

WHITEHALL HEALTHY REPORTER

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Learning to handle stressful situations

Stress can be a horrible feeling.

It may be something you feel when you are afraid, worried, or nervous, according to Ms. Susan FitzGerald, a Philadelphia area journalist and writer who specializes in children's health issues.

"We don't all feel stress the same way," she said during a press conference with the *Healthy Reporter*.

When you feel stressed, she said, you may have trouble sleeping or breathing. Your stomach may ache or your back may hurt.

Stress is something that human beings have experienced for thousands of years, Ms. FitzGerald said. It is a way for your body to stay alert.

"Your body is ready for action," Ms. FitzGerald said. A little stress is good, she said. For example, some stress can help you focus during a test. But too much stress can overwhelm you, Ms. FitzGerald said.

When you experience stress, your heart may beat faster. You may breathe more quickly. Your blood pressure may go up.



Illustration by Gabriella Garcia

Stress can be triggered by too much work.

When you have stress and it is constant, it keeps you from being who you really are, said Ms. FitzGerald. It even can weaken your immune system and make you more likely to catch a cold.

Ms. FitzGerald offered some suggestions about how to deal with stress:

- * Make sure you exercise.

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Winter brings plenty of stress

Winter was so long and tough this year that it was hard to imagine that spring would ever arrive.

Whitehall was closed seven days this winter because of snow. In addition, the school opened late five days and students were dismissed early one day.

So many days of bad weather were stressful for Whitehall staffers and students. In recent interviews, they described what was most challenging for them about the unusual weather and how they dealt with the stress.

Whitehall Principal Mrs. Hoskins said it was often hard to plan for the next school day when weather forecasts called for snow. It was often at 5 in the morning before she knew whether school would be open or closed, or whether it would start late.

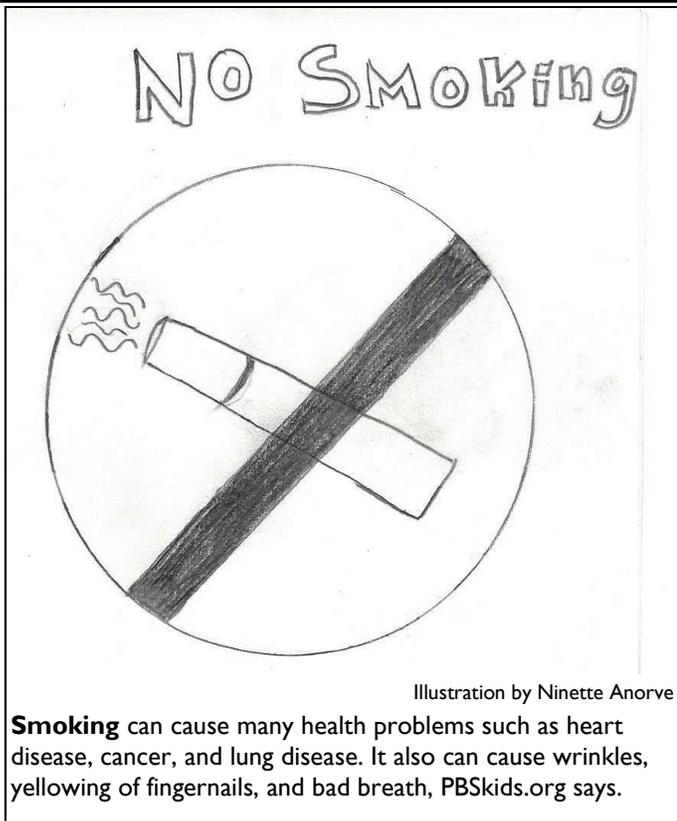
She also never knew what the roads would be like on her drive to school. "I worried if the streets were plowed, and if there was salt on the street," she said.

Mrs. Hoskins said she managed the stress by taking her vitamins and getting as much sleep as she could.

Mrs. Bilella, school secretary, said the winter weather meant sore muscles. She had to work hard to shovel the snow out of her driveway. She missed the sun and taking walks.

She managed the stress by practicing yoga and spending time with friends and family, she said. The

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Smoking can cause many health problems such as heart disease, cancer, and lung disease. It also can cause wrinkles, yellowing of fingernails, and bad breath, PBSkids.org says.

Tips to reduce stress

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- * Get enough sleep.
- * Relax your body.
- * Break down a big problem into little problems. The problem won't seem as big.
- * Turn off the computer, cell phone, and TV long before you go to bed. Relax with a good book.
- * Sing, play an instrument, write in a journal, laugh, cry.
- * Play with your cat or dog.

She also said children who feel stressed should talk to a trusted adult. It could be a parent, an aunt, or a teacher. —By Gabriella Garcia, Quadirah Wise, Brian Sanchez, Alejandra Luna-Hernandez, Ninette Anorve, and Healthy Reporter staff.

Editor's note: Ms. FitzGerald coauthored the book, "Letting Go with Love and Confidence: Raising Responsible, Resilient, Self-Sufficient Teens in the 21st Century."

Let us know what you think!

The *Healthy Reporter* would love to hear from you. Send Mrs. Martin a letter, a poem, or an essay on a health topic. Maybe you will read it in the *Healthy Reporter's* summer issue!

Winter weather creates challenges

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thought that "spring is right around the corner" also helped her manage her stress, she said.

Heidi, a fourth grader, said she missed going outside as often as she usually does. When she did go outside, her feet would get cold. She managed the stress by sleeping, listening to music, and drinking hot chocolate, she said.

Mrs. Roth, a kindergarten teacher, also said staying inside was stressful. Baking was her main activity because she had to be at home and watch her son and his friends. Because she could not exercise outside, she worked out on a treadmill at home.

She said she managed her stress by shopping online. When it was sunny, she went to the store. "Shopping is the power to take away stress," she said.

With so much snow and ice, Mrs. Fonash needed to go to the grocery store to stock up on food and supplies. Driving on slick roads was not easy, she said. To relax, she said, she read a book.

Mr. Yanez, Whitehall's translator, said that the winter weather affected him because he couldn't come to school, he could not drive, and he had to shovel. He felt annoyed.

The weather made a number of things difficult for Ms. Wertly, the art teacher. She lost power at her home for five days. It was stressful because she had to wear many layers of clothing and she also had to shovel constantly. She said she looked at pictures of summer to feel less stressed, she said.

—By Healthy Reporter staff

Whitehall Healthy Reporter

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Student staff members include Guadalupe Andrade-Tellez, Ninette Anorve, Gabriella Garcia, Jaden Jones, Ashley Kelly, Manuel Lopez, Alejandra Luna-Hernandez, Brian Sanchez, Quadirah Wise, and Gianni Young. Mrs. Martin is the *Healthy Reporter's* faculty advisor.

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