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ACTIVITY 1.1

Stress or Anxiety?

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CONCEPT

Students often confuse stress and anxiety because the physical and emotional response can be the same. This activity is designed to help students differentiate between the two terms.

MATERIAL

- Student Worksheet, *Stress or Anxiety?*

INSTRUCTIONS

- This activity will take 5-10 minutes to complete.
- Have students complete the *Stress or Anxiety* Worksheet, go over responses, and lead a small group or whole class discussion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How are stress and anxiety alike?
- How are they different?
- Can you experience anxiety without a stressor?
- Can you experience stress without anxiety?

Answer Key

1A. Stress
1B. Anxiety
2A. Anxiety
2B. Stress
3A. Anxiety
3B. Stress
4A. Stress
4B. Anxiety
5A. Stress
5B. Anxiety
6A. Anxiety
6B. Stress
7A. Stress
7B. Anxiety
8A. Anxiety
8B. Stress

STRESS OR ANXIETY STUDENT WORKSHEET

Instructions

The words "stress" and "anxiety" are often used interchangeably in everyday conversation; however, they have different meanings.

- ***Stress*** is the process by which we perceive and respond to circumstances that we appraise as challenging.
- ***Anxiety*** is characterized by excessive worries that do not go away, even when there is no clear source for the anxiety or after the source of the anxiety is eliminated.

One reason the words stress and anxiety are used interchangeably is because they often feel the same. When we experience stress and when we are anxious, we might feel our heart racing, we might feel sweaty, we might have difficulty focusing, we might not want to eat or feel like eating a lot, and we might have difficulty falling and/or staying asleep. Each of the following scenarios could result in increased heart rate, perspiration, difficulty concentrating, change in appetite, and/or insomnia. Even though the responses might be the same, some scenarios illustrate stress and some scenarios illustrate anxiety.

Read through the following pairs of scenarios and identify which is an example of stress or an example of anxiety. Write "S" for Stress and "A" for Anxiety.

_____ 1A. Taking care of a loved one with cancer.

_____ 1B. Worrying that a healthy loved one might get cancer.

_____ 2A. Avoiding new situations because people in those situations might use racial slurs.

_____ 2B. Joining a new club and hearing someone in the club use racial slurs.

_____ 3A. Worrying that your friends are saying bad things about you behind your back even though they always say nice things when you are together.

_____ 3B. Confronting a friend who you heard said something bad about you.

_____ 4A. Juggling school work, team practices, and a part-time job.

_____ 4B. Repeatedly thinking about what might happen if unable to juggle school work, team practices, and a part-time job.

_____ 5A. Sitting in traffic that might make you miss a flight.

_____ 5B. Repeatedly thinking about how much traffic there might be when you leave for the airport the next day.

_____ 6A. Worrying for weeks about what classmates thought about a presentation you gave even after receiving positive feedback from the teacher.

_____ 6B. Preparing and delivering a class presentation.

_____ 7A. Being made fun of or being humiliated by others.

_____ 7B. Avoiding going to any parties because someone who has teased you in the past might be there.

_____ 8A. Repeatedly thinking about the possibility of being rejected by all the colleges you apply to.

_____ 8B. Writing multiple essays to apply to several colleges.