

What Constant Stress Does To Your Brain

Upper-Intermediate (B2)



WARM-UP

Part 1. Look at the list below and rate each situation from 1 (not stressful) to 5 (extremely stressful). Then add two more of your own at the end.

1. Running late for something important ___
2. Slow Wi-Fi when you're trying to work ___
3. People who don't indicate when driving ___
4. Forgetting your password... again ___
5. Too many notifications on your phone ___
6. Work deadlines piling up ___
7. Bills arriving all at once ___
8. Lack of sleep ___

Discuss:

- Which things stress you the most — and which ones are just everyday annoyances?
- What's the funniest or strangest thing that's ever stressed you out?



Part 2. Look at the signs of stress below. Which ones have you noticed in yourself recently?

1. Trouble sleeping or waking up tired
2. Headaches, tight shoulders, or tense jaw
3. Losing focus or forgetting simple things
4. Overthinking or replaying situations in your head
5. Getting irritated by small things
6. Feeling emotional or close to tears for no reason
7. Craving sugar, caffeine, or comfort food
8. Avoiding people or wanting to be alone
9. Saying "I'm fine" when you're definitely not

Discuss:

- Which signs are most familiar to you?
- How does stress usually show up for you – in your body or your thoughts?

Part 3. Match each word/phrase to its correct definition.

Thrive	A weight on your shoulders	Unrelenting
Bounce back	Regulate	Numbing

1. _____ To recover quickly from difficulties
2. _____ A feeling of tightness or burden, constantly worrying
3. _____ To grow or develop well, despite challenges
4. _____ Not stopping or easing, continuous
5. _____ To bring under control; manage
6. _____ Causing you not to feel emotions or pain

Part 4. Complete the sentences with the correct words/phrases.

1. Children often seem to _____ from illness more quickly than adults do.
2. When deadlines pile up, it can feel like _____.
3. She learnt to _____ her breathing to stay calm.
4. The constant emails were so _____ that I felt exhausted.
5. Despite the challenges, our team continued to _____.
6. Overwork can lead to emotional _____.

VIDEO ACTIVITY

Part 1. Before watching the video, discuss the following questions.

1. What do you think stress actually does to the brain?
2. Do you believe a little stress can be useful? Why or why not?
3. What's one small habit that increases your stress without you realising?

Part 2. Watch the video. After watching, describe the main idea of the video and one surprising fact you heard.

Main Idea –

Surprising fact –

Part 3. Watch the video again and answer the questions below.

1. What hormone is released when we feel stressed?
2. Which parts of the brain change with long-term stress?
3. How does chronic stress affect memory and emotion?
4. What habits can help your brain recover from stress?

Part 4. Decide if each statement is true (T) or false (F) based on the video. If false, can you correct it?

1. Chronic stress enlarges the prefrontal cortex. (T/F)
2. Emotional numbing can result from constant stress. (T/F)
3. Talking to a therapist can help restore balance. (T/F)
4. Chronic stress boosts dopamine levels, so you feel more pleasure and motivation. (T/F)



VIDEO FOLLOW-UP

Part 1. Discuss the following questions.

1. Which effect of chronic stress surprised you the most?
2. What strategies do you already use to manage stress?
3. How realistic is it for you to add a 5-minute grounding exercise into your daily routine?

Part 2. Match each idiom to its correct definition.

Hit the roof

Hit rock bottom

Be on edge

Be at the end of your tether

Keep your chin up

1. _____ To reach your limit of patience or energy
2. _____ To stay optimistic during difficult times
3. _____ To lose your temper suddenly
4. _____ To feel extremely low emotionally
5. _____ To feel extremely nervous or tense

Part 3. Discuss the following questions.

1. What's something that instantly makes you **hit the roof**?
2. Have you ever **hit rock bottom** and managed to bounce back?
3. When was the last time you **felt on edge**?
4. When was the last time you felt **at the end of your tether**?
5. What helps you **keep your chin up** when things go wrong?



Part 4. Think of five ways to reduce stress in everyday life. Include at least two idioms or vocabulary items from this lesson.

Strategy

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Why it helps

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Share your ideas: Which strategy do you think most people forget to use?

REFLECTION

Discuss the questions below to reflect on what you've learnt during this lesson.

1. What's one thing you've learnt about how stress affects the brain?
2. What's a personal sign that you're under too much pressure?
3. What's one small thing you'll do to support your mental wellbeing this week?

WRAP-UP TASK (OPTIONAL HOMEWORK)

My Stress Reset Plan

Write a short paragraph (100–120 words) about how you plan to reduce stress in your daily life.

Use at least four new words or idioms from today's lesson.

You could mention:

- One stressful habit you want to change
- How stress affects your mind or body
- A few small actions to help you recover