



## What to do TODAY Grade 4 (🧠 A Emotional Health Story)

This story talks about stress and how it relates to emotional health and behaviors.

- 🧠 A little bit of stress prepares our bodies for action and activates our sympathetic nervous system – also known as the “fight or flight” system. Too much stress can actually hurt your body and your brain.
  - 🧠 Stress acts on the same parts of your brain that control your emotions, so you need to identify how stressful situations make you feel and act and what kinds of situations you find stressful.
  - 🧠 By understanding how your emotions and behaviors change when you are stressed out, you can then control how you react to the stressful situation. This will help you to feel better about yourself and the situation, which is important for protecting your brain.
- 🧠 For this presentation, you need to have the “I Am So Stressed Out!!!” Story Video. Be sure you practice the breathing exercises – below.
- 🧠 Start the story video at the end of the following slide. Reiterate the key points from the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the Emotional Health presentation.



The story we began last time was called the “I Am So Stressed Out!!!”

- We learned that a little bit of stress is a good thing, it gets our bodies ready to deal with the world around us.
- We also learned that too much stress was not good for our body or our brain.

So in order to deal with stress, you need to be able to identify **WHAT** situations stress you out.

Then, you need to decide if the stressful situation is one that you have **CONTROL** over OR one that you have **NO CONTROL** over.

- 🧠 Continue playing the Story Video and stop after this screen.



Ok...we can get CONTROL of a stressful situation by preparing for it.

Now, I want you to think about something that stresses you out.

Ask...Who would like to share an example of something that you get stressed out about? (Discuss how the student could **prepare** for the situation to CONTROL the stressful event.)

So, stressful situations can be controlled with preparation.

- 🎨 Continue playing the Story Video and stop after this screen.



So, there is always going to be situations that are stressful to you that you have NO control over.

In these situations, you need to help your brain – because remember ALL the things that your brain does for you.

- 🎨 Have a Discussion on how to COPE.

You can help your brain by trying to decide how the stressful situation makes you feel.

- Stress that you cannot control will activate your negative emotions – like feeling angry or sad all the time.
- You cannot FIX stressful situations that you cannot control. So...you need to COPE – Choose your Own Personal Escape. (Write this up on the chalkboard, white board, etc.)
- By **understanding** how the stressful situation makes you feel and then coming up with ways to **COPE**, you will be helping your brain to stay healthy.

One easy way to COPE is to do different breathing exercises. (Have the students stand up at their desks. Encourage each student to participate as you walk them through the three breathing exercises.)

### Belly Breathing

1. Stand up straight with feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Arms and hands are by your sides and relaxed.
3. Body is relaxed and eyes are closed.
4. Focus on lower abdomen (belly) and imagine a small balloon in that space
5. Breath in slowly and deeply through nostrils, imagining the balloon inflating (getting bigger/larger/growing) slowly, hold a few seconds.
6. Slowly exhale through the mouth, imagining the balloon gently deflating (getting smaller, shrinking); blow out of the mouth as if blowing out a candle.
7. Place a hand over the lower abdomen to feel it go up and down, and make sure you are not breathing with the chest
8. Repeat at least 10 times or until calm and relaxed.

### Starfish Breathing

1. Take one hand and open it up like a starfish.
2. Take your other hand and hold up your pointer or first finger.
3. Using your pointer finger, start at the bottom of your thumb and slowly trace your starfish (hand) with your pointer finger.
4. Breathe in when you trace up and breathe out when you trace down.
5. Up and down, in and out for all five fingers on your starfish.
6. Do not go too fast or too slow. Find a pace that is good for you and calms and relaxes you.
7. Repeat as needed.

## Box Breathing.

1. Before starting, student(s) will get a piece of paper and a pencil.
2. Have them draw a “start” button in the top left corner area of their paper and draw a line to the right to make the top of the box.
3. Next, they will draw a line down, another line to the left, and then back up to their start button to make a box or square. If not using paper, they can simply trace the box on the desk with their finger or even draw their box in the air in the space in front of them.
4. Put the pencil down and using their finger, they will start at the start button.
5. Breathe in as the top line is traced.
6. Hold the breath as the right side of the box is traced.
7. Breathe out as the bottom line is traced.
8. Hold the breath as the left side of the box is traced.
9. Student(s) should go at a pace that is calming and relaxing for them.

Remind students that sometimes something as simple as taking some deep breaths can do wonders for helping them calm down and relax in stressful situations. When they are calm and relaxed, they can do what they need to do, and this is good for their emotional health and makes their brain healthy.

🎨 Continue playing the Story Video and stop after this slide.



This is a REALLY important thing to remember...YOU are responsible for your emotions and your behaviors.

I want you to say...I am responsible for my own emotions and behaviors. Say it with me.... I am responsible for my own emotions and behaviors. (you may want to do this a couple of times until the class does this all together).

You cannot always control the stressful situation, BUT, YOU can figure out how it makes you FEEL and YOU can COPE. AND...you don't have to do this alone.

🎨 Continue playing the video until the end.

Tell the students that you had fun talking with them about ways they can avoid saying “I Am So Stressed Out!!!”.

Remind the students that...

- 🎨 Stress is not always a bad thing. A little bit of stress prepares our bodies for action and activates our sympathetic nervous system – also known as the “fight or flight” system. But, too much stress can actually hurt your body and your brain.
- 🎨 Stress acts on the same parts of your brain that control your emotions, so you need to identify how stressful situations make you feel and act and what kinds of situations you find stressful.
- 🎨 You need to decide if the stressful situation is one you can control or not control.
- 🎨 By understanding how your emotions and behaviors change when you are stressed out, you can then control how you react to the stressful situation. You can figure out ways to COPE.
- 🎨 By understanding HOW the stress is making feel and then coping with it, you will feel better about yourself and the situation, which is important for protecting your brain.

Be sure to thank them for listening and the Brain Health Team of JHU students will see them soon.