

## Stressed out by Carolyn Flores

**Age:** Young adults / Adults  
**Level:** Intermediate – advanced  
**Time:** 90 – 120 minutes  
**Objective:** to practise their communication skills around a familiar topic: stress. Students will learn various forms of the word *stress* while having the opportunity to summarize information and ask questions, as well as present and exchange ideas, opinions and feelings in a dynamic and engaging way.  
**Key skills:** speaking, reading  
**Materials:** one copy of the two worksheets per student

### Warmer

Hand out worksheet 1. Students read the short opening text, then discuss the three warmer questions, either in a small group or with a partner.

Have students compare their answers with the rest of the class to stimulate interest and engage all students prior to moving on with the lesson.

#### Key (possible answers):

- too many demands on your time; personal conflicts or relationship problems; failure to take time out to relax; serious illness; moving house; money problems; work problems; bereavement; loneliness;*
- Animals: conflict; loneliness; confinement; lack of food or shelter; threat to offspring (babies) hunger; tiredness; lack of parental attention or affection*  
  
*Teenagers: conflict with peers or family; lack of belonging; academic pressures; lack of sleep; insecurities around their physical development; having a boy/girlfriend*  
  
*The elderly: loneliness; health worries; money problems; bereavement*
- moodiness; inability to concentrate; short temper; aches and pains; frequent colds; eating or sleeping more or less than usual; isolating yourself from others; using alcohol or drugs to relax*

### Reading

The first reading text, an email to an advice column, introduces the lesson's main topic, stress. Students should read the email.

Working in a small group or with a partner, students complete activity a.

#### Key:

*stress (noun); under a lot of stress (prepositional phrase with a noun); stressing over (verb); stressing out (verb); stress (noun) stressful (adjective); stressed (verb); stress-free (adjective); distressed (adjective); stressfully (adverb)*

Students complete activity b, where they choose the correct words to complete the sentences about the text.

#### Key:

*1. b; 2. b; 3. a; 4. a; 5. a; 6. b; 7. a; 8. a*

Students complete the sentences with the correct form of the word *stress* (activity c).

#### Key:

*1. under a lot of stress; 2. stressful; 3. stress-free; 4. distressed; 5. stressing out; 6. stressing over; 7. stresses (or 'stress'); 8. stressed; 9. stress; 10. stressfully*

*Sentence 8 uses the word 'stress' to mean 'emphasize'.*

### Conversation questions

These conversation questions, related to the topic of stress, are designed to stimulate the sharing of ideas, views or opinions. Teachers are encouraged to help out with language as needed, although in order to ensure students express themselves freely, minimal interruption is recommended.

### Reading

Hand out worksheet 2. This second reading text provides more formal reading material, also related to the main topic of the lesson. As with the first reading text, students work in a small group or with a partner on comprehension and language-focus activities after reading the text.

#### Key (activity a):

- Laughter reduces high levels of cortisol in the bloodstream and increases the production of endorphins, which lighten an unhappy disposition.;*
- Your body can't tell the difference between a real laugh and a phoney one.*

#### Key (activity b):

- giggling; 2. chuckle; 3. circulation; 4. practitioners; 5. phoney; 6. antidote; 7. infectious; 8. disposition; 9. alternative*

**Stressed out**  
by Carolyn Flores**Conversation questions**

Students work in a small group or with a partner to discuss the conversation questions.

**Conversation plus**

This section wraps the lesson up. Working in a small group or with a partner, students choose one of three dynamic speaking or writing activities to demonstrate and reinforce their understanding of the lesson's ideas and vocabulary. Students are then encouraged to share their work with the rest of the class. Students can present their writing orally or put it up on the wall and circulate, reading and reacting to each other's work.

## Stressed out by Carolyn Flores

### Warmer

We've all experienced periods of stress when things just don't go our way or when things seem too difficult to manage. Stress can cause us to lose our sense of humour and our patience. As a result, our behaviour can sometimes cause friends and family to want to 'keep a safe distance' from us. The good news is that these stressful periods never last. We just need to do what we can to get through them until the good times come again!

Discuss the following with a partner or in a group. Then, compare your answers with the rest of the class.

1. What gets people stressed? What are the most common sources of stress, from least to greatest?
2. Do you think animals get stressed? What about babies, teenagers and the elderly? What are the main causes of stress for them?
3. What are some common signs that someone is under stress?

### Reading

- a. Read the email to the Dear Gabby advice column. Then, with a partner or in a group, decide if the different forms of the word **stress** are nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs.

Dear Gabby,

We're a family of four living with a lot of **stress**. We're always so busy dealing with all the demands of daily life that we end up feeling like strangers in our own home. My daughter not only has to deal with the **stresses** of being in high school; she's also been **stressing over** her relationship with her boyfriend and is starting to get burned out from her part-time job. Her brother is also **stressing himself out**. He's busy juggling school, sports and his own part-time job. Meanwhile, my husband is also **under a lot of stress** because he recently set up a consulting business and is just drowning in paperwork. We hardly ever see each other and, when we do, we're all so tired and ratty that just being together is a **stressful** experience.

I've **stressed** to all of them that family and communication *must* come first and that we need to get together for at least one meal a week where we put all our troubles aside and share some quality time together. This way, when things settle down and we become **stress-free** again, we won't feel like such strangers to one another. Unfortunately, they all say they're too busy for even one night together. I feel so **distressed** by the situation. I don't want to give up on them but I'm at my wits' end. PLEASE HELP!

**Stressfully** yours,  
Charlotte

**Idiom:** If someone is **at their wits' end**, they are so worried and tired because of their problems that they cannot think of any more ways of solving them.

**Idiom:** If someone is **drowning in** something, they have too much of something bad or stressful, such as work, and are feeling stressed about it.

## Stressed out by Carolyn Flores

**b. Based on the Dear Gabby email, choose the correct words to complete the sentences. Compare your answers with a partner.**

- |   |                  |                       |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The writer is ...                                    | a. angry.        | b. worried.           |
| 2. The writer's family doesn't seem concerned about ... | a. their mother. | b. communication.     |
| 3. Her husband is ...                                   | a. tense.        | b. chilled out.       |
| 4. The writer's son is ...                              | a. busy.         | b. lazy.              |
| 5. Everyone in the family is ...                        | a. busy.         | b. relaxed.           |
| 6. The writer's daughter is ...                         | a. bored.        | b. exhausted.         |
| 7. Her husband's business is ...                        | a. new.          | b. sinking.           |
| 8. The writer wants her family to ...                   | a. reconnect.    | b. manage their time. |

**c. With a partner or in a group, choose which form of the word *stress* should be used for each sentence. Some forms may be used more than once. When finished, decide which sentence uses the word *stress* to mean *emphasize*.**

stressfully	distressed	under a lot of stress	stress-free	stressing over
stress	stresses	stressful	stressing out	stressed

- After his promotion, Jack was \_\_\_\_\_. His new role carried a lot of extra responsibility.
- Losing a job can be very \_\_\_\_\_.
- Reading a book or watching TV is considered to be a \_\_\_\_\_ activity.
- The little boy suddenly became \_\_\_\_\_ when he realized he was lost in the crowd.
- Myley was \_\_\_\_\_ herself \_\_\_\_\_ working 12 hours a day.
- I wish you would stop \_\_\_\_\_ the little things in life.
- Exercising can help to relieve some of the \_\_\_\_\_ of our daily lives.
- The teacher \_\_\_\_\_ that the homework needed to be completed by Monday.
- \_\_\_\_\_ can be harmful to your health.
- The woman \_\_\_\_\_ waited for her medical results.

### Conversation questions

**Discuss the questions with a partner or in a group.**

- What gets you stressed out? What symptoms do you typically experience?
- What was the most stressful period you have ever experienced?
- Do you feel stressed when you think about the future? Why? Why not?

### Reading

*Stressed* spelt backwards is *desserts*. Coincidence? I think not!  
— anonymous

## Stressed out by Carolyn Flores

Read the following text.

### Laughter is the best medicine!

Have you ever laughed until you cried and then felt an immediate sense of peace afterwards? It has always been said that laughter is the best medicine, and medical research now points to laughter as an important part of managing and reducing stress. It's like a workout for your insides, which helps to provide a physical and emotional release from stress.

Laughing is free and natural, and according to research, it has numerous other health benefits including providing a good workout for your heart. It can help strengthen your immune system and improve the overall blood circulation in your body. Laughter also reduces high levels of cortisol in the bloodstream and increases the production of endorphins, which lighten an unhappy disposition and reduce pain.

Interestingly enough, even if you haven't got anything to laugh about, faking it works just as well. The fact is that your body can't tell the difference between a real laugh and a phoney one. All laughter, whether real or faked, produces the same results. Alternative health practitioners, in recognition of this fact, have set up laughing yoga studios and humour therapy clinics worldwide to provide an antidote to the stressed-out lives many people are living today.

So think about all the people around you who could use a good laugh. Try smiling more and bringing more laughter into your day. When you're feeling stressed, think about a giggling baby, a playful puppy or a joke you heard recently, and crack a smile or have a good chuckle. Remember, laughter is infectious, and your own private chuckle could very easily spread to your friends, family members or colleagues. Before you know it, you're all enjoying a good laugh and feeling better about life!

#### a. Answer the questions with a partner or in a group.

1. In what ways can laughter help to reduce stress?
2. Why is it recommended that you laugh even if you don't find something funny to laugh about?

#### b. Working with a partner or in a group, read the clues and unscramble the synonyms, which are from the text you've just read.

1. glgigign	laughing	
2. ckecluh	laugh quietly	
3. cnuaiorlict	movement of blood	
4. oapsnttircrei	doctors	
5. npyohe	not real	
6. ttoianed	remedy	
7. sfteciniou	irresistible	
8. pnodsiositi	way of behaving	
9. taealtvirne	something you can choose instead of something else	

### Conversation questions

**Stressed out**  
by Carolyn Flores**Discuss the questions with a partner or in a group.**

1. What are some ways that people deal with stress? Do you have any special remedies for dealing with stress?
2. Have you ever helped someone who was experiencing high levels of stress? What was your advice and how did you help them?
3. Do you think certain people are more susceptible to stress than others? What about certain occupations?

**Conversation plus****Using vocabulary from this lesson, choose one of the following activities and work with a partner or in a group.**

1. Reread the Dear Gabby letter in activity 2 and write down some advice and recommendations for improving Charlotte's situation. Share your best advice with the rest of the class.
2. Pretend you are Charlotte's husband. Write a letter to Gabby about the stress you are experiencing from starting your own business. Use as many forms of the word *stress* in your letter as you can. Read your Dear Gabby letter to the rest of the class, asking them for advice.
3. Discuss what a stress-free life means. Then, be creative and write a rhyming poem of 8–12 lines about the positive sides of living a stress-free life. Share your poem with the rest of the class.