

# Stressed Out

Research, examine and discuss ways of dealing with stress.

- Define stress and anxiety.
- Ask students to identify some situations in which they have felt very tense. (Example: Just before a big test, giving a speech, singing or playing a solo, asking for a date, etc.)
- Have students explain what they did to try to relieve the stress and how well it worked for them.
- Have student's research stress-related disorders and illnesses. Key questions students should answer:
  - What does too much stress do to the human body?
  - Do external influences, internal influences, or both cause stress?
- Discuss results of research.
- Lead students through the relaxation activities on the "Relaxation Techniques" handout.
- After practicing the relaxation techniques, discuss how, when, and where these may be used, along with those techniques students cited as working well for them.
- Discuss with students that some stress and anxiety is natural, desirable and motivates individuals. However, too much is inhibiting and may result in impulsive behavior which, in turn, causes undesirable consequences.

# Relaxation Techniques

## Activity 1

1. Sit in a comfortable chair with your eyes closed.
2. Make a tight fist with your right hand. Then relax your hand.
3. Let your whole arm relax and go limp.
4. Do steps 2 and 3 with your left arm.
5. Next, with your arms hanging limp at your sides, raise your eyebrows, crinkle or tighten your forehead, and tighten the muscles of your scalp. Relax all these muscles. Tighten them again. Relax them.
6. Work your way down your body. Tighten and relax the muscles in your eyes, your nose, your jaw, your neck, your shoulders, your chest, your stomach, your thighs, your calves, your ankles, and finally your toes.
7. When you finish, each part of your body should be relaxed and seem heavy. Sit quietly for a few minutes. Then open your eyes.

## Activity 2

1. Close your eyes.
2. Relax all your muscles, starting at your feet and going up to your face. Keep all your muscles relaxed.
3. Breathe through your nose. Mentally count each breath as you inhale. Breathe easily and naturally. Continue counting silently. Try not to think about anything except your breathing and counting.
4. Continue for ten to fifteen minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm. When you finish, sit quietly for a few minutes with your eyes closed. Then open your eyes slowly. Do not stand up for a few minutes. (Do this exercise several hours after a meal, not just after you have eaten.)

## Activity 3

1. Take a mind vacation by sitting in a chair with both feet on the floor.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Think of your favorite place—mountains, ocean, lake, etc.
4. Relax there. Feel the breeze blow. Smell the fresh air. Hear the natural sounds.
5. Stay in your mental vacation at least ten minutes