



Managing Our Stress using the Stress Bucket

Parent / Carer's Guide

Thank you for looking at this material with your children.

The Aim of this session: To introduce the concept of the stress bucket and help children understand that things can fill our stress buckets, but that we can manage our stress levels through opening the taps on our stress buckets.



Children learn that we each have a stress bucket which can fill up with lots of different stresses. We can learn to release the stress by opening our taps through different actions and avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Each person is unique, so different things will fill and empty different buckets.

The structure of the session:

1. Watch the video on the website together: The video will introduce the session and demonstrate some ideas of things that fill our stress buckets and things that open the taps on our stress buckets. (Note: If needed you can rewatch the video after the activity and while completing the worksheets, pausing at each part as the children complete the worksheets)
2. Play the Managing your Stress Game (see instructions below)
3. While you play the game fill in your worksheets and then pop them on your fridge to help you remember what opens your taps. How about doing a worksheet for each member of the family, to show that we are all different and help remind you what we can do to manage our stress levels.

The Managing your Stress Game

Print off the stress bucket pictures along with the taps and water drops. Keep the bucket as a complete sheet and then cut the water droplets and taps into tokens.

Option 1:

Divide into two teams and take it in turns to pick an item (either tap or water drop) out of a bowl/bag which you can't see what they are. Encourage children to share ideas of what opens their taps / what fills their buckets (depending on the token). Then add the token onto the top of the bucket. Move to the next person, repeating the process until all of the tokens are gone.

For really young children just add in 5 of each tokens so they don't get bored or distracted.

Option 2:

Add an element of chance by using a dice. If you roll an **even number** it's a tap; an **odd number** is a water drop. Set a time limit and roll the dice in turn- to add the token to the bucket you have to give an example of either what opens your tap or fills your bucket. Either at the end of a set time or when you have ran out of one of the pieces- count up the taps and water droplets and see how stressed you are in this game.

You could keep a record of the ideas as they are said to help the children fill in the sheet.

Hints and tips on what can fill up our buckets (here are some of the suggestions mentioned in the video- there are many others)

Big things like:

- Being unwell ourselves or worrying about someone else who is unwell
- New things- like a new house, or a new teacher, new school or a new person in our lives
- Falling out with someone
- Having some tests coming up
- Practicing for a performance or a big game/ match depending on your sport

Smaller things can also fill our buckets like:

- I can't remember that persons name
- I don't understand my homework
- I can't find my- shoes, jumper, favourite toy
- My hairband isn't right
- My jumper feels wrong

We are all individual but below are some examples of what can help us open the taps on our stress buckets.

Physical things that can open our taps: some people find that going for a walk, playing an outside game, running up and down the garden or going for a run helps. Others find attending a dance or exercise class, or bouncing on a trampoline can also help open their tap.

Other things you can try at home are a hug, a tickle (this helps to raise endorphins and decreases the stress hormone cortisol) or a Pizza massage (you make an imaginary pizza and add different toppings on your child's back while talking about what fun things they'd like on a pizza).



Things that can emotionally open our taps: You may find that having a chat with a sympathetic listener and talking about what's filling up your bucket can be useful. Alternatively writing a list of the things that are whizzing around your head, doing something you enjoy e.g. a hobby or playing a musical instrument, or playing a silly game may help.

Getting enough sleep is really important at any age and a lack of sleep can definitely raise your stress levels. See our What's Normal page to identify how much sleep children need at different ages

<https://standinginthegap.uk/whats-normal>

Perhaps try doing a different activity e.g. such as a colouring sheet / artwork or a quiz.