



Stress and Anxiety

Aim: to explore everyday stresses and discover ways to relax and care for ourselves.

Items needed this week

- Cut-out card pieces for 'Squares' icebreaker placed in envelopes (see below for more instructions)
- A ball of string and beads for the Stress line activity
- Stress Busters (Appendix 4) cut up and put into envelopes
- Smartphone/laptop/speakers - relaxing nature sounds are available as a free app, eg 'Free Relaxing Nature Sounds' (Red Hammer Software), or can be found in advance on YouTube
- Small hand cream for each woman (available to buy from pound stores). Ask and check for any skin allergies before craft activity
- Nail varnishes, nail files, nail polish remover, cotton pads/buds, nail art tools, toothpicks, hair pins (all available to buy at pound stores / Boots / Superdrug) and nail art pens
- Photo/diagram print-outs of examples of nail art designs
- Riverbank The Course Session 2 PowerPoint Template

Welcome

Give a short summary recapping the previous session. Ask the group how they have been getting on over the past week and if anyone has anything they'd like to share. Allow a couple of minutes for sharing. You might also like to remind the group of the contract created in the first session.

Introduce this topic by reading out the aim.

Icebreaker

Refer to the list of icebreakers in Appendix 1 and select one - don't forget to prepare any items needed for the chosen icebreaker before the session.

Activities

Squares (see Appendix 3)

This activity helps us to notice how we react to stress when things feel challenging or rushed. Working together to solve the puzzle shows us how staying calm, communicating well, and supporting each other can help to make stressful situations easier to handle.

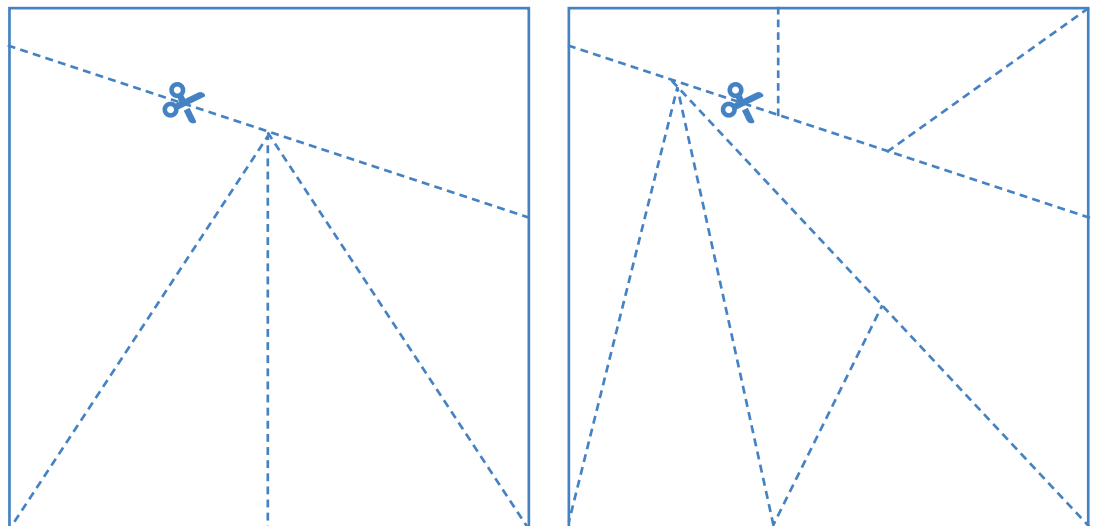
Top tip



Before putting the pieces into envelopes take a photo of each completed square for reference.

Preparation

Take different-coloured squares of card and cut them into random geometric or angular shapes. Do this for five different coloured squares, increasing the amount of pieces cut each time. Then place the pieces from each square into individual envelopes. Do this twice, so when the group is divided in two each team has matching envelopes with pieces.



Activity

Divide the participants into two groups. Give each group an envelope containing pieces from the five squares. The group should work together to build all five squares as quickly as possible.

Stress line

Give a piece of string (approx 30cm) to each person and a little arrow/ bead. The string will represent a scale from 'completely disagree' to 'completely agree'. As you read out the statements below, encourage the group to move the arrow and bead along the line to how much they agree.

Read the statements below and move the arrow/bead:

- *I have lots of time to relax by myself.*
- *I am juggling lots of different activities every day.*
- *I go on holiday at least every six months.*
- *I worry about my finances.*
- *I get enough sleep.*
- *I have lots of people I can go to if I need help.*
- *I regularly get angry at the people who rely on me (children/parents/friends).*

Between each statement you may wish to offer the group a chance to share why they put their marker where they did.

Around the room there may be a variety of answers. We all experience stress in different ways, which is why it's important to remember that there isn't a standard response to solving stress.

Stressful situations

We all face stressful situations, but it's good to know that we are not alone.

Display the PowerPoint slide titled 'personal support checklist'. You will see a number of sentences for the group to complete in their notebooks.

We are going to take some time to think about who we have in our lives who might be able to support us when life feels stressful. The personal support checklist highlights the key people we have around us.

If the group wants to look deeper into this, you might want to display the slide titled 'networks and family links.' This unpacks our close relationships. Ask the group to create their own diagram in their notebooks.

For a few moments, we are going to take a deeper look into our close relationships and understand how they can change how stressed we feel.

This can be quite a personal thing, so can be done as individuals; but allow time in case people want to explain their diagram. You may want to ask follow-up questions such as: Are there more or fewer strong links than you expected? Is there anything you can think of which would help to strengthen the weak links? Or in what ways can you approach stressful relationships differently?

We are going to think together about some techniques which we can use in these situations or generally in our lives that will help us keep calm.

Stress busters (Appendix 4)

If helpful, split group into smaller groups and ask each group to sort the ideas from their envelope into an order of helpfulness, adding their own ideas on the blank cards if they wish. (Appendix 4)

In your notebook write three stress busters you're going to try out over the next week. At the start of Session 3 there will be an opportunity to feed back how effective this has been.

Relaxation Holiday

Invite everyone to find a space. If there are children present, see if they want to be involved.

Find a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down. Breathe in slowly, and close your eyes if that feels comfortable to you. Let each moment I describe gently hold your imagination.

Top tip



Have nature sounds / spa music ready to play as you read the script.

Calmly begin to read through the text below to the whole group, remembering to pause after each 'Imagine the ...' line. Go through it slowly.

- *Imagine the colours of the sky in a beautiful sunset ...*
- *Imagine the sound of water flowing in a stream ...*
- *Imagine the smell of a bonfire on a crisp autumn day ...*
- *Imagine the feel of smooth, clean sheets ...*
- *Imagine the sound of rain on the roof ...*
- *Imagine the smell of a field of grass in the hot summer sun ...*
- *Imagine the stars and moon in the dark sky on a clear night ...*
- *Imagine the taste of a favourite food ...*
- *Imagine the sound of a beautiful song ...*
- *Imagine the wind blowing on your face ...*
- *Imagine floating on the still water of a peaceful, shallow lake ...*

Notice the feeling of calm and peace, and take time to enjoy it.

Top tip



If one of the group is a beautician you could ask them to do the demonstration. If not, simple hand massage guides and diagrams can be found online by searching 'simple hand massage'. It would also be helpful either to print off or project example photos of a range of nail art designs to inspire the group.

Pamper session

It's time to unwind with a relaxing and pampering hand massage and nail design.

Offer each woman a small hand cream and invite them, if they feel comfortable, to give one another a hand massage and paint their nails.

It can be helpful to demonstrate a few simple hand massage techniques with a volunteer, explaining each step as you go. Invite participants to follow along during the demonstration, then swap roles so that each woman in the pair has a turn.



Reflect and Respond

Spend some time reflecting on this session - you may choose to refer back to the aim. Ask the women if they have any questions.

Spend some time reflecting on this session using the questions below:

- *What went well?*
- *Even better if ...?*
- *Is there anything else you'd like to say?*

Invite the group to write the answers to these questions in their notebook and follow up with them individually. Alternatively, have a time of open sharing

After the session, consider if there are any immediate changes to make based on the feedback. Record all other comments for future reference for your leader's feedback at the end of the programme.



Preparation for Session 3

Remind the group to bring in their notebooks for Session 3. In the next session we will be decorating our notebooks. Ask the group to bring any artsupplies they wish to use in addition to what will be provided.