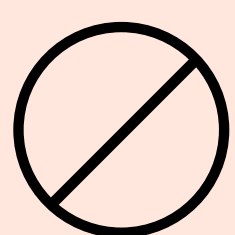




Be Your Strength: Stress, Coping and Wellness

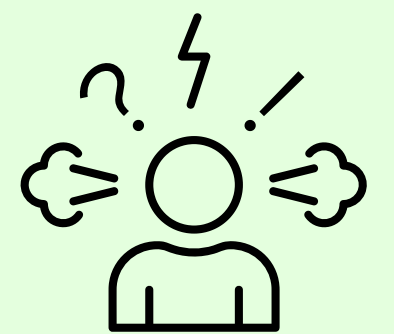
Stress, Mental Health & Substance Use

- Some teens use e-cigarettes, vapes, or other substances to cope with stress or mental health issues.
- This may provide short-term relief but can lead to bigger problems
- Stigma around mental health and substance use can make it harder for teens to ask for help



This leaflet summarises what your teenager will learn in You and Me NI Vape Free Lesson 5. It focuses on understanding stress, healthy coping strategies, and the links between stress, mental health, and substance use.

Understanding Stress



- Stress is a normal reaction to change or challenges—everyone experiences it
- There are two types of stress:
- Eustress (positive stress): motivates and excites
- Distress (negative stress): feels unpleasant, can harm health and performance
- Young people may stress about grades, friendships, family, time management, or peer pressure

How Stress Affects Teens



- Stress can cause tiredness, sleep problems, mood changes, headaches, stomach-aches, and changes in eating habits
- It can also affect behaviour—teens may become withdrawn, irritable, or forgetful

Compassion, Empathy & Support

- Teens are encouraged to respond to friends who vape or use substances with empathy and compassion, not judgement.
- Open, supportive conversations help reduce stigma and encourage seeking help.



Key Takeaways for Parents

- Stress is a normal part of life, but healthy coping is key.
- Open conversations at home can help teens feel supported and less alone.
- Encourage your teen to use healthy coping strategies and seek help when needed.
- Reducing stigma around mental health and substance use makes it easier for young people to get support.



Healthy Coping Strategies



- Mindful meditation, breathing exercises (like Squared Breathing), physical activity, creative hobbies, and talking to trusted adults are all healthy ways to manage stress.
- Teens are encouraged to build a “wellness toolkit” of coping strategies that work for them.

Support Is Available



- Talk to your GP or pharmacist about Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRTs)
- Talk to Frank textline (82111)
- Stanford My Healthy Futures
- Cancer Focus quit services