

Lesson Plan: Stress

Introduction to Stress

1. Think about the things around us that cause us to feel stressed. These are the things that make our days harder, cause us to worry and might impact negatively on our emotional health. Think about different contexts, such as school, friendships, home, online and the world in general.
2. When we feel stressed about things our bodies start to react to the stress. Think about what the long term effects of stress might be. This could include:

- Mental health problems
- Headaches
- Stomach aches
- Heart problems
- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in appetite

Anything else?

There are also short term effects of stress. When our body responds to something scary or something that makes us feel unsafe then our body sends out warning signals to tell us that something doesn't feel right. These are called our Early Warning Signs.

3. Now think of something that makes you feel scared or unsafe.

Early Warning Signs

Read the following;

When we feel unsafe, our bodies tell us through physical sensations that something is wrong: these are called our Early Warning Signs and they are our body's way of trying to survive. It is useful to be able to recognise these signs early so that we can deal with multiple situations when these sensations arise.

There is a worksheet provided at the back of this lesson plan called Body Map. If you cannot print this worksheet please draw the worksheet.

Imagine that the thing you have identified as being scared of is in the room with you, or about to happen.

4. Now draw on the blank person body map all the things that would happen in your body if you were feeling scared or unsafe (for example, heart beating fast, breathing heavily, goosebumps, butterflies in your stomach, feeling sick etc).

Early Warning Signs

We might feel these physical sensations because of a one off crisis or moment of feeling scared, but we can also feel these sensations if we have been stressed over a long period of time, for example coming up to exams or during the current situation due to the pandemic.

Although there are a lot of different Early Warning Signs (EWS), there aren't that many that we can notice in other people.

Which of the EWS that you have would someone else see? – this is a reminder not to make judgments and assumptions when there is very little we know about what's going on for someone unless we ask them.

Feeling our Feelings

How would you behave if you noticed these physical sensations? What could you do if you noticed these signs and realised you were in danger?

5. Now think about anger and imagine it like a volcano. Using the worksheet at the back of this lesson plan, populate the action layer of the volcano. If you cannot print the worksheet please draw the Volcano worksheet. Please read the following statement;

'When you are angry, what would people notice about your behaviour that would tell them that you were angry?'

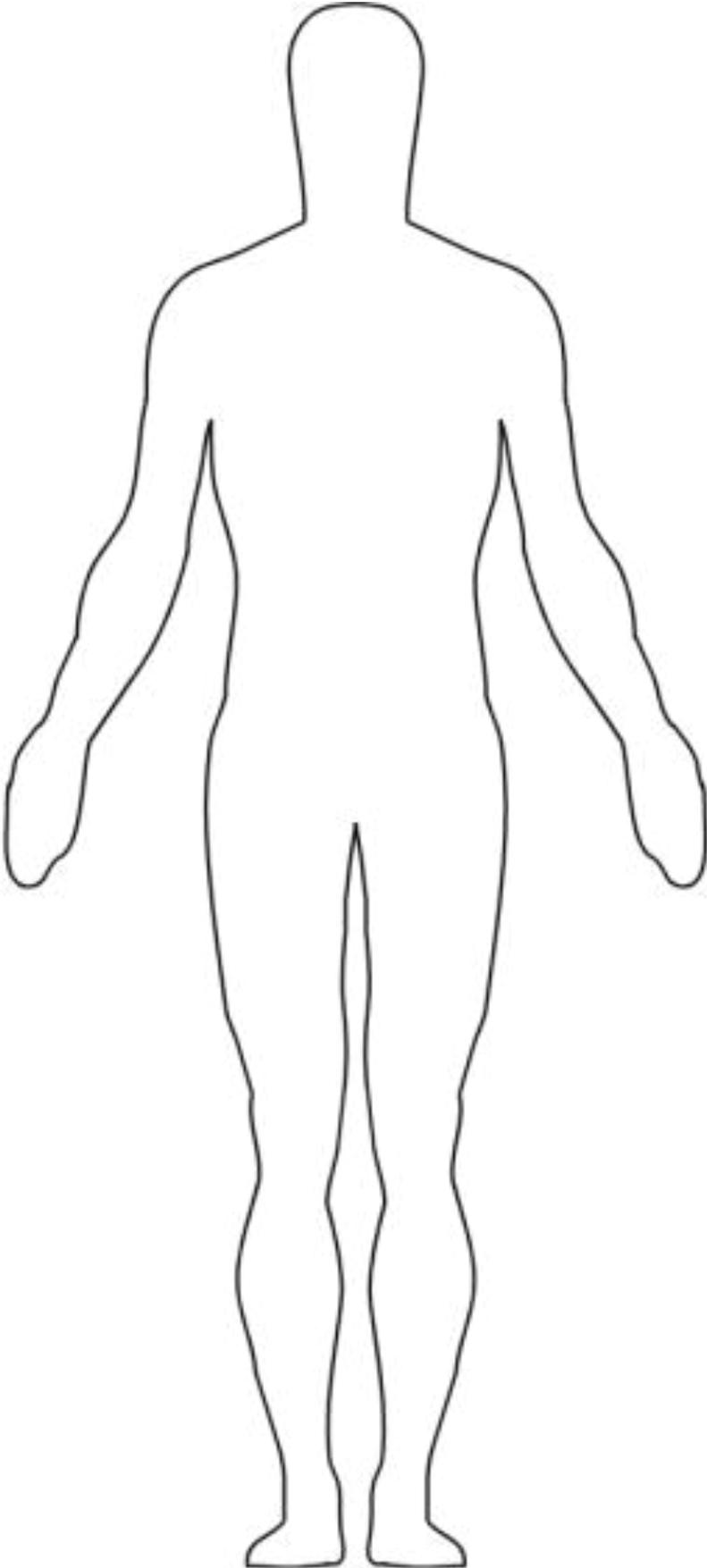
6. Before our 'eruption' there are often loads of really subtle triggers that other people might not notice but we are aware of, in our own bodies. Populate the trigger layer of the volcano.

Refer to your Early Warning Signs to complete the last layer.

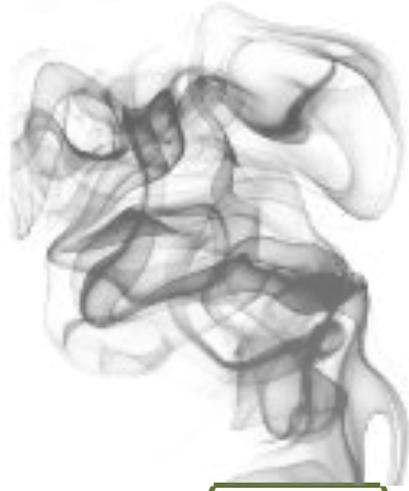
Now please read the following:

Before you "erupt", what are the warning signs that you notice? This might be feelings, emotions or physical sensations – remember to think back to Early Warning Signs to help you.

Body Map



Volcano



Action

Trigger
**(Internal feelings/
mood)**

Events/External