

## ***How Can I Change to Chill?***

Almost all teens experience stress. The good news is that even though the causes vary and some stress is unavoidable there are lots of ways to manage it. Use the steps below to teach young people about the causes of their own stress and ways to deal with it in order to thrive.

### **What You Need**

- Electronic devices for each participant or one with a larger screen that can be seen by all
- Internet connection
- Pen or pencil (one for each participant)
- Copies of [“Stress: What Brings It On?” worksheet \(pdf\)](#)\*
- Copies of [“What is Stressing You Out?” flier \(pdf\)](#)\*
- Copies of [“Feeling Anxious?” flier \(pdf\)](#)\*

*\*Worksheets and handouts are optional and can also be used as guides for group discussion facilitation*

### **Get Started**

Start by showing the group the introductory Change to Chill video. Explain that you are going to introduce them to and practice using some of the Change to Chill resources, which are available anytime and anywhere they have internet access. Take a few minutes to see if anyone in the group has a reaction, comment or question they’d like to share about the video or about stress in general. Don’t spend too much time on this, but do give people a chance to speak.

Change to Chill Intro video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qgzn25U9arI>

### **Create a Safe Space**

Point out that when talking about stress, what causes it, and ways to deal with it, teens might at some point address sensitive or emotional topics, including mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. There is nothing wrong with having a mental health condition and it’s nothing to be ashamed of. It’s no different from having diabetes or high blood pressure. In fact, 1 in 4 people struggles with a mental health condition. Still, there is stigma around mental health: stereotypes, pre-judgment, fears, labeling. Stigma can make it so that people who really need help don’t get it. For example, we know that even though depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions are treatable, in the United States people who have these conditions wait an average of 10 years before seeking treatment. Part of the problem is stigma.

It’s important therefore that you work together to create a safe space where people feel they can share information and ideas, be honest about their experiences, and be respected and treated well. Ask the group to brainstorm a list of expectations, norms or agreements that will help make that so. If necessary, provide a few examples to get them started. Write their ideas on a piece of poster board or flip chart paper and then post it where everyone can see and that

you can point to if people need reminding. If they don't mention the following consider adding them:

- **Confidentiality:** What's said in the room stays in the room.
- **Non-judgment:** The causes of stress and ways of dealing with it are different for everyone. This group is about learning how to recognize and manage your own stress, not "fix" others. Refrain from counseling, coaching or critiquing what others say or do in the group.
- **Listen to hear, not respond:** Again, each person is unique. When others are sharing their stories, thoughts or ideas, listen and try to understand, ask clarifying questions, affirm what's being said, but don't try to argue points, persuade others, or correct things you think are wrong.
- **Respect self, others and the space:** Be good citizens of the group. If you choose not to participate, make sure you are not distracting or otherwise making it difficult for your peers to participate in the ways they choose.

### Awareness Experiment

This short experiment gives you a taste of what Buddhists call *mindfulness*.

Listen to the audio or read the "Awareness Experiment" meditation script aloud to the group. When you've finished, ask the group these questions:


- How do you feel?
- What did you notice during this relaxation practice?
- At what points during your day could you use a few minutes of relaxation? Do you think practicing using this method could help you do that?

Listen to the audio: [https://youtu.be/c13l2XQ\\_3sM](https://youtu.be/c13l2XQ_3sM)

["Awareness Experiment" meditation script \(pdf\)](#)

### Meditation Experiment

Before you start talking about stress, lead a little experiment. Let participants know that there is no right or wrong way to do this...that it's just about trying it and seeing what happens. Give the following instructions:

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*This experiment will be done sitting in a chair, with no particular position. We will be sitting in silence for about one minute, breathing normally. As we do this simply become aware of the inhale as your breath comes into your body, and exhale as it leaves.*

Let them breathe in silence for about 15-30 seconds, then say the following:

*Now, as you do this you may notice, within seconds, that thoughts begin to arise. Some of these thoughts dissolve quickly. Others may hold your attention so much that you cannot focus on your inhale and your exhale at all. When you find this is the case, acknowledge the thoughts and then focus once again as much as possible on following closely the inhale and the exhale of your breath.*

Do this for an additional 30-60 seconds. Then talk about that experience. What was it like? How did it feel? Was it comfortable? Uncomfortable? Relaxing? Stressful? Explain that in the sessions that follow you will be learning about and practicing various forms of *meditation* and *mindfulness* and that this was one example. Mindfulness and meditation are two of the healthiest and most effective stress-busting strategies.


- Mindfulness is *the objective observation of the present moment*. It reduces anxiety by focusing on the present moment—not the past or the future, both of which can create anxiety.
- Meditation is *the practice of turning your attention to a single point of focus*. It can take many different forms.

Change to Chill has a number of options for learning about mindfulness and trying meditation with the help of videos and guided audio recordings. Learning some easy relaxation and meditation techniques can help you think more clearly, make better decisions and manage whatever comes your way. They will probably become much more comfortable with these practices over time and learn to use them to cope with and even prevent stress.

### **What Is Stress and Causes of Stress**

Read through as a group or individually the Causes of Stress section. Distribute copies of the Stress: What Brings It On? worksheet or have them each draw three matching columns on a blank piece of paper, marking the top of the columns (from left to right) “then,” “now” and “when.” Follow the instructions on the worksheet.

[Stress: What Brings It On? worksheet \(pdf\)](#)

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Next, watch the “Stress Test” video and try the breathing technique described at the end. Also, ask participants to pay attention to when they are stressed and how their bodies react. Then ask each of them to reflect by saying aloud one word that describes how they are thinking or feeling at the moment.

Stress Test video: <https://youtu.be/XBXVljwuuSk>

Just as the video pointed out, when your body reacts to stress, you can feel it. It’s the sensation known as fight-or-flight. You may feel energy surge through your body if you are worried or anxious about something, or if you are in an emergency. Your instincts take over and tell you that you are facing danger and you either need to defend yourself (fight) or get away (flight).

Stress causes all kinds of problems, discuss the symptoms of stress from the “What is stressing you out?” handout or What is stress? section.

[“What is stressing you out?” handout \(pdf\)](#)

Anxiety is also a response to everyday stress. Facing play tryouts, a basketball game or a math test can cause anxiety. Everyone feels anxious at some time. This is normal! Anxiety can cause emotional and physical problems; read more from the “Feeling Anxious?” handout.

[“Feeling Anxious” handout \(pdf\)](#)

### ***Optional: Chill at Home Skill Building Activities***

- ✓ **Gratitude Note:** write a gratitude note to someone you care about and read it aloud to them
- ✓ **Mindful Eating:** as you eat your next meal or snack, be mindful about it. Notice the smells, tastes, textures and colors of what you are putting in your body.
- ✓ **Listening:** have a conversation with a family member, friend or teacher and focus all your attention on being present and listening. Share with that person something new you learned from the conversation.
- ✓ **Connecting:** ask your parent/guardian about their day and share something about your day.
- ✓ **Lend a Hand:** help your parent/guardian/friend make a meal. Focus on being present with each step of the meal preparation process and enjoy the fruit of your labor at the end!

- ✓ **Unplug:** take a walk this week, but leave your cell phone at home. Notice the things around you: sounds, smells, nature and objects you have not paid attention to before.
- ✓ **Take a Break:** devote 20 minutes to reading a book without interruptions – leave your phone in a different room!
- ✓ **Be Present:** pick one day this week and leave your cell phone at home in the morning. Go the entire day at school without being connected. Take time to notice your feelings, emotions and observations without the interruption and distraction of your phone.
- ✓ **Get Some Rest:** commit to getting at least 7 hours of sleep 3 days this week. If you feel up for it, jot down how you feel in the morning and reflect back on your notes at the end of the week.
- ✓ **Take a Deep Breathe:** practice deep breathing once a day. Count to 3 as you inhale and count to 4 as your exhale, repeating as many times as you want.



## Life Balance

A balanced lifestyle sets the stage for optimal health and happiness, now and for the long term. Creating a lifestyle that is satisfying, maintainable, realistic, and supportive of all of one's personal values is balance. Use the steps that follow to help teens explore what balance looks like for them and how they can achieve it.

### What You Need

- Electronic devices for each participant or one with a larger screen that can be seen by all
- Internet connection
- Smart Board or projector
- Copies of the [“Values Circle” worksheet \(pdf\)](#) \*
- Copies of the [“Gratitude” worksheet \(pdf\)](#) \*
- Pen or pencil (one for each participant for writing)
- Small, individually wrapped candy (chocolate, chewable fruit) or other food that will work for a guided mindful eating meditation
- Copies of the [“Sleep Tracker” \(pdf\)](#) \*
- Copies of the [“Better Sleep Tips” flier \(pdf\)](#) \*

*\*Worksheets and handouts are optional and can also be used as guides for group discussion facilitation*

### Determine Your Stress Factors

Complete the stress quiz as a group or individually, as appropriate. As a group, talk about different ways stress affects the participants and what they can do to help relax and relieve stress. Do participants experience symptoms they didn't realize are caused by stress? Did they find a new recommendation to help them reduce stress?

After a bit of discussion, spend a few minutes doing some deep belly breathing or other relaxation techniques before getting started with the session.

Stress Factor Quiz: <http://www.changetochill.org/stress-factor-quiz/>

### Life Balance

The Achieve Balance section of the site focuses on becoming aware of how teens are balancing their life. Explain to the group that leading a life that isn't in alignment with their values and priorities can be a huge source of stress. Do the activity that follows.

*Values Circle*—Distribute the “Values Circle” worksheet or blank pieces of paper to each participant along with a pen or pencil. Follow the directions for the activity as they are listed on

the handouts and website. When participants are done filling in the two worksheets as directed spend a few minutes discussing the following:

- What do you notice about how your values compare with how you spend your time?
- Are you happy with what you discovered by doing this activity? Why or why not?
- What's one thing you'd like to do differently in order to have your life more aligned with your values?

["Values Circle" worksheet \(pdf\)](#)

### **Gratitude**

Ask participants if they have ever thought about what it takes to be happy? More money, more stuff? Ask the group to share their ideas on what material items people think make them happy.

Then, explain that people who take time to appreciate what they have in the moment are actually happier than those who don't! Research shows only about 10 percent of our happiness depends on our situation. In other words, WE are responsible for our own level of happiness! One of the keys to happiness is our resilience and ability to successfully manage stress.

Tell the group that resilience can be learned. The more we practice stress management and resilience skills, the happier we can become. Change to Chill includes many techniques and skills to help participants manage stress (deep breathing, meditation, better sleep and more). Another great tool to help build up the "resilience muscle" is gratitude. Think about it – how often do we take the small things like a beautiful sky, amazing sunset and family or friends for granted? Research shows expressing gratitude truly makes us happier people, especially if we do it often and in-person.

Explain to the group that the following activities will help build the "resilience muscle" through practicing gratitude.

### **Gratitude Worksheet**

Walk participants through the "Gratitude" worksheet, taking time to discuss each question, as time allows. Once they have completed the worksheet have participants intentionally set aside time to write a thank you letter to someone they are grateful for.

["Gratitude" worksheet \(pdf\)](#)

### **Gratitude Meditation**

Listen to the audio or read the meditation aloud to the group. After the meditation, ask the group how they can practice gratitude every day. Give the following examples, if they are not brought up by the group.

- Live in the present. Notice what is today instead of focusing on yesterday or tomorrow's worries.
- Start the day with gratitude. Practice giving thanks before you go on with the day's activities, and notice new opportunities to be grateful for throughout the day.
- Start a gratitude journal. Write down the things you are grateful for every day, then look at it at the end of the month or when you struggle to notice anything good.

Reiterate the idea of practicing being content, focusing on what we have, not on what we don't.

[Gratitude Meditation Audio](#)

[Gratitude Meditation Script \(pdf\)](#)

### **Sleep – What's the Big Deal**

Explain that sleep is a critical component of dealing with stress. If we don't get enough sleep the hard stuff gets a lot harder.

It's fair to say that overall, teens in the U.S. are in the middle of a sleep crisis. For most, 9-10 hours a night is ideal. However, many teenagers aren't getting enough sleep to recharge their bodies. Many teens report being drowsy upon waking, tired during the day, and wakeful at night.

But if teens are getting by this way, does sleep really matter?

The answer is yes, it absolutely matters. In addition to *feeling* better physically and emotionally, getting enough sleep has many benefits for teens, including:

- Lower likelihood of getting sick.
- Greater likelihood of staying at a healthy weight because lack of sleep causes hormones that affect weight to become out of balance.
- Lower risk of developing high blood pressure and diabetes.
- Boosting brainpower! Teens will be able to think more clearly at school and perform better on things that matter to them, whether it's school, work, arts, sports, or just life in general.
- Increased likelihood of making better, more healthful decisions.



Now share with the group some signs that *they* might be suffering from a lack of sleep:

- Irritability
- Difficulty making decisions
- Decreases ability to concentrate
- Lower hand-eye coordination
- Increased illness (both mental and physical)
- FEELING TIRED A LOT!

Explain that some people think it's okay to get just a few hours of sleep a night during the week and then make up for it on the weekends. However, sleep doesn't work that way. Our bodies need regular, consistent rest and time to reset.

Getting enough sleep is easier said than done, right? Many teens find the rest of the world doesn't function on the same schedule their bodies do. That's because biological changes during adolescence can make it difficult to fall asleep before 11:00 or so, which in turn means sleeping later in the morning.

Fortunately there are some things they can do to help improve their chances of a good night's sleep. A first step is to learn about their own sleep-related habits. Have participants use the Sleep Tracker and Better Sleep Tips flier provided at the end of the lesson to figure out how much sleep they're getting and what things they're doing at night that might be helping or causing problems.

[“Sleep Tracker”\(pdf\)](#)

[“Better Sleep Tips” flier \(pdf\)](#)

### **Head-to-Toe Relaxation**

Listen to either option of the audio or read either of the “Head-to-Toe Relaxation” meditation scripts aloud to the group. When you've finished, ask the group these questions:

- How do you feel?
- What did you notice during this relaxation practice?
- At what points during your day could you use a few minutes of relaxation? Do you think practicing using this method could help you do that?

Point out that doing this relaxation activity in bed at night can be a way to help participants fall asleep.

[“Head-to-Toe Relaxation” meditation script \(pdf\)](#)

[“Extended Head-to-Toe Relaxation” meditation script \(pdf\)](#)

### **Just Breathe Meditation**

Listen to the audio or read the “Just Breath” meditation script aloud to the group. When you’ve finished, ask the group these questions:

- How do you feel?
- What did you notice during this relaxation practice?
- At what points during your day could you use a few minutes of relaxation? Do you think practicing using this method could help you do that?

Point out that doing this relaxation activity in bed at night can be a way to help participants fall asleep.

[“Just Breathe” meditation script \(pdf\)](#)

### ***Optional: Chill at Home Skill Building Activities***

- ✓ **Gratitude Note:** write a gratitude note to someone you care about and read it aloud to them
- ✓ **Mindful Eating:** as you eat your next meal or snack, be mindful about it. Notice the smells, tastes, textures and colors of what you are putting in your body.
- ✓ **Listening:** have a conversation with a family member, friend or teacher and focus all your attention on being present and listening. Share with that person something new you learned from the conversation.
- ✓ **Connecting:** ask your parent/guardian about their day and share something about your day.
- ✓ **Lend a Hand:** help your parent/guardian/friend make a meal. Focus on being present with each step of the meal preparation process and enjoy the fruit of your labor at the end!
- ✓ **Unplug:** take a walk this week, but leave your cell phone at home. Notice the things around you: sounds, smells, nature and objects you have not paid attention to before.
- ✓ **Take a Break:** devote 20 minutes to reading a book without interruptions – leave your phone in a different room!
- ✓ **Be Present:** pick one day this week and leave your cell phone at home in the morning. Go the entire day at school without being connected. Take time to notice your feelings, emotions and observations without the interruption and distraction of your phone.

- ✓ **Get Some Rest:** commit to getting at least 7 hours of sleep 3 days this week. If you feel up for it, jot down how you feel in the morning and reflect back on your notes at the end of the week.
- ✓ **Take a Deep Breathe:** practice deep breathing once a day. Count to 3 as you inhale and count to 4 as your exhale, repeating as many times as you want.

## ***Mindfulness: Practice and Movement***

Being mindful can apply to the way our bodies move and feel. In between movement, the body gains benefits by focusing on the pauses or rest.

### **What You Need**

- Electronic devices for each participant or one with a larger screen that can be seen by all
- Internet connection
- Foam mat, blanket or soft area for mindful movement practice

### **Introduction to Mindfulness**

Ask participants the following questions:

- Have you ever had a time when your mind is so caught up in what happened earlier in the day that you can't focus on the now?
- Or maybe you are worried about something for tomorrow?

Explain that sometimes we spend so much time worried about the past or being anxious about the future that we can't focus on what's happening now.

That's where [mindfulness](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHuK0oJMAzY) can help. Mindfulness is the observation of the present moment, without any judgement. It reduces anxiety by focusing on the present moment—not the past or the future, both of which can create anxiety and stress. Play this video for a brief introduction to mindfulness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHuK0oJMAzY>

Tell the group that instead of reacting right away to a situation, they can take the time to notice, without judgement, how they are feeling. Taking the time to notice how they are feeling can help them decide how they want to react.

Sometimes the worst part about a stressful event is what goes through our heads as we are worrying or wondering. Ask the group to think of a time when they were late for something, maybe for school.

- What was going through your mind as you were on your way?
- Perhaps scolding yourself for not getting up early enough (past), worrying about what your teacher might say (future) and generally making yourself miserable?

By practicing mindfulness and staying in the *present moment*, we can acknowledge when we are anxious about being late and then concentrate on things that are happening right now. Ask the following questions:

- How does your body feel when you are anxious?
- What do you notice about what is happening around you?

It can be difficult to remain in the moment when we are worried about the past or the future. One of the best ways to practice mindfulness is in situations where it is easy. The more we practice mindfulness in our day to day activities, the easier it will be to be to stay in the moment when a stressful situation comes up. Below are a few examples of ways teens can use mindfulness in their daily lives.

#### *Mindful Eating*

Many of us eat on the go – in our cars, at our desks, in front of the TV or with others at a restaurant. This exercise will help participants tune into all the sensations while eating to make it a more meaningful experience. This exercise will also help them to become aware of the bodily sensations while they eat: hunger, when they stop feeling hunger, and when they feel satisfied.

[Mindful Eating Exercise \(pdf\)](#)

#### *Mindful Walking*

This is an exercise for teens to use when out for a walk or just walking as part of their daily routine. Teens should start by taking a deep breath and clearing their mind as they begin their walk. Then, they should walk slowly and feel the sensation beneath their feet. They should breathe slowly and feel the movement in their legs and sensations across their body. Suggest that teens practice this for 2 minutes or as long as they feel comfortable.

[Mindful Walking Exercise \(pdf\)](#)

To continue the conversation about how to incorporate mindfulness into every day, share these tips with teens:

- 1. Morning is a great time to put mindfulness into practice.**  
Mornings are usually the quietest part of the day – both in schedules and in the mind. They are a great time to set a mindful intention for the day while you brush your teeth or eat your breakfast.
- 2. You don't have to sit cross-legged on the floor with your eyes closed to be mindful.**  
If it feels comfortable to sit on a yoga mat, then go for it! If not, just settle into a space you feel comfortable. This could mean on the couch, sitting upright on your bed, in the passenger seat of a car or on the bus. It's less about the place and space your body takes up and more about the quality of your attention.
- 3. Start by focusing on the breath.**  
Our days are busy but a constant for each and every one of us is our breath. To quiet the mind, focus on your breathing.
- 4. Mindfulness is a practice, which means just that – it takes practice.**



The natural state of the mind is sort of like a busy monkey – curious and easily distracted. When your mind wanders (which it will!) gently recognize the distraction and come back to each inhale and exhale. After time and practice this will get easier and easier to do.

### **What is Mindful Movement?**

Mindful movement means slowing down. Being present in what we are doing at any one time. By practicing mindful movement we can slow down to hear or discover what we are thinking and feeling. We can then allow that pause to help us decide what to do with the feelings or thoughts.

Practicing mindful movement can help us in our everyday lives. There are movements that calm, movements that energize, movements that help with sleep, movements that ignite gratitude and movements that improve athletic performance. Depending on what kind of movement teens are interested in, go through the mindful movements below as a group.

### **Reduce Anxiety**

- Eagle Pose - beneficial for quieting the mind and bringing the attention to the body.
- Legs Up The Wall Pose - a simple but effective anxiety-busting posture that calms the chatter in our minds.
- Fish Pose - can be used for fatigue and anxiety relief, as well as gentle back and shoulder stretching. Beginners may want to place a thickly-folded blanket beneath the head for neck support if they are experiencing any discomfort.

### **Calm**

- Standing Forward Bend - forward bends are excellent for calming our nervous system, providing a release of the upper body and soothes the mind through gentle inversion.
- Balancing Poses - quiet the mind and cultivate focused awareness.
  - Half Moon Pose
  - Tree
  - Airplane

### **Energize**

- Childs Pose - stimulates your nervous system and helps reenergize your body.
- Warrior II – awakens and energizes the body and empowers strength.
- Chair Pose – awakens and energizes the body and empowers strength.
- Upright Cat/Cow – a seated version of the classic cat/cow move is designed to move energy through the spine, by activating through rocking the spine back and forth without putting pressure on it.

### **Sleep**

- Easy Forward Bend – creates an overall sense of ease in the body while opening the hips.
- Plow Pose – turning the blood flow around can bring the body a calming sense of vitality, great for sleep.
- Corpse Pose – gets the body into a relaxed state to focus the attention on the breath and calming.
- Spinal Twists – gentle twists relieve tension through the spine to rinse out tension from the day.
  - Supine Spinal Twist
  - Seated Spinal Twist
- Reclined Butterfly – helps the body get ready to rest and observe the breath. It can be helpful to place one hand on the heart and one hand on the belly to feel the rise and fall of each inhale and exhale.

### **Improve Athletic Performance**

- Reclined/seated pigeon - improves mobility.
- Cobra – releases pressure in the spine.
- Dolphin - stretches the upper back and shoulders, hamstrings, calves and foot arches at the same time.
- Frog - improves strength of connective tissue around the ankles and knees, which makes it a great warm-up movement prior to lower-body exercises.
- Supported Backbends - they very lightly stretch tight spots, while giving athletes a chance for deep relaxation, which speeds up recovery.
  - Fish
  - Bridge
- Reclined Big Toe - strengthens the knees and can target the IT band (a common tight spot in runners) and can relieve backaches and sciatic pain. Using a band/strap makes it accessible for everyone.
- Boat Pose – increases abdominal and hip flexor strength.
- Bow Pose – stretches the front of the body, improves posture and strengthens the back muscles.

Conclude by asking the group to share the different scenarios/settings where practicing these mindful movements would be beneficial.

***Optional: Chill at Home Skill Building Activities***

- ✓ **Gratitude Note:** write a gratitude note to someone you care about and read it aloud to them
- ✓ **Mindful Eating:** as you eat your next meal or snack, be mindful about it. Notice the smells, tastes, textures and colors of what you are putting in your body.
- ✓ **Listening:** have a conversation with a family member, friend or teacher and focus all your attention on being present and listening. Share with that person something new you learned from the conversation.
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- ✓ **Unplug:** take a walk this week, but leave your cell phone at home. Notice the things around you: sounds, smells, nature and objects you have not paid attention to before.
- ✓ **Take a Break:** devote 20 minutes to reading a book without interruptions – leave your phone in a different room!
- ✓ **Be Present:** pick one day this week and leave your cell phone at home in the morning. Go the entire day at school without being connected. Take time to notice your feelings, emotions and observations without the interruption and distraction of your phone.
- ✓ **Get Some Rest:** commit to getting at least 7 hours of sleep 3 days this week. If you feel up for it, jot down how you feel in the morning and reflect back on your notes at the end of the week.
- ✓ **Take a Deep Breathe:** practice deep breathing once a day. Count to 3 as you inhale and count to 4 as your exhale, repeating as many times as you want.

## Guided Imagery

Guided imagery can have many health-related physical and emotional benefits. The steps that follow can help you teach teens to use their imaginations to actually change how they are feeling and what they are focused on.

### What You Need

- Electronic devices for each participant or one with a larger screen that can be seen by all
- Internet connection
- Smart Board or projector
- Copies of the [“Create the State You Want” worksheet](#) \*
- Pen or pencil (one for each participant)
- Copies of [“Self-Guided Imagery activity” worksheet](#) \*
- Copies of [“Guided Imagery Step-by-Step How-to” flier](#) \*
- Copies of [“Calm Practice” worksheet](#) \*

*\*Worksheets and handouts are optional and can also be used as guides for group discussion facilitation*

### Guided Imagery

Show the **Guided Imagery video** and choose one of the processes in the video for participants to try, either to de-stress or to focus on a future goal. At the end, discuss as a group how participants think they could use the strategy in different specific situations.

Guided Imagery video: <https://youtu.be/BD3ubF-5KCg>


Next, have the group complete the **Special Place Guided Imagery practice and activity**.

Listen to the audio or read the “Special Place Guided Imagery” script aloud to the group. When you’ve finished, ask the group these questions:

1. How do you feel?
2. What did you notice during this relaxation practice?
3. At what points during your day could you use a few minutes of guided imagery? Do you think practicing using this method could help you do that?

Listen to the audio: <https://youtu.be/VbtYP4OINos>

[“Special Place Guided Imagery” script \(pdf\)](#)

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Next, distribute the “Self-Guided Imagery” and “Create the State You Want” worksheets and explain that one of the most powerful yet simple self-awareness techniques is guided imagery. Guided imagery can have many health-related physical and emotional benefits. It can help us feel less nervous or upset, be less bothered by pain or reach a goal such as an athletic or academic achievement. Through guided imagery we can learn to use our imaginations to actually change how we are feeling and what we are focused on. Have participants complete the worksheets and if they are comfortable doing so, share what they wrote or drew with one other person.

[“Self-Guided Imagery Activity” worksheet \(pdf\)](#)

[“Create the State You Want” worksheet \(pdf\)](#)

### **Get Focused Meditation**

Listen to the audio or read the “Get Focused” meditation script aloud to the group. When you’ve finished, ask the group these questions:

1. How do you feel?
2. What did you notice during this relaxation practice?
3. At what points during your day could you use a few minutes of relaxation? Do you think practicing using this method could help you do that?

Point out that learning to focus works to calm us and relieve stress.

Listen to the audio: <https://youtu.be/aNNSeHt19Uw>

[“Get Focused” meditation script \(pdf\)](#)

### **Calm Practice**

Have the group begin by choosing a feeling. It can be any feeling, one they are feeling in this moment or one that comes up as they think about feelings (happy, sad, angry, frustrated, etc.). Then walk them through answering the questions on the “Calm Practice” worksheet.

Once the worksheet is complete, follow these steps with the group:

1. Have participants bring back the image of their initial feeling. Have them picture that image’s color, shape, and texture. Participants should imagine pulling their feeling out of that place in their body where they imagined the feeling residing.



2. Instruct participants replace to the shape of their initial feeling with the shape they named as peace, calm or joy. They should replace the color of their initial feeling with their favorite color and replace the texture with the texture they listed.
3. Next have participants picture their image with the changes they have made, thinking of the sounds of their favorite song. Participants should take a deep breath while imagining the new image they have created.
4. Tell participants to imagine they are taking their image and placing it back in their body, where the feeling usually resides. Have them take several deep breaths while picturing the new image they created.
5. Conclude by asking participants if they could you feel the difference between what they visualized for their first feeling and the feeling of peace, calm or joy.

Explain that when they encounter a feeling that causes stress, they can try visualizing their peace, calm or joy feeling. They have the ability to moderate their feelings by choosing a feeling and visual they like.

[“Calm Practice” worksheet \(pdf\)](#)

### ***Optional: Chill at Home Skill Building Activities***

- ✓ **Gratitude Note:** write a gratitude note to someone you care about and read it aloud to them
- ✓ **Mindful Eating:** as you eat your next meal or snack, be mindful about it. Notice the smells, tastes, textures and colors of what you are putting in your body.
- ✓ **Listening:** have a conversation with a family member, friend or teacher and focus all your attention on being present and listening. Share with that person something new you learned from the conversation.
- ✓ **Connecting:** ask your parent/guardian about their day and share something about your day.
- ✓ **Lend a Hand:** help your parent/guardian/friend make a meal. Focus on being present with each step of the meal preparation process and enjoy the fruit of your labor at the end!
- ✓ **Unplug:** take a walk this week, but leave your cell phone at home. Notice the things around you: sounds, smells, nature and objects you have not paid attention to before.
- ✓ **Take a Break:** devote 20 minutes to reading a book without interruptions – leave your phone in a different room!
- ✓ **Be Present:** pick one day this week and leave your cell phone at home in the morning. Go the entire day at school without being connected. Take time to notice your feelings, emotions and observations without the interruption and distraction of your phone.

- ✓ **Get Some Rest:** commit to getting at least 7 hours of sleep 3 days this week. If you feel up for it, jot down how you feel in the morning and reflect back on your notes at the end of the week.
- ✓ **Take a Deep Breathe:** practice deep breathing once a day. Count to 3 as you inhale and count to 4 as your exhale, repeating as many times as you want.

## **Mental Remix**

Once in a while, we need a Mental Remix. This final session in the Change to Chill series focuses on mentally remixing how we deal with stress. Teens work in teams or individually to investigate something they can share with the larger group so that everyone has a chance to learn a new skill and stress less.

### **What You Need**

- Electronic devices for each participant or one with a larger screen that can be seen by all
- Internet connection
- Pen or pencil (one for each participant)
- Copies of [“Stepping Outside the Box” worksheet \(pdf\)](#)\*
- Ball (or another small object) to be passed along during the Reflect activity

*\*Worksheets and handouts are optional and can also be used as guides for group discussion facilitation*

### **Mental Remix Video and Discussion**

Each person sees and experiences the world differently. No one is accurate or right in their reality, their reality just is what it is. When we understand that and learn to respect other people’s “maps of the world,” we become more resilient. That does not mean we have to like, agree or be the same as each other. Respect leads to understanding, and understanding leads to compromise, negotiation and change. Without respect there is judgment. Judgment leads to bias, conflict and not being able to move forward.

For example, Google maps and GPS directions don’t always match the actual streets, houses or buildings, right? In the same way, the maps or filters we have in our minds don’t always match what’s happening in our lives. When this is the case, when our lives are going ways that don’t fit with what we want or expect, it causes a stress response. This is similar to how a traveler on an unfamiliar road trip might panic if the directions said take Exit 3C to the east at 7th Street and there was no exit at 7th Street. The more we can be aware of our “maps”, the more we can adjust and adapt as needed. We can change the way we are thinking, change what we’re doing, or both. This is called a Mental Remix.

Show the Mental Remix video to the group.

Mental Remix video: <https://youtu.be/WZ27b1wbyxU>

After the group has watched the video, explain that we all experience stress. It's how we deal with it that makes a difference in our overall perspective. Encourage participants to mentally remix their next stressful event and write down three ways they can turn things around.

## Get Some Perspective

Help participants get perspective on things that matter by reading through the following scenarios and answering questions together in large or small groups.

### 1. One story about a person is just one story, not the whole person.

Read the statement above and ask the group the following questions:

- Has anyone had an embarrassing moment or period of life that others saw or heard about? Have you ever made a mistake or decision you regretted?
- What if that moment got labeled and that's all you were ever seen as? What would it feel like if people judged your character only based on that information? Would that paint a true picture or you?
- Has this happened to you or someone you know? Does it feel fair?

Give them time share stories or share a story of your own and relate the experiences back to the idea of perspective.

### 2. There are no failures, only feedback.

Read the statement above and ask the following questions:

- Have you ever tried something and felt like it didn't go the way you hoped? Did it feel like a failure?
- Did you try again? What happened the next time?
- Has anyone ever provided you with feedback you didn't like or didn't want to hear?
- Did you let the feedback define who you are as a person?

Ask someone to share an experience and discuss as a group.

Tell participants that any time something doesn't go the way they want, they have a choice: they can view it was a failure or they can view it as an opportunity to learn from the feedback of it not going the way they wanted. It is okay to make mistakes and the most important part of mistakes is what you learn from them – failure is what didn't happen and feedback is what did happen.

### 3. The person with the greatest flexibility has the best chance to make things better.

It's nice when things go exactly as planned, but sometimes they don't. Ask the group if this has ever happened to them, then present the scenario below:

“Let’s say we are going to the movies. The bus pulls up and we all get on. But when we arrive at the theater we see it is closed. What do we do now? Do we come back here and cry?”

Ask them what an alternative option could be – could we decide to do something completely different? What if the alternative option was 100 times more fun than the movie would have been? Give participants time to share response and their experiences related to this topic.

### ***Stepping Outside the Box Activity***

Next, explain that when we feel boxed in by not knowing how to get out of a bad situation, solve a problem, or are overwhelmed by others’ opinions, we can always step outside the box and exercise creativity.

Have participants complete the “Stepping Outside the Box” worksheet.

Once everyone has completed the activity, have participants flip the sheet over to see the answer. Explain that most people approach the exercise thinking that they need to stay within the lines of what they perceive as the box around the dots. The activity is meant to help teens see the answers through a different lens.

[Stepping Outside the Box worksheet \(pdf\)](#)

### **4. The more time we spend in the stress response, the less resilient we become.**

Ask the following questions:

- Has a stressful situation made it hard for you to concentrate or treat people the way you normally would?
- Has a friend been so stressed that they treated you poorly?

Give them a moment to nod or respond to these questions. Share with the group that when we are stressed it can be hard to react positively to normal daily situations and, similarly, that it is easy to take things personally when someone is treating us poorly when they are stressed.

Next, choose from the following activities:

1. Play the [Two Arrows video](#) and have a discussion about how this idea relates to participants’ stress responses.
2. Have participants jot down something that is frustrating or causing them stress. Then have them list 3-5 things that could help them manage that stress. (Examples might include deep breathing, going for a walk or talking with a friend.)



## 5. Everyone has a unique map of the world.

Revisit the movie scenario from part three. Tell the following scenario:

“Let’s say we were able to see the movie we wanted to see in the earlier scenario. All [INSERT # PARTICIPANTS] of us hop on the bus and this time actually see the movie. After the movie is over and we are walking out of the theater we will have experienced [INSERT # PARTICIPANTS] movies!”

Wait for participants’ reactions to this last statement. Explain that our beliefs, attitudes, physiology and past experiences play a part in how each of us sees the movie in a different way.

Next, give an example of reading your favorite book, or one that you have read many times. Explain that each time you read it, it means something completely different to you, depending on what is going on in your life at that time.

Conclude with explaining that our maps of the world are always changing as we gain more knowledge and experience more things. No one is accurate or right in their reality. When we understand this and learn to respect other peoples’ “maps of the world” we become more resilient through respect and understanding.

### **Meditation**

Show the Change to Chill Meditation video.

Invite participants to get in a comfortable position and inform them they can either watch the full video quietly or close their eyes and just listen.

At the end, take a few minutes to discuss what they thought of the experience.

Meditation video: <https://youtu.be/uZX4v4lw2Mc>

### ***Optional: Chill at Home Skill Building Activities***

- ✓ **Gratitude Note:** write a gratitude note to someone you care about and read it aloud to them
- ✓ **Mindful Eating:** as you eat your next meal or snack, be mindful about it. Notice the smells, tastes, textures and colors of what you are putting in your body.

- ✓ **Listening:** have a conversation with a family member, friend or teacher and focus all your attention on being present and listening. Share with that person something new you learned from the conversation.
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- ✓ **Take a Deep Breathe:** practice deep breathing once a day. Count to 3 as you inhale and count to 4 as your exhale, repeating as many times as you want.

### *Change to Chill for Athletes*

**We get it. Most athletes aren't really into the whole "mindfulness" thing.**

**But guess what:** there's a ton of research behind the benefits of practicing mindfulness and its link to increased athletic performance, readiness for competition and overall success.

- In a study of over 200 Olympic athletes that assessed for three readiness factors (mental, physical and technical), **only mental readiness was significantly associated with how successful the athletes were in the Olympics.**
- A recent study published in the Journal of Health Psychology found that athletes who practice mindful meditation techniques **are far more motivated to exercise and feel more satisfied by their workouts.**
- A study of university student athletes found that athletes who practiced a routine mindfulness program rated their own **performance as higher and reported less sports-related anxiety.**
- In a 2017 study of Division I university athletes, researchers found that, when used together, mindfulness and relaxation practices **serve as a protective factors against the emotional and cognitive impacts of high-demand, high-stress times** that athletes face regularly.

As an added bonus, practicing mindfulness also helps teens to:

- **reduce their overall stress**
- **get better sleep**
- **improve mental clarity and concentration**

**Have we got your attention? Let's get started.**

### **Mindfulness Reflection Activity**

Gather the team together and in large or small groups have athletes answer one, some or all of the questions below. Once they have answered the question(s) engage in a brief discussion around their answers.

- What are three reasons you like being part of a team sport?
- What is the best part about competing?
- What emotions do you feel when you play well?
- How would you describe what feeling confident is like?
- How does being an athlete make you a better person?

- What is the one thing you do after a good performance?
- What do you do to calm your butterflies while you compete?
- What do you do to help you get focused before a game or meet?
- Do you use visual cues of your environment to help you focus? What are they?
- What do you give up to play sports?
- What do you do to stay calm under pressure?
- Do you have a mantra? What is it?
- Do you think attitude is a factor in winning? Why?
- How does being an athlete inspire you to do good?
- How does being an athlete make you a better student?

### **Mental Training Practices for Athletes**

Have athletes tackle each of these training practices – either all at one time or periodically throughout the season. Check in with the team regularly to get a pulse on how they are doing with their practices.

#### **1. Write down your goals**

Do you have a goal for your mental health? A goal for your mindfulness practice? For your athletic performance?

Go “old school” and write down your mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, academic and athletic goals! Putting pen to paper helps get these thoughts out of your head and, research shows, that you’re more likely to follow through with these goals when you’ve written them down.

#### **2. Practice positive self-talk**

As a team, or as an individual, commit to using instructional or positive self-talk rather than critical talk.

| Examples of Critical Talk                           | Examples of Instructional/Positive Talk                    |
|---|--|
| <i><b>I can't make that shot.</b></i>               | <i>I've been training. I can make the shot.</i>            |
| <i><b>I won't be able to run that fast.</b></i>     | <i>I am strong and fast.</i>                               |
| <i><b>I'm not motivated.</b></i>                    | <i>What song would really pump me up right now?</i>        |
| <i><b>I'm not good enough to make the team.</b></i> | <i>I am enough and I am talented.</i>                      |
| <i><b>I'll just let everyone down.</b></i>          | <i>I am more than this goal. I will do the best I can.</i> |

Paying attention to your internal dialogue, as well as the stories you tell yourself, your friends and your family, is important because your internal dialogue can reflect and shape your mental

state. It's OK to notice the thoughts or feelings when they come up, but it's not OK to take them with you to the next race or shot.

### **3. Mentally practice like you physically practice**

As an athlete, you spend countless hours training your physical body to perform. Now that you know the importance of your mental state, reflect on how much time you spend training your brain.

Start small with mini check-ins throughout the day. When you think of it, ask your mind where is your body? How is your body feeling? How is your mind feeling? Are there emotions present?

#### **Guided Imagery for Athletes**

Whether your team is prepping for a big game or bouncing back from a tough loss, use this guided imagery exercise to get in the state of mind you need.

Invite everyone to get into a comfortable position. Make sure you've determined the desired outcome before beginning – this could be to focus, the win, to reset, to be resilient, etc.

1. Settle into the space. Feel the weight of your body supported by the ground/chair/floor. Take a few deep breathes – in through the nose and out through the mouth. Gently close your eyes.
2. Notice the sensations of the space. Is there a smell you notice? What are the sounds around you? What is the temperature of the air? Just take in the sensations – you don't have to react or response, just notice.
3. Gently shift your attention to your breathing. Relax into your normal pattern of breath. Feel your belly and chest rise and fall with each breath.
4. Invite the group to visualize the outcome you pre-determined. This visualization should be detailed and as realistic as possible.

Use all five senses when visualize the outcome. What would you feel? What would you see? What would you hear? Who would be there? What would it smell like? What would it taste like? What would the temperature be? What textures would you feel?

Be as detailed as you can.

5. Once you have settled into the visualization, refocus your attention on your breath.
6. Revisit the sensations of the space you are in – what are the sounds, smells, temperature, etc.?
7. Feel the weight of your body in space and the ground supporting your body.
8. When you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

Revisit this exercise and the visualized place as often as possible before or after a practice or game.

***For more information, activities and videos on guided imagery, check out the [Guided Imagery content on Change to Chill!](#)***



### **Mindful Movement for Athletes**

Mindful movement means slowing down. Being present in what we are doing at any one time. By practicing mindful movement we can slow down to hear or discover what we are thinking and feeling.

As a team, commit to starting or ending practice or workouts with these mindful movements:

- Seated pigeon - improves mobility.



- Cobra – releases pressure in the spine.



- Dolphin - stretches the upper back and shoulders, hamstrings, calves and foot arches at the same time.



- Frog - improves strength of connective tissue around the ankles and knees, which makes it a great warm-up movement prior to lower-body exercises.



- Supported Backbends - they very lightly stretch tight spots, while giving athletes a chance for deep relaxation, which speeds up recovery.
  - Fish



- Bridge



- Reclined Big Toe - strengthens the knees and can target the IT band (a common tight spot in runners) and can relieve backaches and sciatic pain. Using a band/strap makes it accessible for everyone.



- Boat Pose – increases abdominal and hip flexor strength.



- Bow Pose – stretches the front of the body, improves posture and strengthens the back muscles.

