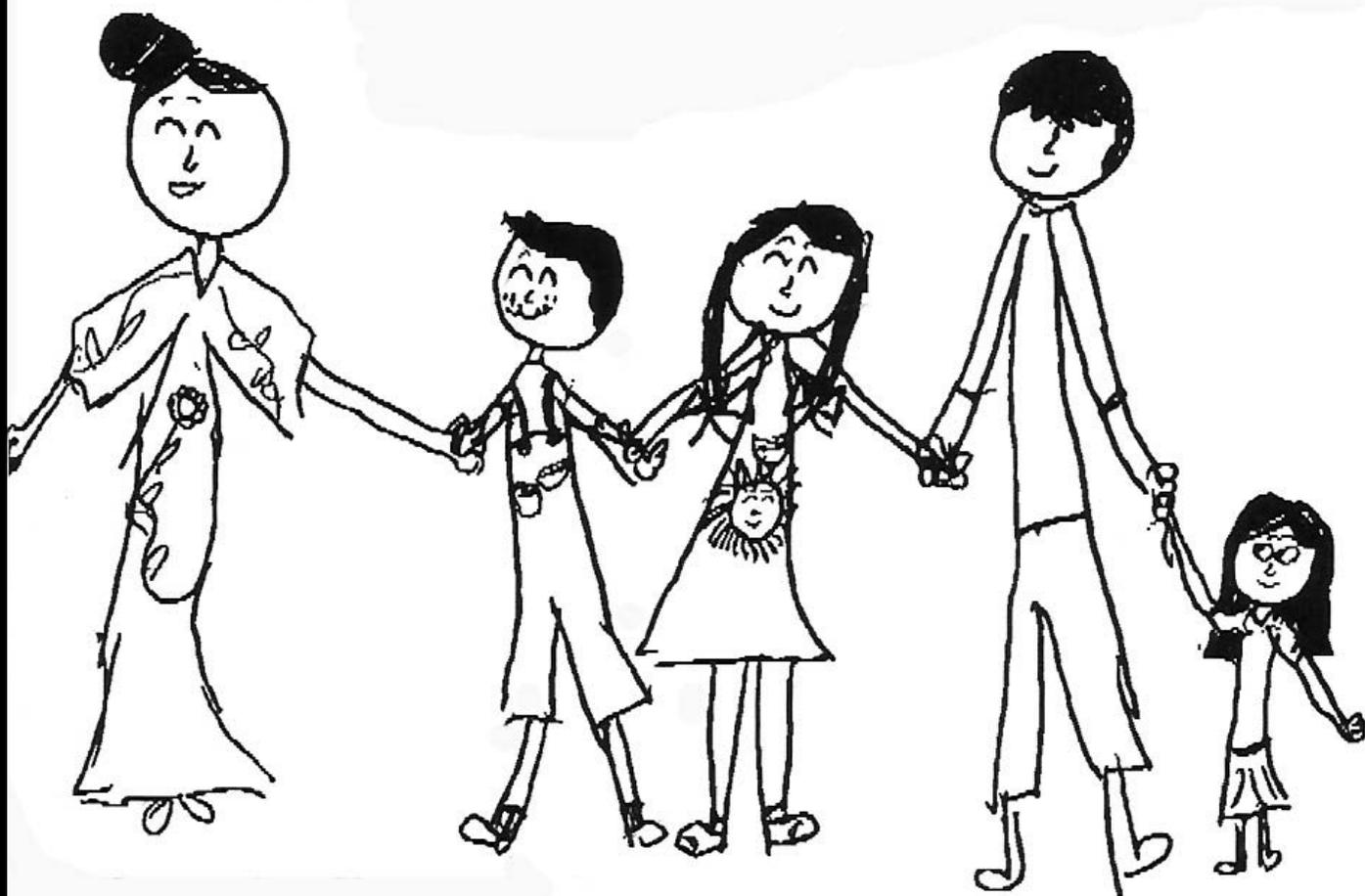


Cool Kids

TOOL KIT



**A “Color-Along” Guide
to Keeping Cool and Dealing with Stress**

Illustrated by West Virginia children and teens

Published May 2009 in honor of National Children’s Mental Health Day

 **West Virginia**
CoolKids
COOL, CALM & CONFIDENT

What is STRESS?

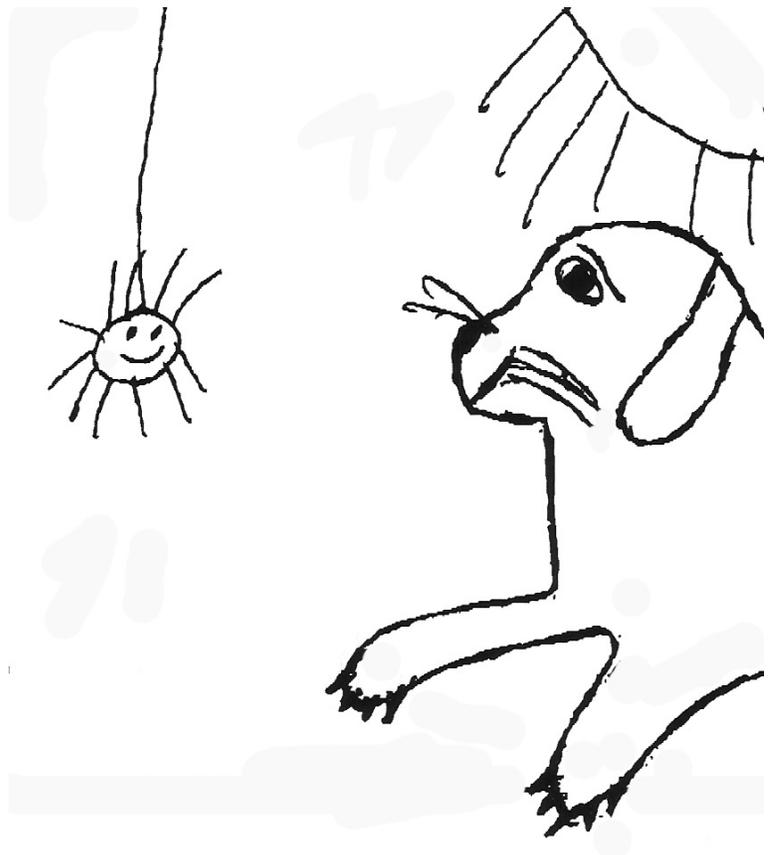
Stress is the reaction that happens whenever people (or animals) feel threatened.

Stress causes body and mind changes to get us ready for a “fight-or-flight” response.

Our heart rate and blood flow speed up. Our senses become sharper.

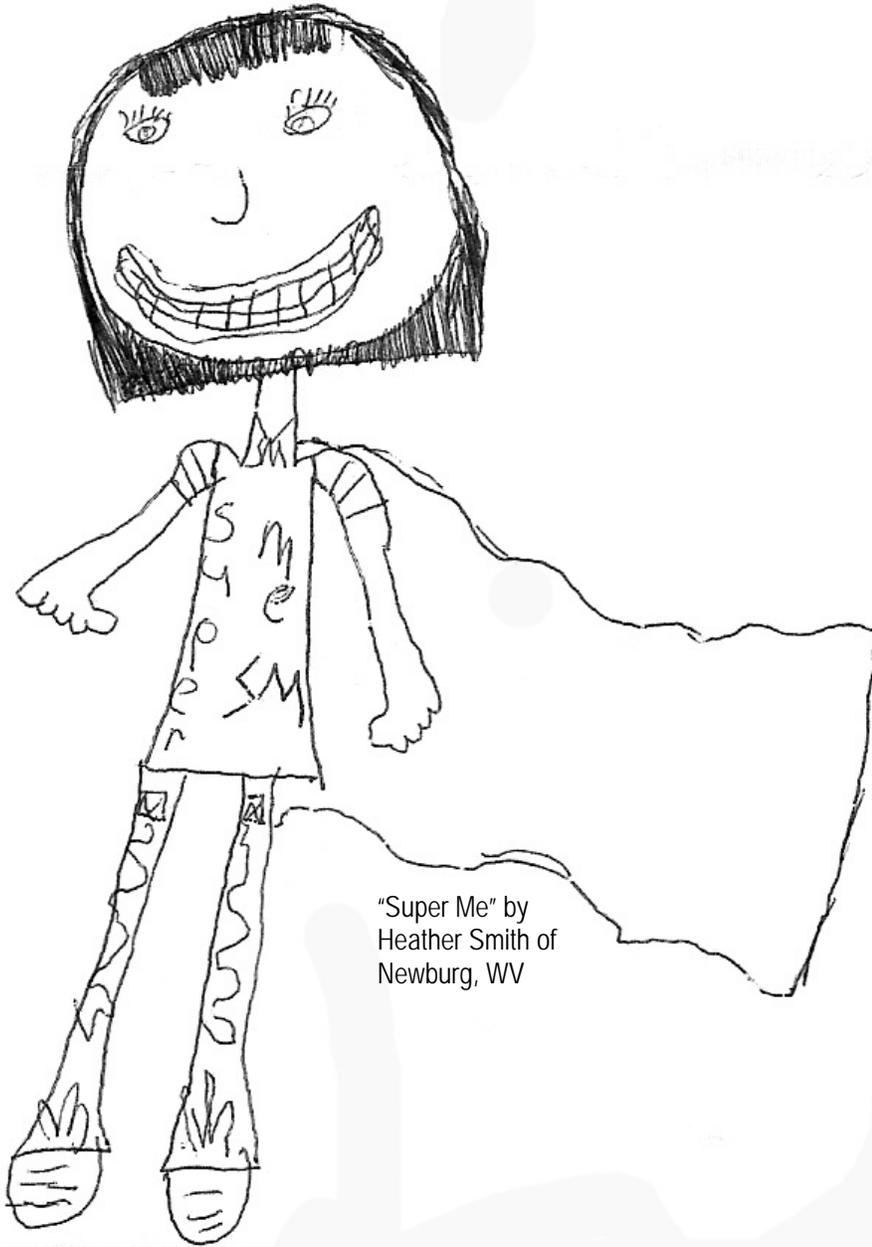
Stress can come in handy if our lives are really in danger (when escaping natural disasters or facing wild animals).

Stress is your body’s reaction to things that scare, irritate, confuse or excite you.



Not all Stress is Bad

Stress can be positive or negative. Positive stress pushes you to complete a task or try something new.



"Super Me" by
Heather Smith of
Newburg, WV

A normal amount of stress can give you the energy to finish the last mile of a bike race or make you mentally alert to pass a big test.

You may not think stress has much to do with your life.

But have you ever tried out for a team, taken a test, gotten a new baby in the family, or changed schools?

All of these things can cause stress.

Whew! After a Stressful Event...

Stress makes us stronger and faster for the time it takes to survive a challenge. When the threat has passed, we feel drained — and we are!

Stress slows down everything in our bodies not needed for survival.

Our digestion, immune system and growth hormones all slow down.

It takes rest, nourishment and a feeling of safety to get back to normal.



"Lilly" by Heilea Cates of Ranson, WV

Warning Signs of STRESS OVERLOAD

What if we felt in danger most of the time?

The stress response would never turn off!

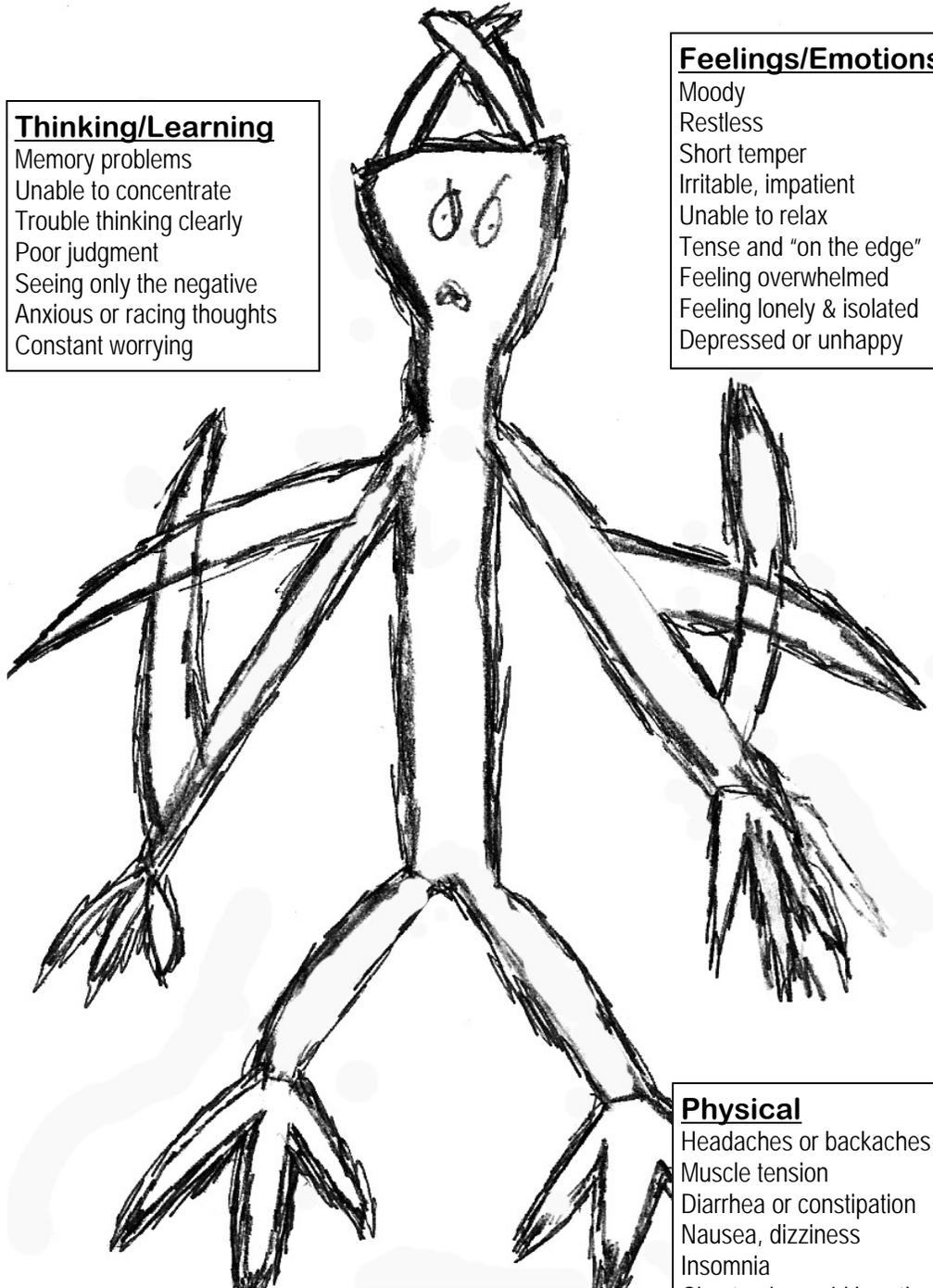
That would harm our bodies and our minds, in any of these ways!

Thinking/Learning

Memory problems
Unable to concentrate
Trouble thinking clearly
Poor judgment
Seeing only the negative
Anxious or racing thoughts
Constant worrying

Feelings/Emotions

Moody
Restless
Short temper
Irritable, impatient
Unable to relax
Tense and "on the edge"
Feeling overwhelmed
Feeling lonely & isolated
Depressed or unhappy



Physical

Headaches or backaches
Muscle tension
Diarrhea or constipation
Nausea, dizziness
Insomnia
Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
Weight gain or loss
Skin breakouts
Frequent colds

Behavior

Eating more or less
Sleeping too much or too little
Isolating yourself from others
Putting off or avoiding responsibility
Using alcohol, cigarettes, drugs
Nervous habits (like nail biting)
Teeth grinding, jaw clenching
Overdoing activities (like exercise, shopping, etc.)
Overreacting to unexpected situations
Picking fights with others

"Lightning Bolt" by Aaron of Marlinton, WV

SOURCES OF

Young people experience stressful events, big and small, good and bad.

Check off each thing that happened to you in the past year:

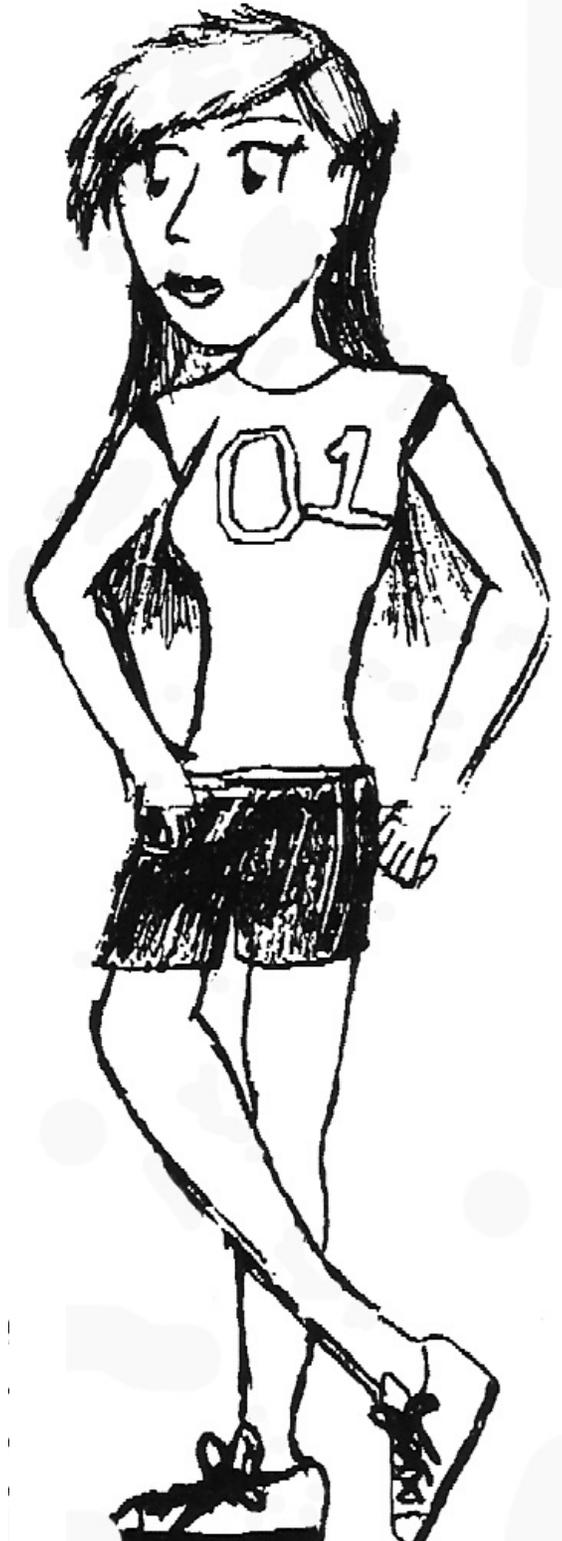
- Doing something I'm not comfortable with
- Making new friends
- Trying to be accepted by kids at school
- Fighting with a friend
- Trying to look good; wearing the right clothes
- Not getting along with my brothers or sisters
- Worrying about money
- Death of a close relative or family member
- Being left out
- Parent loses job
- Being home alone after school

- Not being good at sports, music, dance, spelling, math, etc.
- Trying hard but still failing
- Parents giving me too many jobs and responsibilities
- Parents don't listen to me
- Death of a friend or classmate
- Speaking in front of class
- Having adults expect too much from me
- Joining a new after-school/weekend activity
- Changing schools

STRESS

- Bullying or violence at school
- Divorce of parents
- Parents fighting or separated
- Getting sick or hurt
- Gaining a new family member (baby or stepfamily member)
- Change of someone's health in my family
- Arguments with parents
- Moving
- Having trouble with a teacher
- Going on vacation

*Too many stress events in a few months, or even one big, bad stress event, could cause **STRESS OVERLOAD!***



"Sarah" by Cheyenne Stewart of Tunnelton, WV

Stop Stress in its Tracks!

Here are some tricks to help you **KEEP COOL** and deal with life without too much anger or worry, even when stressful events **HEAT THINGS UP!**



"Nanner" by Brandon
Ryman of Ranson, WV

Trick 1:

Take care of yourself

Make sure you eat right, sleep enough, balance work and play, and spend time with people who like and support you.

Those simple things keep our minds clear and calm!

List your favorite healthy food:

What's your favorite bedtime routine?

What ways do you like to help others?

Trick 2:

Use “Self-Talk” (or think to yourself)

Remind yourself, when stressful things happen, that:

“Different is not always bad or wrong... it’s just different.”

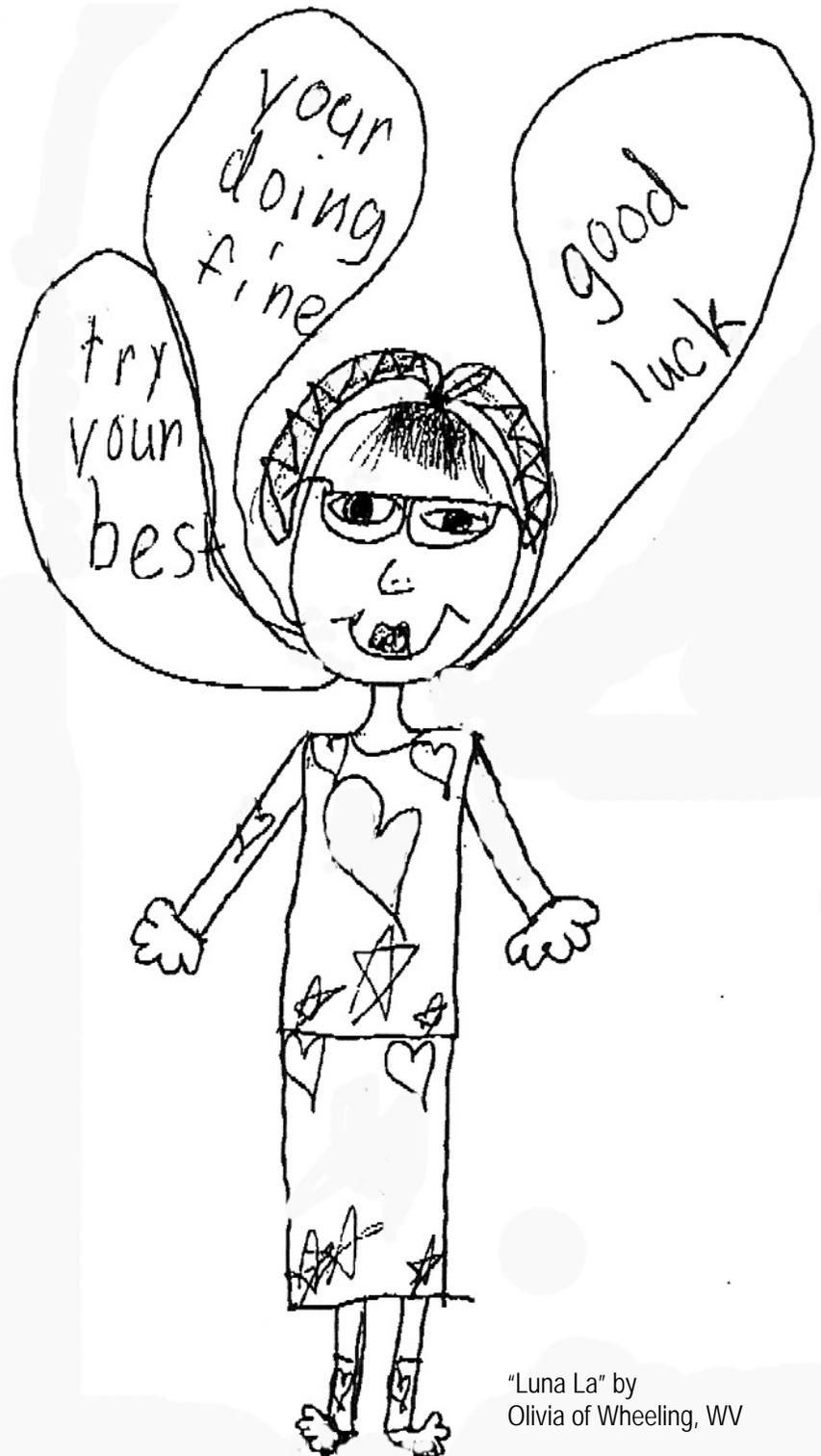
“No one is perfect (not even me), but everyone is good at something.”

“Mistakes are how we learn.”

“We get what we give—if we give anger, we get an angry world; if we give happiness, we get a happy world.”

Think of your own “words to the wise.”

What else will help you remember that you can be okay, no matter what happens?



“Luna La” by
Olivia of Wheeling, WV

Trick 3:

Stay in the “Now”

Thinking sad or angry thoughts about the past, or worried thoughts about the future, makes it hard to have fun now.

Think how easy life would be if we just did the right thing with what’s in front of us. Take things one moment and event at a time.

Trick 5:

Build Your Self-Esteem

It is easier to adjust to life and think clearly when we feel good about ourselves.

Learn and practice new skills. Find ways to rely on yourself, and take on new tasks. Be helpful to others.

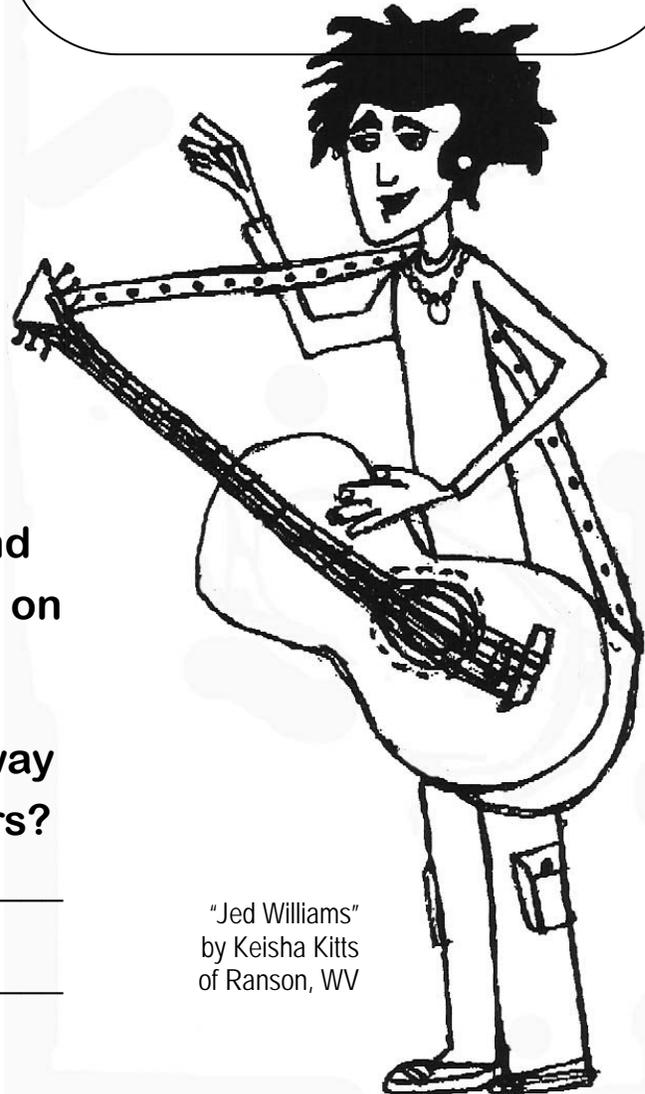
All those things can change the way we see the world. What are others?

Trick 4:

Use bad feelings as a “yellow light” - SLOW

After we slow down and calm down, we can give ourselves a “green light” and act with clear thinking.

There are lots of ways to calm down when we feel bad. We can walk away, or take deep breaths. Some people tense and relax their muscles, or use Trick 2.



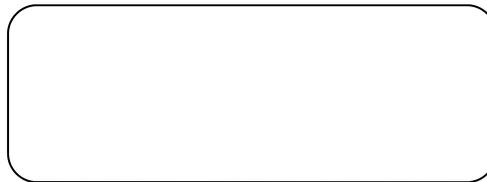
“Jed Williams”
by Keisha Kitts
of Ranson, WV

More Help:

Sometimes people forget the tricks that can stop stress. Sometimes they feel so overwhelmed they get sick, or they can't remember how to work or play, have fun or enjoy family and friends.

If you are having lots of trouble with stress, you don't have to stay that way. Tell a trusted adult (family, teacher, pastor or friend). Here are some more people and places that can help:

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER CLOSEST TO ME:



OTHER SUPPORT & CRISIS NUMBERS:

FAST PROGRAM/SUPPORT & INFORMATION FOR PARENTS **1-866-255-4370**

WV COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE **1-304-965-3552**

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE **1-800-656-HOPE (4673)**

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE **1-800-273-8255**



Source Material:

Robin Weiner, Logan-Mingo Area Mental Health—Logan
Lynne Stanley, Northwood Health Systems—Wheeling
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Agriculture and Applied Science
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Mountain State Parent Child & Adolescent Network
West Virginia Licensed Professional Counselors Association
West Virginia System of Care Implementation Team—Communication Committee

THIS PUBLICATION IS AVAILABLE AS AN ADOBE PDF DOCUMENT DOWNLOADABLE AT:

www.wvsystemofcare.org

Keep Your Kid Cool: **Parents & Caregivers Can Help Kids Manage Stress**

Establish a Daily Family Routine

Have a family routine that includes eating meals together, a regular time for homework each afternoon or evening, and going to bed at a set time.

Set Boundaries for Children

Children feel reassured and protected when guidelines are firm. Couching your "no" with care and concern is more likely to coax a cooperative response. Learn other ways to say "no," such as "Yes, after your homework is done."

Listen and Encourage

Listen to your children and encourage them to express their feelings, especially if you sense that they may be overwhelmed or experiencing stress. Respect their feelings and reassure them that everyone experiences nervousness, fear, and anxiety. It's okay to feel this way.

Offer Stress Safety Valves

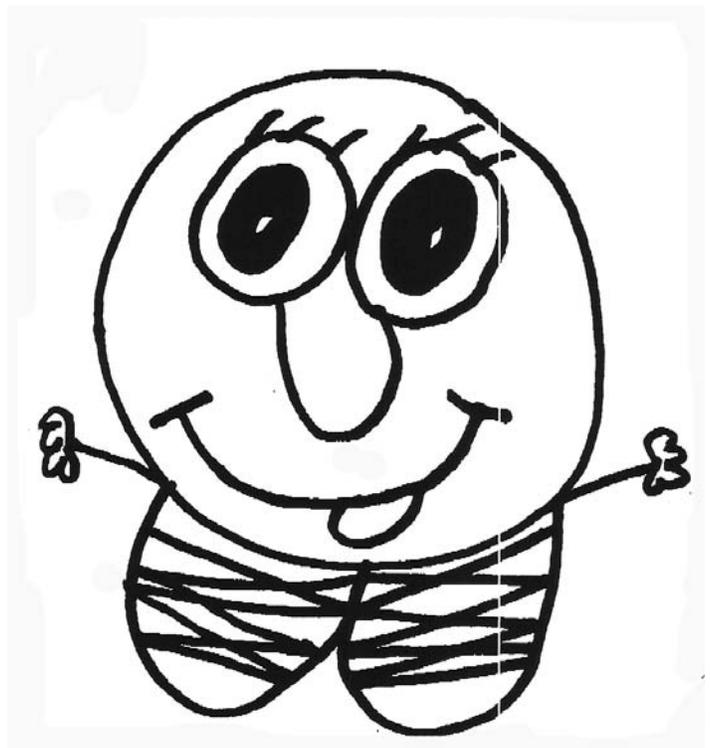
Every child, teen, and adult needs stress safety valves—ways to relax or enjoy some downtime. Tried and true safety valves include taking a walk, listening to music, breathing slowly on a 1 to 10 count, even smiling at someone. Help your children relieve some of the pressure they might be feeling by providing time and space for large-motor activities such as running and jumping. Having a special time and place for noisy activities is an excellent outlet for expressing aggression.

Be a Role Model for Coping Skills

Parents can model and teach their kids how to cope. For example, break a large task into smaller ones and take time out from stressful situations.

Take Good Care of Yourself!

Exercise and eat regularly. Avoid excess caffeine in coffee or sodas that can increase feelings of anxiety and agitation. Avoid alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. Get help if you have trouble facing the challenges of everyday living.



"MoPo" by Taelor Spade of Independence, WV