

Task 1 – Long reading: Stress Management

At a glance

Level: ISE III

Focus: Task 1 – Long reading

Aims: Students practise reading a text and completing sentences about the text

Objectives: Students can understand specific factual information at word or phrasal level and students can infer and understand meaning across paragraphs

Skill: Understanding specific information

Topic: Lifestyles

Language functions: Expressing abstract ideas, paraphrasing, evaluating options, hypothesising, deducing and inferring

Lexis: Vocabulary used to talk about stress and ways to overcome it

Materials needed: Whiteboard, paper and pens, one student worksheet and one reading text per student

Timing: 70 minutes

Procedure

Preparation

Photocopy one worksheet per student.

In class

1. Tell students they are going to do a sentence completion task similar to questions 11-15 in Task 1 – Long reading in the ISE III Reading & Writing. Tell them that the reading text is about stress management.
2. Write "stress" on the board. Ask students individually to list five things that make people stressed and then ask the students to compare what they have written with a partner. Elicit some answers from the class, and write on the board.
3. Ask students to work with a different partner to list the ways in which people might try to manage or overcome stress for example breathing

exercises, listening to relaxing music or doing yoga. Elicit some answers from the class, and write on the board.

4. Tell students they are going to read a text about stress management. Ask them to note down:
 - a) the causes of stress
 - b) the ways to manage or overcome stress

Give each student one worksheet and allow them 10 minutes to read the text individually and write down the answers.

5. Ask students to compare their answers in pairs and then check the answers with the whole class. Explain any vocabulary they do not understand.

Answer Key:

- a) *Money problems, job worries, relationships, family problems.*
- b) *Taking control of the environment by eliminating unnecessary stresses, adopting a healthier life-style, learning to accept the things that you can't change.*

6. Draw the students' attention to Task A on the worksheet. Ask the students to read the instructions. Ensure the students are aware of what they have to do and then allow them 10 minutes to complete the task.
7. Ask students to check that:
 - (1) *they have not written more than three words*
 - (2) *their sentences are grammatically correct*
 - (3) *they have spelt the words correctly*
8. Ask students to compare their answers in pairs and then check with the whole class. Write the correct answers on the board.
9. Draw the students' attention to Task B on the worksheet. Ask students to discuss in pairs. Monitor and provide help where necessary. After 10 minutes, briefly elicit some answers from the class.

Extension activity

1. Early finishers during the reading activity can write their own sentence completion questions.
2. Early finishers during the speaking activity can role-play a conversation between the writer and the life-style counsellor.

Further support activity

Weaker students can be told which paragraph they will find each answer in.

1. Para 1
2. Para 3
3. Para 4
4. Para 6
5. Para 7

After class

For homework, students can be asked to write an email to a friend who is suffering from stress offering some advice. You may choose to revise the following ways of giving advice:

You should ...

You could ...

Why don't you ...?

Have you tried ...?

If I were you I would ...

Student Worksheet

Task 1 – Long Reading:
Stress Management

Aim: To practise questions 11-15 in Task 1 – Long reading in the ISE III Reading & Writing exam

Text

Read the following text written by a newspaper columnist which talks about the causes of stress and some possible solutions, then answer the questions below.

Text Stress Management

I recently went to the doctor with an inexplicable stomach pain that had persisted for several days. After a brief examination, he provided his diagnosis: "It's probably stress". I have to admit that I was disappointed with the verdict, as I was hoping that he would find a more concrete cause that could be easily resolved with prescription drugs. Instead, I was going to have to take a look at my life-style and try to make some changes.

I began by reading some on-line articles about the causes of stress. According to my research, the main sources of stress in adults are money problems, job worries, relationships, and family problems. I do have a demanding new boss, and I have recently had a slight disagreement with a sibling, but I hadn't really considered myself to be stressed about either issue. When I think about it, I don't really know anybody who doesn't suffer from at least one of the four major causes of stress. Does that mean we are all stressed to a certain degree?

My reading seemed to confirm that this is indeed the case. We all have problems that can make us feel stressed, but the difference is in how we manage that stress. Apparently, some of us are better at taking charge of our thoughts, feelings, schedule, and the way we deal with problems than others. Some people are able to remain calm and in control, despite the demands and pressures of everyday life. So how could I become one of those people?

I went to talk to a life-style counsellor, who presented me with several suggestions. Firstly, I could try to take control of my environment by eliminating unnecessary stresses. Clearly, I wouldn't be able to eradicate my boss or my brother. However, I could avoid travelling in a crammed train carriage every morning by getting up 10 minutes earlier and

catching a bus to work. I tried it for a few days, and surprisingly enough I already felt a little more in control.

Secondly, I should try to adopt a healthier life-style. We all know that a healthy diet and regular exercise make us thinner and fitter, but I wasn't aware that they could also help to eliminate stress. I decided to start with some small changes, such as cutting out sweets and desserts, and taking the stairs instead of the lift. Again, I immediately felt that these small changes were making a positive difference.

Perhaps the most important advice of all was to learn to accept the things that I couldn't change. I started to think of my challenges as opportunities for personal growth. Neither my boss nor my brother were going to back down, so I had to learn to compromise. I would start to expect less of people and accept that no one is perfect, least of all myself.

A couple of days ago, I met with my best friend Sandra and told her of the changes I had made to try to conquer my stress. She thought about it for a while before responding: "So, it now takes you longer to get to work, you don't allow yourself any treats, your boss and your brother are still problematic; yet you feel less stressed?". To be honest, as I hadn't really known that I was stressed in the first place, it was hard to compare my stress levels with what they had been before. But one thing was for sure; talking and laughing about it with Sandra made me feel far better than any of my other actions. Maybe it's OK to be stressed as long as there is a friend to share it with.

A) Reading Comprehension Questions

Complete sentences 1-5 with a word, phrase or number from the text (maximum 3 words). Write the word, phrase, or number in the space provided.

1. The writer felt _____ the doctor's diagnosis as he had wanted to be prescribed some medication.

2. Although everybody suffers from stress, some people are better at keeping _____ in difficult situations.

3. The writer decided to start avoiding a daily stressful situation by _____ to work.

4. The life-style counsellor recommended that the writer began to _____ that were beyond his control.

5. Sandra found it hard to believe that the steps the writer had taken would make him _____.

B) Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- a) Do you agree with the advice given by the life-style counsellor? Why/ why not?
- b) On a scale of 1 to 10, how stressed do you think you are? What are the causes of your stress and what do you do to manage it?
- c) What life-style changes could you make to try to reduce your stress levels?

Answer Key

A.

1. The writer felt *disappointed with* the doctor's diagnosis as he had wanted to be prescribed some medication.
2. Although everybody suffers from stress, some people are better at keeping *calm* in difficult situations.
3. The writer decided to start avoiding a daily stressful situation by *catching a bus* to work.
4. The life-style counsellor recommended that the writer began to *accept the things* that that were beyond his control.
5. Sandra found it hard to believe that the steps the writer had taken would make him *feel less stressed*.

Original sources:

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm

<http://oregonstate.edu/counsel/lifestyle-changes-more-effective-stress-management>

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_signs.htm

<http://www.bupa.co.uk/individuals/health-information/directory/s/hi-stress>

<http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/health-library/articles/s/stress/causes>