



## GAME DAY MINDS

# Lesson 10: Tips for Stress

Competition provides a natural opportunity to help athletes manage stress. Stress management strategies include thinking positive thoughts, releasing tension, and connecting with others. In this lesson athletes will try out different ways to handle stress and consider when and where to use them.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Athletes are aware of how their body responds to stress.
- Athletes learn strategies to manage stress.
- Coaches and caregivers support athletes to choose a new strategy or practice a strategy they have used in the past.

### EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Optional: stress balls

### LESSON OUTLINE

20 MINUTES TOTAL	DESCRIPTION
3 minutes	Welcome and Gather
11 minutes	Ways to Manage Stress
3 minutes	Athlete Question of the Day
3 minutes	Closing



### WELCOME AND GATHER (3 minutes)

Greet athletes as they arrive. Invite athletes to walk and talk with a teammate until everyone arrives.

To begin the lesson, call everyone in with your designated signal.

Once athletes are gathered, introduce the Fitness through Sport lesson of the day. *Today's lesson is called Tips for Stress! We are going learn about stress and ways to manage it when it comes up. Stress is normal, and it is our body's way of telling us to 'pay attention.'*



## WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS (11 minutes)

**Purpose:** Teach athletes strategies to manage stress and discuss when they could use these strategies.

### Directions:

- Tell athletes they are going to practice different ways to manage stress.
- *Today we are going to go over 3 different things we can do to prevent stress from affecting our ability to do day to day activities or to perform at our best.*

### 1. Connecting through Teambuilding

This will serve as the main activity. *When we have fun as a team, we all feel better. We're going to start with a fun team activity.*

- Have athletes stand facing forward, in lines of 3-6 people.
- Give a ball or beanbag to the athlete at the front of each line. Explain that the goal of the activity is to pass the bean bag to the end of the line and back again.
- Have the athletes practice calling for the ball to promote both communication during a game and also asking for help! Do this three times.
- At the end of Round 3, do a team cheer for all the teamwork and cooperation in that activity.
- Make note of athletes who may have dropped the bean bag but kept going. It is important for teammates to support each other and reach out for support when they need it.

Options: You can keep the type of passing the same each time, or vary it using the ideas below.

- **Round 1:** Over – pass the bean bag over your head
- **Round 2:** Under – pass the bean bag under/through your legs
- **Round 3:** Over, Under – athletes alternate over and under passes

### 2. Squeeze the Ball

*Our next activity is one you can do on your own. Squeezing a stress ball or your fist helps us get rid of extra energy. It is also a distraction that can help us feel more relaxed.*

- Hand a stress ball to each team and have them take turns squeezing it for a count of three seconds, then release. Note: if you don't have balls, athletes can make a fist or *imagine you have a lemon in your hand and you are squeezing it.*
- Ask athletes how it feels. *When would you use this?*

1. Squeeze the ball for 3 seconds.



2. Release the ball and any tension.



### 3. Stretches

Another way to manage stress is stretching because it helps our muscles relax. Let's do a couple of stretches from the Fit 5 Exercise Cards.

- Ask athletes to share a couple of stretches they would like to practice. Make sure athletes hold static stretches for at least 30 seconds.
- Incorporate deep breathing into stretching routines.



1. Try a few stretches.



2. How do you feel?



### ATHLETE QUESTION OF THE DAY (3 minutes)

**How can we support each other and ourselves when we feel stress in our body?**

- We can all support each other with positive messages, and that is what we will be covering in the next lesson.
- Your teammates and I are here to support you.
- You can ask your family to learn these strategies too.
- Remind athletes to add any new goals to their Weekly Habit Tracker



### CLOSING (3 minutes)

Thank the athletes for their participation and effort. **Share what you do to manage stress before competitions.** On game days, I like to \_\_\_\_\_ to manage my stress. I usually do this \_\_\_\_\_ (when I wake up, an hour before the event, etc.) for \_\_\_\_\_ (minutes).

### Reminders:

- [Homeplay: Stress and Your Body](#) — *In this week's Homeplay activity, you will notice where you feel stress in your body and plan when to use specific tips to keep the stress from affecting your ability to function or compete.*
- Share feedback and praise for effort and healthy habits you observed.

### Coach Reflection:

- What worked?
- What did not work? What can be done differently?

### SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Homeplay: Stress and Your Body](#)
- [Strong Minds Tips for Stress](#)