



Host a “Relieve the Stress Fest!”

Most students get a little stressed out from time to time—for example, in September when you’re getting into the swing of a new school year, when midterms and final exams are approaching, and during report card time. To help your peers relieve their stress in a healthy way, host a “Relieve the Stress Fest” at school. Administrators, teachers, and even other students can demonstrate a variety of simple stress reduction techniques that help keep teens off drugs. Use the techniques you learn to relieve your stress instead of engaging in risky behaviors.

Students can take the stress relief techniques that they learn and apply them during stressful periods throughout the year, and for the rest of their lives. Teachers and administrators should be encouraged to participate as well. Everyone should get in on the fun! Not only will they serve as examples, but getting everyone involved will help build a sense of community. The best part is that most of the stress-relieving activities proposed for a “Relieve the Stress Fest” require only a small effort and a few resources that your school should already have on hand!

Here’s what you’ll need:

- **A large room.** A gymnasium, cafeteria, or a large classroom will work for your stress-relieving events!
- **Yoga mats or regular exercise mats.** You just need something to put between you and the floor. You will probably find mats in your school’s gym supplies area, or you can ask a local gym or exercise studio if you can borrow their mats temporarily.
- **Music and music player.** Don’t forget the speakers so everyone can hear! You might need to get approval on the music list from a school administrator before the event. Remember, yoga music should be calming and relaxing, and aerobics music should have a strong beat that makes people want to get up and move!
- **Volunteer instructors.** As an alternative, use TVs, DVD players, and workout DVDs.
- **Sports activities.** Offer sports activities, along with the appropriate equipment, for those who prefer not to do group exercise.
- **Poster board and markers.** Don’t forget to advertise your “Relieve the Stress Fest” in the weeks leading up to it. Create posters with encouraging messages about eating well and getting enough sleep, and place them throughout the school.



Here's how to do it:

- **Contact** your principal and see if the activity you choose can be done for your entire grade. Don't forget to ask which date and time work best. Make sure you have your school principal's full approval before you announce the event or make any arrangements.
- **If you are able to do the activity** at your school, check with the facilities administrator or gym teachers to see when the gym is available for use.
- **If your grade has a lot of students**, you may have to divide groups by homeroom and offer different activities at different times or even on different days.
- **Once you know** when and where you will host your "Relieve the Stress Fest," visit your local gym or exercise studio and ask to speak with the manager or group exercise manager and ask if they know of an instructor who may be available to volunteer to showcase a few classes and techniques for a great cause. It benefits the gym or exercise studio, which could expand its client base with potential new members!
- **Check with your peers** and even teachers who may want to get involved. If you have more than one classroom available for your activities, you can set up stations and have students rotate from room to room at designated times. Consider breaking your event into a 2-hour block of time, with stations that students can go to every half-hour so that each student can visit many stations. One could teach meditation techniques, another could be a yoga lesson, and another might teach a short hip-hop dance routine.
- **Find a CD** or online radio station that plays relaxing music (be sure to get approval from your school administrator). Have everyone find a space on the mats you've provided, and share some relaxation tips and breathing techniques. You can find a variety of these pointers online. Teach students to meditate for a few minutes each day.
- **After everyone is relaxed**, introduce yoga as a fun way to stay flexible and reduce stress. If you can't find a yoga instructor to volunteer, check out a DVD from your school or local library (make sure you have a DVD player and a compatible TV with good speakers).
- **Dance parties** are a fun way to reduce stress and get a great workout. Tune the radio to your favorite station and freestyle it, or find a dance DVD that students can follow. Teach students that it's a great way to squeeze in exercise, reduce stress, and have fun at the same time.



- **Set up** a bunch of different sports in your gym or on the sports fields outside, and encourage your peers to try each activity to see which they like best. Sports can include dodgeball, kickball, four square, jumping rope, basketball, volleyball, or whatever you'd like!
- **Talk** to your teachers and administrators about encouraging afterschool recreational sports that all students can play. This is a great way to reduce stress and have fun with friends.
- **A small, but informative poster campaign** can be an effective way to help give your peers tips on how they can reduce stress. Plan to make these posters in the weeks leading up to your "Relieve the Stress Fest."
- **Make some posters** to advertise the big event as well. Convey three things that can help manage stress: developing organizational skills, having good study habits, and maintaining proper eating habits. A poster should be dedicated to each one of these areas and should include helpful tips for maintaining these skills. Younger students may need help with juggling homework and playtime, while older students may need the tools to develop essential skills to prepare for tests. Also include a poster about keeping your brain healthy and staying off drugs. You can find lots of science-based information on this topic at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov>. Check out the PEERx section of this site for information about prescription drug abuse, and consider making a poster about this topic, too.
- **Make sure** you have the support of teachers and administrators, including guidance counselors who deal daily with mental, emotional, and physical health.
- **Arrange** for some photographers from your school's yearbook committee to cover your event for the yearbook.