred by teachers and other students (Wang et al., 2016). This could possibly indicate that children may experience stress if they do not have a good relationship with their teachers and peers.

When children learn how to manage stress, it makes their life a lot easier at home and during school. It allows them to be happier, healthier, and engage in positive relationships with their peers and everyone around them. To help children understand their emotions and learn how to control them, I intend to develop a lesson for a 5th grade class at Sherwood Elementary School in Salinas, California to enable them to learn stress management skills.

Development

Emotional development during middle childhood involves children that are no longer relying on their caregivers to help them regulate their emotions. Instead, children learn how to manage their emotions on their own. Through middle childhood, children start to be more

effective in using strategies for autonomously regulating their emotions and managing stress. Emotional development allows children to learn how to recognize and understand their feelings, as well as learning how to express and manage their emotions (Skuse et al., 2011). A socially and emotionally competent child has strong skills coming from five major areas; self-awareness, social awareness, emotional regulation, good relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (NCSSLE, 2022).

Emotions start to become more complicated as children become more aware of their surroundings, which may cause them to hide their emotions instead of expressing them. In order for the child to be better prepared to deal with a stressful situation, it is beneficial for children to learn how to manage their emotions. Children who develop coping strategies enhance their self-control and confidence (Skuse et al., 2011). In addition, they may manage their emotions and improve their emotional wellbeing. Therefore, I will be developing lessons to help children better understand their emotions, and learn several stress management techniques that they could use in the future.

Consideration of Diversity

The content I will be covering is directed towards this particular audience of 5th graders at Sherwood Elementary School in Salinas, California. The ethnic demographics of the participants should be reflective of Sherwood Elementary School. According to the U.S. News Education (U.S. News & World Report L.P; 2022), Sherwood Elementary School is 98.2% Hispanic/Latino, 0.9% White, 0.5% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1% Hawaiian. This project might not be suitable for smaller children that have not yet learned how to read and comprehend, given that reading it required for the project. The

content will be delivered in English therefore, English proficiency will be in fact necessary for the students to learn and engage in the content.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the project participants will be able to...

- Indicate three ways stress may affect their health and why it is important to manage their stress.
- ❖ Identify two emotion-focused coping skills and two problem-focused coping skills.
- Create a stress management plan with at least three strategies they could utilize when they find themselves stressed in each particular setting: home, school, peers.

Method

Day 1

On the first day, I started off by introducing myself and I let the students know why I was there. For the first five minutes I asked the class to define the word stress, and what they think stress is in their own words. I continued with a twenty minute slideshow presentation. I presented the definition of stress, its causes, and techniques on how to manage stress. See Appendix A for the slides. I also played part of a video clip (2:15-6:40) about the effects stress has on their health. (https://youtu.be/3Nf2Pzcketg). To check for their understanding of the content on the slideshow and the video, I had them write down on a piece of paper and answer questions about the effects of stress on their health. See Appendix B. I gave them about fifteen minutes to do this task. For the next segment, I introduced various stress coping techniques. For the last ten minutes I continued with the slideshow, presenting emotion-focused coping skills and problem-focused coping skills.

Day 2

On the second day, I gave a brief five minute review of what we covered on Day 1. I gave out a quick true or false review quiz so that the students could go back and review what they had learned. See Appendix C. I gave the students ten minutes to complete this.

I continued for about five minutes and finished the presentation about the emotion-focused and problem-focused coping skills (Appendix A). Then, I handed out a worksheet to all of the students to see if they could recognize the types of coping strategies. There were four "stressful" scenarios in the worksheet, each with a different coping skill as a possible response. See Appendix D for the worksheet. For the next fifteen minutes or so I went over the worksheet with the whole class and read the scenarios out loud. I asked the students to write down whether they believed the skills were emotion or problem-focused coping skills.

In order to meet the third learning outcome I had the students do an activity. They created a stress management plan that included at least three stress coping strategies. See Appendix E for the template of the worksheet. The children had to choose strategies they could utilize when they found themselves stressed in each particular setting; which is at home, school, or with their peers. This activity took up the remainder of the time which was about fifteen minutes.

Results

Learning outcome 1 was that students would indicate three ways stress may affect their health and why it is important to manage their stress. To see if the students were able to meet this goal, I provided questions about how stress can harm their health based on a video they watched during the slideshow presentation. The questions were about the effects of stress on their health. I reviewed all of the students' answers and analyzed them based on the completeness of their answers. 20 out of 26 students were able to indicate three ways stress may affect their bodies. 6 of the students' answers were either partially complete or did not answer properly; therefore I did

not include the answers from those students in the results. See Table 1 for more detail. From the results, I can see that 76% of the class was able to indicate three ways stress can harm their bodies. Therefore, I believe that this learning outcome was partially met.

Learning outcome 2 was that students would identify two emotion-focused coping skills and two problem-focused coping skills. To see if the students were able to identify these types of coping skills, I distributed a worksheet to all the students. In the worksheet, there were four stressful scenarios and different coping skills as possible solutions to those scenarios. I read the scenarios and solutions to the students out loud and asked the students to write if they thought the types of skills were either emotion or problem-focused. To analyze the data, I checked the answers from every student. Of the 29 students, 13 were able to properly identify the type of coping skill for each scenario. 12 out of 29 students missed 1 or 2 answers. Also, 4 out of 29 students either missed 3 answers or did not do the assignment correctly. After reviewing all of the student's answers, I noticed that 13 students had a difficult time identifying problem-focused coping skills, while 8 students had a difficult time identifying emotion-focused coping skills. See Table 2 for results. Some of the students were not able to identify both types of skills depending on the scenario. Since only about half of the class was able to do this activity successfully, I believe that this learning outcome was partially met.

Learning outcome 3 was that students would create a stress management plan with at least three strategies they could utilize when they find themselves stressed in each particular setting: home, school, peers. For this learning outcome to be successful, I provided the students with a worksheet that included a section for the home, school, and peers. For each three sections they had to answer the following questions; what is stressing me?, what can I do about it?, and how can adults help? Most of the students were able to fill this out and create a plan for

themselves to use in the future. However, some students struggled with this activity. Some students did not have anything that stressed them out, and others did not know how adults could help them. See Figure 3 for examples. I did not collect these worksheets, since it was for them to keep. Also, some were personal and the students did not want to share. Since most of the students did participate and had at least a plan for one of the settings, I believe this learning outcome was partially met.

Discussion

I believe that my project could have been a bit better. I think my project was mostly successful because the learning outcomes were partially met. It could have been completely successful if all three learning outcomes were perfectly met. Although my project was not completely successful, the students did participate and were fully engaged in the topic. When I would ask them a question as a class they would always respond, and there were a lot of students raising their hands waiting to speak. The results were, in fact, consistent with the research. Most of the students shared the same stressors, which were mostly related to their school and homework. However, a lot of students did not have any stressors related to their peers.

If I were to do this project again, I would have added another day just to have more time to cover each learning outcome. The students were given enough time to do their activities. I don't think I rushed through the project, but we could have spent more time on each learning outcome. Another thing I would like to change is some of the words that I used. For example, many students did not know what the word "peers" is. I explained to them that it could be their friends, classmates or those around them. Also, I could have changed the title for the stress management plan to something like "How will I control my stress?" This way it won't have big words like "management," and it can be more appropriate for 5th graders. If I were to do this

project again, I would have provided examples for the students. Many students were confused on how to create their plan, if I would have done an example myself it would have been easier for them to understand.

Since the participants are in the middle childhood stage, they start to become more effective in using strategies for regulating their emotions on their own. I think that this project allowed them to learn about how stress can harm their health and how they can control their stress. I am sure that the students benefited from my project and learned the many ways stress can affect their health. They also learned the coping skills they can utilize when they find themselves stressed. In the future, I hope that the children learn more about the strategies they could utilize and actually use them as they grow older and become adults.

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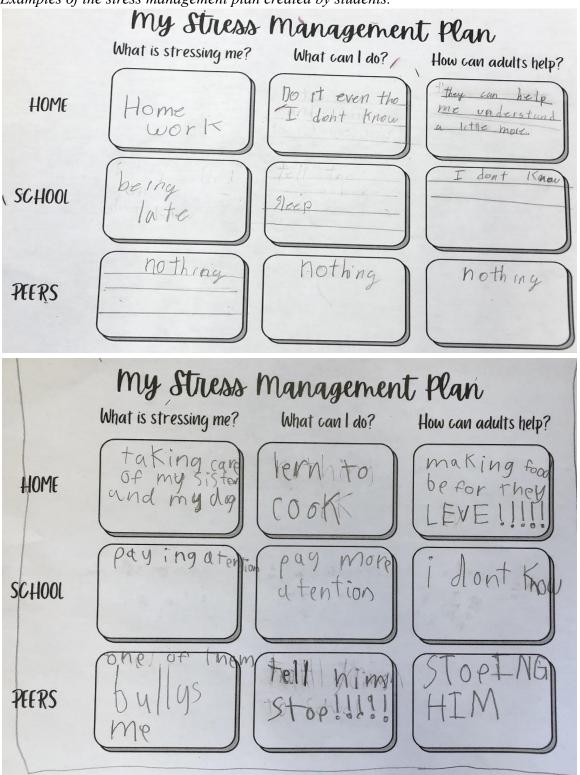
Table 1
List of responses from students indicating how stress affects their health and the importance of managing their stress.

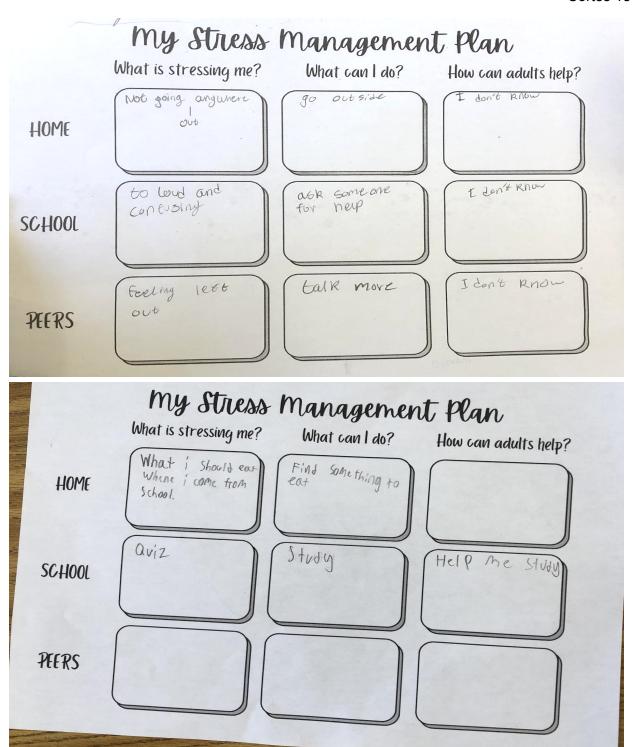
				
Frustrated, mad, angry (9 responses)	Low/no energy (3 responses)	Unorganized, Forgetful, Not being able to concentrate	Tell an adult/friend, counseling	Focus on things you can control (13 responses)
Anxious (8 responses)	Eating to much/little (2 responses)	Feeling nauseous, light headed	Focus on good things (2 responses)	Manage your time (15 responses)
Headaches (7 responses)	Behavior (4 responses) Mood Body	Breathing problems (4 responses)	Taking naps	Say nice things to yourself (14 responses)
Makes us sick (5 responses)	Overwhelmed, tired	Bad thoughts	Working out	hang out with friends and family members (13 responses)
Sad, feeling down (9 responses)	Feelings, Worried, Helpless, Hopeless	Sweating	Healthy eating	take care of your body (14 responses)
Want to be alone, pushing people away	Pounding heart beat (2 responses)	Not enough sleep (3 responses)		

Table 2
Percentage of correct responses for each scenario given

	Scenario 1:	Scenario 2:	Scenario 3:	Scenario 4:
	Problem-focused	Emotion-focused	Problem-focused	Emotion-focused
	coping skill	coping skill	coping skill	coping skill
Percent correct:	86%	83%	48%	72%

Figure 3
Examples of the stress management plan created by students.





Appendix A

Slideshow on Stress Management

How to Manage Stress DANIELA CORTES GOMEZ CSUMB Human Development and Family Studies









VIDEO: Stress Management Tips for Kids and Teens! ACTIVITY: Answer the following 1. How does stress harm our body? 2. What body symptoms or feelings do we experience when we are stressed? 3. What are 5 ways to cope with stress?

Introducing Coping Skills: Emotion focused Problem focused



Emotion-focused coping skills





Help!

Problem-focused coping skills



Day 2



Hello Class!

Stress is our body's response to pressure, it is our reaction to an uncomfortable situation that makes you feel angry, frustrated, scared, or afraid.

Let's Review

Good stress: Experienced when there is no threat or fear, feel excited and motivated to complete a task and get things done.

Bad stress: Stressful feelings keep going over time. This kind of stress isn't going to help you, and it can actually make you sick.

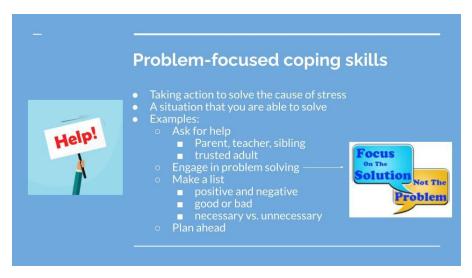
Emotion-focused coping skills

- focuses on regulating feelings and emotional reactions to stress such as anxiety, fear, sadness, and anger Stressor is something you cannot change Examples;

 Label Feelings
 Learn Breathing Exercises
 Create Artwork, draw
 Read a Book
 Play a Game
 Meditate
 Play with pet
 Listen to music
 Exercise
 Take a nap











Appendix B

Questions for Learning Outcome 1

VIDEO: Stress Management Tips for Kids and Teens!



ACTIVITY: Answer the following

- How does stress harm our body?
- What body symptoms or feelings do we experience when we are stressed?
- 3. What are 5 ways to cope with stress?





Appendix C

True or False Review Quiz

Name:	Date:
	Quiz
Instructions: Circle the correct ans	wer, true or false, for each sentence.
1. True or False: Stress is what yo	ou feel when you're worried or uncomfortable about something.
2. True or False: Good stress can	help push you to get things done, like study for a test or practice for
a concert.	
3. True or False: Bad stress can r	nake you sick.
4. True or False: Stress affects yo	our body, mind, feelings, and behaviors.
5. True or False: When you're fee	ling stressed, you should always try to solve the problem yourself.

Appendix D

Emotion-focused and problem-focused coping skills worksheet to achieve Learning Outcome 2

Activity: Emotion-focused skills vs. Problem-focused coping skill

Instructions: For this activity you will be given a stressful scenario and a possible solution for that particular situation, your task is to read the scenario and solutions. Decide whether the solution is an emotion-focused or a problem-focused coping skill. Write your answer in the blank space.

Scenario 1: Leaving the house late in the morning.

You set your alarm with enough time to get ready for school. Some mornings you even give yourself hours, yet you're still always running late. There's always just one more thing to do really quickly, which keeps you from getting out the door.

Possible solution: Make a list of what has to be done in the morning and what can be done later, and stick to it. Cross out the unnecessary things and do the most important ones before you leave.

Skill:	

Scenario 2: Being stuck in line.

You're really hungry, in the lunch line and the person ahead of you is taking what seems like forever to get their food. As they begin to chit chat with the other people around, you begin to feel impatient and irritable, and suddenly can't stand still.

Possible solution: Take a deep breath, feel your feet on the ground beneath you, and focus on what you notice around you. Remind yourself that the people in front of you are not trying to make you angry, they are enjoying a moment of interaction. Breathing and focus can help you get rid of tension.

Skill:				
	-	 	 	

Scenario 3: Presenting to your class.

Your teacher just gave an announcement that the students will be presenting their project they created to the class next week. You begin to panic because you don't like to talk in front of the class. Your hands are starting to sweat and you are thinking of not showing up to class on the day of presentations to avoid presenting.

Possible solution: Prepare as much information as possible to fully present your project. Practice your presentation ahead of time. Look up tips online on how to prepare yourself for your presentation. Ask your teacher for help if necessary.

Skill:			
SKIII:			

Scenario 4: Moving to a new state.

Your parents decided to move to another state. They found a better job and you will be going to a new school. This might sound exciting, but that means you will leave everything behind, your friends and family. You start to feel really worried and anxious that your life is about to change.

Possible solution: It's okay to feel worried or anxious about moving to a new place. You might feel really sad, but that is completely normal. Label and understand your feelings. You might want to take a nap or draw to make yourself feel better. Positive self talk could help you be motivated about this life changing situation.

Skill:			

Appendix E

Stress management plan template to achieve Learning Outcome 3

Name:	my Stress r	Nanagement	t Plan
	What is stressing me?	What can I do?	How can adults help?
HOME			
SCH00l			
PEERS			

Appendix F

Presentation from Capstone Festival

Improving 5th Grade Students' Stress Management Skills

Daniela Cortes Gomez

Needs

Stress can affect children at any age.

Examples of stressors:

problems at school/friends, bullying



- Children's physical and mental health
 - o impact their learning
 - develop certain behavior problems

Develop stress coping strategies



Better prepared to deal with future stressors

Home, School, Peers

Emotional Development: Middle Childhood

Emotional development is the ability to...

- > recognize
- manage feelings

at different stages of life and to have empathy for the feelings of others.

- → no longer relying on their caregivers to regulate their emotions
- learn, are more effective in using strategies for regulating emotions on their own

Children who develop coping strategies:

- enhance self-control and confidence
- manage emotions
- improve emotional well being

Learning Outcomes

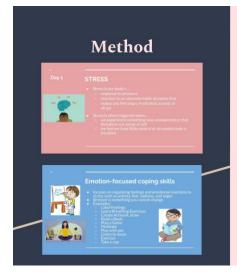
By the end of the project participants will be able to...

- → Indicate three ways stress may affect their health and why it is important to manage their stress.
- → Identify two emotion-focused coping skills and two problem-focused coping skills.
- → Create a stress management plan with at least three strategies they could utilize when they find themselves stressed in each particular setting: home, school, peers.

Project Details



- Two-day lesson on stress management techniques
 - > 5th grade class
 - > Sherwood Elementary School
 - ➤ Salinas, California



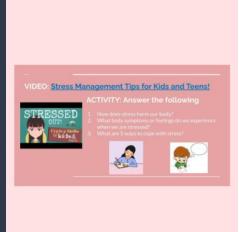
- ☐ Two-day
 - 45-55 min on each day
- ☐ Slideshow presentation (20 min)
 - ☐ Video included
 - Answer questions
- □ Worksheet indicating proper strategies
- ☐ Create a plan including strategies they could use in the future



Results: Learning Outcome 1

LO1: Students would be able to indicate three ways stress may affect their health and why it is important to manage their stress.

- Reviewed and analyzed answers based on the completeness
- 20 out of 26 successful results
- 6 of the students' answers were not included



Results: Learning Outcome 1

76% of the class was able to indicate three ways stress can harm their bodies and the importance to manage stress.



This learning outcome was partially met.

Frustrated, mad, angry (9 responses)	Low/no energy (3 responses)	Unorganized, Forgetful, Not being able to concentrate	Tell an adult/friend, counseling	Focus on things you can control (13 responses)
Anxious (8 responses)	Eating to much/little (2 responses)	Feeling nauseous, light headed	Focus on good things (2 responses)	Manage your time (15 responses)
Headaches (7 responses)	Behavior (4 responses) Mood Body	Breathing problems (4 responses)	Taking naps	Say nice things to yourself (14 responses)
Makes us sick (5 responses)	Overwhelmed, tired	Bad thoughts	Working out	hang out with friends and family members (13 responses)
Sad, feeling down (9 responses)	Feelings, Worried, Helpless, Hopeless	Sweating	Healthy eating	take care of your body (14 responses)
Want to be alone, pushing people away	Pounding heart beat (2 responses)	Not enough sleep (3 responses)		

Results: Learning Outcome 2

LO1: Students would be able to identify two emotion-focused coping skills and two problem-focused coping skills.

- Checked answers
- 13 out of 29 properly identify
- ♦ 12 out of 29 missed one or two
- 4 out of 29 missed three or did not do it properly

Acti	vity: Emotion-focused skills vs. Problem-focused coping skill
Instructions: For th	is activity you will be given a stressful scenario and a possible solution for that
	your task is to read the scenario and solutions. Decide whether the solution is an
emotion-focused o	r a problem-focused coping skill. Write your answer in the blank space.
	Scenario 1: Leaving the house late in the morning.
You set your alarm	with enough time to get ready for school. Some mornings you even give yourself
hours, yet you're s	fill always running late. There's always just one more thing to do really quickly, which
keeps you from ge	etting out the door.
Possible solution	: Make a list of what has to be done in the morning and what can be done later, and
stick to it. Cross or	at the unnecessary things and do the most important ones before you leave.
Skill:	
	Scenario 2: Being stuck in line.
fou're really hunory	in the lunch line and the person ahead of you is taking what seems like forever to
	sy begin to chit chat with the other people around, you begin to feel impatient and
rritable, and sudden	
Possible solution:	Take a deep breath, feel your feet on the ground beneath you, and focus on what
	moment of interaction. Breathing and focus can help you get rid of tension.
Skill:	
you notice around you they are enjoying a r	ou. Remind yourself that the people in front of you are not trying to make you angry

Results: Learning Outcome 2

- 8 students had difficulty with emotion-focused
- 13 students had difficulty identifying problem-focused

Since only about half of the class was able to do this activity successfully

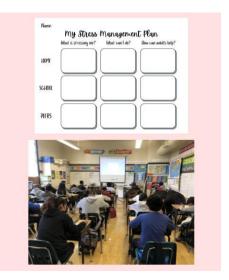
This learning outcome was partially met.

Table 2				
Percentage of con	rect responses for ea	ch scenario given		
	Scenario 1: Problem-focused coping skill	Scenario 2: Emotion-focused coping skill	Scenario 3: Problem-focused coping skill	Scenario 4: Emotion-focused coping skill

Results: Learning Outcome 3

LO1: Students would create a stress management plan with at least three strategies they could utilize when they find themselves stressed in each particular setting: home, school, peers.

- Most students filled out correctly and created a plan for themselves
- ❖ Some students struggled
 - "Nothing stresses me."
 - > Don't know how adults can help



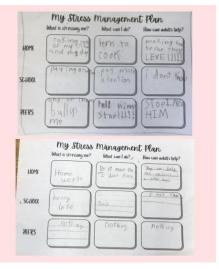
Results: Learning Outcome 3

- Did not collect plans
 - > some personal
 - > students did not want to share

Since most of the students did participate and had at least a plan for one of the settings



This learning outcome was met.





If I were to do this project again:
Provide examples
Change the wording

- ➤ Peers
 ➤ Management
 "How will I control my stress?"

Project:

- mostly successful- the learning outcomes were partially met.
 - the students participated and were fully engaged in the topic
 The results- consistent with the research
 Students shared same stressors related to their
- - school and homework
 - Students did not have many stressors related to their peers

