

Stress Management Series (3 of 3) Journal

The first step to stress management for kids is to help them understand what stress, worry, and anxiety are. They can think of it as their built-in alarm system that scans the environment for potential threats. Remind children that experiencing stress is a part of being human, it is normal, and that handling worry takes practice. Today you will introduce them to stress and some techniques to help them manage it and relax. This lesson is a series. It explores body scan, journaling, and deep breathing. You may do one or multiples in the series. Our goal is not to eliminate stress – we can't – but to teach children ways to handle the stress.

Social Emotional Learning Competency:

- Self-Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible Decision Making

Purpose:

- Develop Basic understanding of stress
- Realize there are things to do that can help manage stress.
- Experience journaling for self reflection
- Utilize for stress management

Materials

- Paper
- Journal(optional, if funds available)
- Writing utensil
- Optional – could type instead of handwrite.

<https://balancingelephants.com/8-stress-management-activities-for-kids/>

Background and Introduction

- This lesson is on journaling. Specifically creating a worry or thankful journal.
- Sometimes it's easier to write about a problem than to talk about it. A worry journal is a great stress management strategy that helps kids process complicated feelings. Journaling teaches kids how to express themselves freely and work through their problems safely and honestly.
- Its good for kids to recognize things they are thankful for and process how it can affect them.
- There are so many fun journals to choose from, but if the child loves to create, they might enjoy designing their very own.
- How a worry journal helps with stress relief:
 - It will encourage daily contemplative practice.
 - It's convenient – you can take it anywhere!
 - It's not graded or judged.
 - It can help kids solve the problem.
 - It can help kids focus on the positive and reframe their thinking.
 - It will help kids identify the emotions they experience.
- How a thankful journal helps:
 - Encourages reflection on things we are thankful for.
 - Helps us recognize good things and people in our lives.
 - Can help kids focus on positive things rather than negative or worries.
- From *Balancing Elephants 8 Stress Management Activities for Kids* by Stephine at [balancing elephants.com](https://balancingelephants.com)

Adapted by Angie Holmes , 4-H Educator, October 2022 from balancingelephants.com and [mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org)

Success Indicators

- Participants try journaling.
- Participants share their journaling experience.

Recommended Group Size:

- Any

Est. Time

- 15 minutes or longer of desired

Preparations

- Gather supplies.
- Decide if your exercise will be in creating a worry journal entry or a thankful journal entry or the choice of the participant.
- Depending on which type of journal entry you are doing, think of a prompt question(s). Examples
 - What's something that has been worrying you? Write about it and what you can do to help the worry.
 - What's something from this past week that you are thankful for. Write about it and why you are thankful.
 - Is there something that stresses you out, something worrisome? Write about it and possible solutions for making it less stressful.

Activity

- Set the stage for journaling. Share about stress, different types of journals (worry, thankful).
- Pass out supplies.
- Pose your journaling entry question you have written to the participants and ask them to spend time writing about it. (Anywhere from 8-15 minutes is good depending on age).
- Let participants know they don't have to write. They can also draw, doodle, or even use stickers if available.
- Once time is up, ask if anyone is willing to share what they journaled about. Not specifics, but in general like, "I'm worried about my sick grandmother." or "I was thankful for a friend that played with me."

Wrap-up/Follow-up

- Challenge them to go home and share with someone that they tried journaling and if they like it. And if they did or didn't challenge them to try it for one week and see if they like it or it helps with stress. Again, stress it can be drawings, doodles or even stickers. It doesn't always have to be written word.
- If they enjoy it or want to try the week challenge let them know they can get or make a special journal, but really any paper or notebook will do. They could even type entries on a tablet, laptop, or smart phone.
- Remind them journaling is a great way to explore what they are feeling and help manage stress.