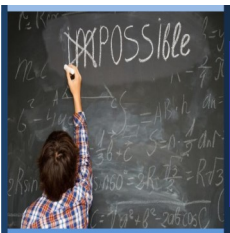
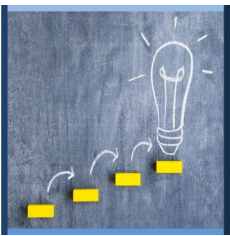


4S Skills for Secondary School Success

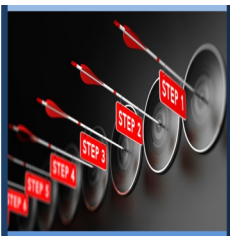


Student Manual

2025 Edition



Unit 2: Confronting Challenges and Having a Growth Mindset



Experience of Stress

Below are some questions about how you experience stress. We want you to take a few minutes and think about what stress may feel like in your body. The goal is to identify what stress may feel like or look like, so you know when it may be time to take a break or relax. You do not have to share your answers with anyone if you prefer not to do so.

In a typical week, how many nights do you have difficulty sleeping?

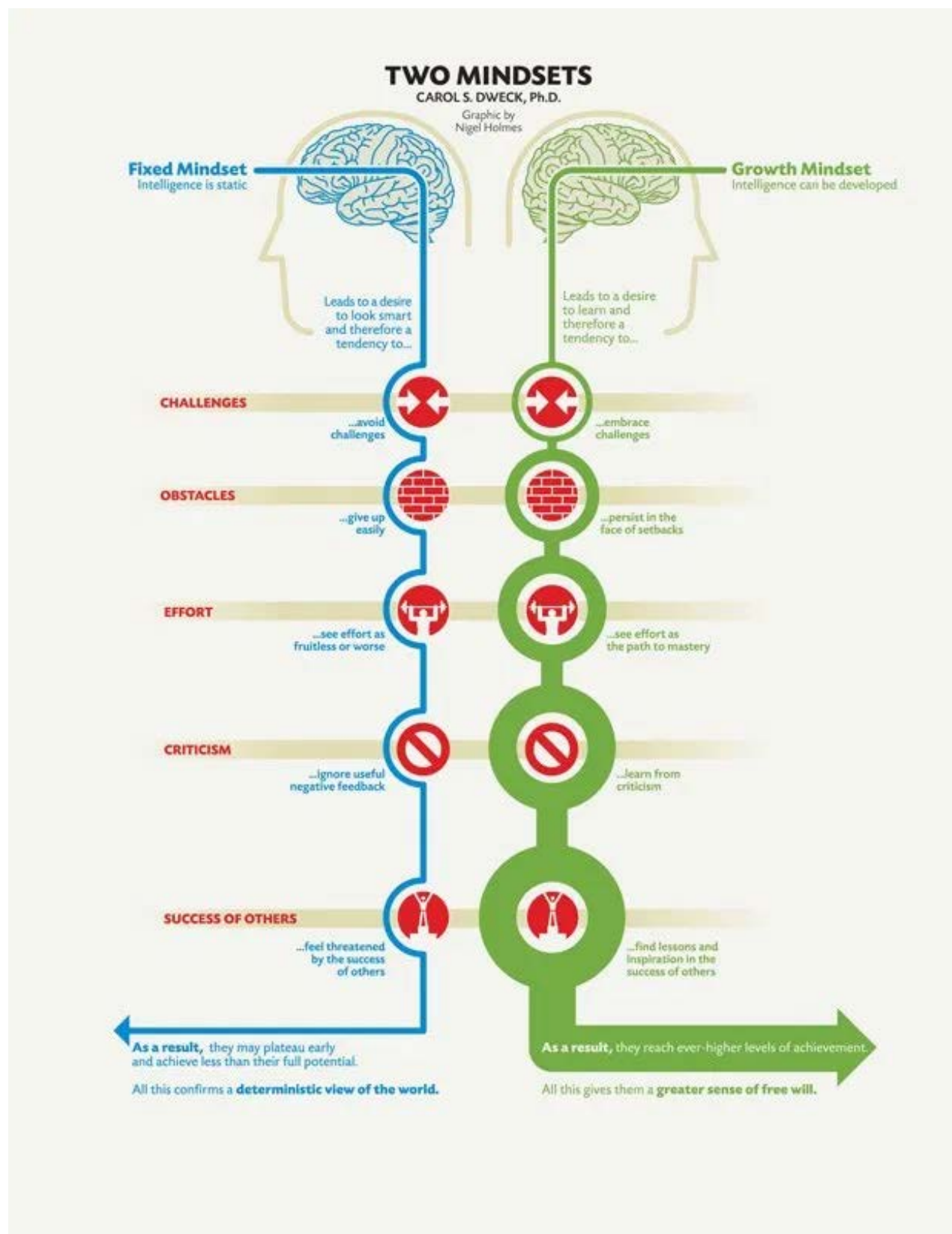
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How often do you..

	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once a week	Multiple times a week	Multiple times a day
get headaches?					
feel sick to your stomach because of stress?					
have difficulty being physically still because of stress?					
feel your heart racing because of stress?					
start arguments because you feel stressed out?					

How often do you...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
...get annoyed with others because you feel stressed?					
... have difficulty focusing because of everything going on in your life?					



Self-Regulation Strategies

Below is a list of strategies that people use when they are very emotionally charged or feeling stressed. These activities can help you calm down or refocus. Check any of the items that you either currently do or would like to try.

Self-regulation strategy	I do this	I would like to try	Not for me
1. Deep breathing or meditation			
2. Identify and label your feelings			
3. Talk about it with someone you trust			
4. Call someone you love or care about			
5. Do something nice for someone else			
6. Write down 5 things you feel grateful for			
7. Go for a walk			
8. Write in a journal about what is bothering you			
9. Squeeze a stress ball			
10. Draw or doodle			
11. Stretch			
12. Read a book			
13. Drink water			
14. Listen to music			
15. Exercise			
16. Count to 20 (or 100)			
17. Sit in a quiet place			
18. Play a game or do a puzzle			
19. Give someone a hug			
20. Watch a funny video			

Signs of Stress Activity Sheet

Stress is your body’s responses to events around you. Stress can be both positive and negative; if you decide to run a 5K race and begin training, your body will experience a good stress. If you break your leg, that is a bad stress. Sometimes stress is both positive and negative. Ideally, your level of stress should be motivating, not overwhelming or draining. Too much stress will exhaust your body and mind and lead to serious health problems.

Stress affects your mind and your body. It causes powerful feelings and biological changes. Your body responds with a “fight or flight response.” It is ready to fight to defend itself or run away to be safe from danger. Your heart speeds up. Stress hormones flood your body, preparing you for action. You may feel highly alert and focused. But if the stress continues, you will experience negative consequences.

List as many symptoms of stress as you can in the chart below.

Physical Symptoms	Emotional Symptoms
Behavioral Symptoms	Mental Symptoms

Causes of Stress

Making School Better

Based on what you have learned about stress and some of the causes, what are ways we can make school less stressful? How about ways we can help students manage stress? With your team, brainstorm some ideas for principals, teachers, and in general.

Ideas for the principal

Ideas for teachers

General ideas

The Stress Response: Sympathetic vs. Parasympathetic Nervous System**The Sympathetic Nervous System****Stress Response**

Revs you up, preparing you to fight, take flight, or freeze

- Heart beats fast
- Breath is fast and shallow
- Pupils expand to take in more light
- Stop digesting food
- Blood rushes to your muscles
- Hormones rush through your body
- High energy use

**The Parasympathetic Nervous System****Relaxation Response**

Calms you down, preparing you to rest, think, and recover

- Heart beats slow and rhythmic
- Breath is full and slow
- Pupils return to normal
- Food digestion resumes
- Blood flow returns to your gut and lungs
- Hormones lift your mood and help you relax
- Saves energy



What are three differences between the stress response and the relaxation response?

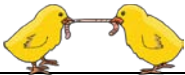
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Conflict Journal



My Conflict	Who Was Involved	What It Was About	My Response	How Could I Have Handled It Better?

Steps to P.E.A.C.E.: How to Remain Calm Under Pressure

P = Identify the PROBLEM

E = EXAMINE yourself

A = Get some ADVICE

C = CONSIDER the result you want

E = EXHIBIT the skills of a self-controlled person

P = Identify PROBLEM

E = EXAMINE yourself

A = seek ADVICE

C = CONSIDER outcome

E = EXHIBIT self-control

Problem: What recent problem/event made me want to lose my cool?

Examine: Why did I feel this way? What did it feel like in my body? What things affected how I reacted?

Advice: Did I get advice from someone? What did he, she, or they say?

Consider: What positive outcome did I want?

Exhibit: What did it (or would it) look like for me to be a self-controlled person?

Emotional Triggers Checklist

When teenagers were asked to identify things that made them mad, they listed things at school, home, in their relationships and in themselves. They also mentioned specific feelings that may lead to more intense emotions. Are any of these your triggers too?



School

- _____ Other kids fool around in class so we can't learn
- _____ School work doesn't seem to relate to my future goals
- _____ The physical condition of my school
- _____ Getting detention or a negative consequence
- _____ Feeling misunderstood by my teacher
- _____ Getting publicly called out
- _____ Too much homework
- _____ Being treated unfairly or accused of something that I did not do

Family

- _____ My brother/sister
- _____ Fighting, separation, or divorce of parents/guardians
- _____ Chronic illness or death of a loved one
- _____ Too many responsibilities at home
- _____ Parents working all the time
- _____ Parents treating me like a little kid
- _____ Parents not understanding my perspective

Friends

- _____ Having fights with friends
- _____ Friends pressuring me to do things I don't want to do
- _____ Friends not being nice to me
- _____ Friends not including me in their plans
- _____ People talking about me behind my back

Me

- _____ Changes in my body
- _____ Not getting a chance to voice my opinion to parents or teachers
- _____ Taking on too many activities; feeling overwhelmed
- _____ Feeling lonely

Experiences

- _____ Feeling unheard
- _____ Feeling embarrassed
- _____ Feeling judged
- _____ Feeling blamed
- _____ Feeling disrespected
- _____ Feeling ignored
- _____ Feeling disconnected
- _____ Feeling manipulated

What are some of your other triggers?

Remaining Calm



What does it look like and sound like to remain calm under pressure?

Looks Like	Sounds Like

Self-Regulation Strategies:

What are strategies you use to regulate your emotions?



Margarita's Conflict: Fight, Flee or Face?

People sometimes use avoidance (fleeing) to deal with problems because they are afraid to confront the other person, hate conflict, or have an unhealthy need to please others. Other people fight or attack by criticizing, insulting, blaming, bullying, spreading rumors, gossiping, or using violence. They would rather attack than admit they might be wrong. But some people learn to face conflict head on and try to solve their problems.

Let's see if we can recognize when people use the unsuccessful approaches and discover the third way—a way to address conflict positively. Read these scenarios and answer the questions.

1. Margarita has been working with Peter on a science project all semester. It is an important part of their grade. She is frustrated because several times Peter agreed to meet her after school to work on the project, but stood her up and went out with friends instead. He once joked that he wished the teacher had made him work with Tayisha instead because she is so good looking. Margarita has never talked to him about these things, or told him that she is frustrated and hurt by his actions. She acts as if everything is okay between them.

What approach is Margarita using? _____

Is this approach working? Why do you think so? _____

2. When Margarita invited Peter over to her house last week to work on the project, he was forty-five minutes late and offered no apology. He had not done the research he had agreed to do. Instead, he told Margarita, "You should probably do all the research, because you have more time." She lost her temper. "You are such a jerk! You haven't done anything to help with this project. If we fail, it will be your fault!"

How did Margarita deal with this conflict? What approach did she use? _____

Will this approach work? Why do you think so? _____

How can Margarita address this conflict in a healthier way? _____

Sorting Through Conflict

Some ways of responding to problems are more effective than others. For example, if you flee or avoid the issue, it may not get resolved. Taking an aggressive approach may not help either, as it could make the problem worse. A better approach is to face the issue calmly and thoughtfully. Below are some different ways people handle problems. Decide whether each one is an example of **fleeing**, **fighting**, or **facing** a problem, and write it in the appropriate space.

- Apologizing when wrong

Blaming someone else

Bullying

Compromising or collaborating

Cooling down to think straight

Denying that there’s a problem

Fighting

Asking for help
- Gossiping or back-stabbing

Insulting others




Keeping score to attack later

Pretending to be okay

Running away

Talking to the person

Trying to improve the relationship

Strategy	Examples
<div>Flee</div> <div>(Avoid)</div> <div></div>	
<div>Fight</div> <div>(Attack)</div> <div></div>	
<div>Face</div> <div>(Address)</div> <div></div>	

Role Play: Three Approaches to Conflict

	The Scenarios	Response
#1	Joshua, Tami, Ramon, and Hamid have formed a band. They have been asked to play at a friend's 16 th birthday party. Hamid wants to replace Tami, who sings and plays guitar, with another singer. What should Tami do?	What would avoidance look like? What would attacking look like? What would it look like for Tami to address the problem?
#2	Miguel (14) thinks his mother asks him to do too many chores, especially since his brother Juan, who is 12, hardly has to do any. What should Miguel do?	What would avoidance look like? What would attacking look like? What would it look like for Miguel to address the problem?
#3	Christina is hanging out with a guy Holly used to like. Holly sent a mean and insulting text message to Christina because she is jealous. What should Christina do?	What would avoidance look like? What would attacking look like? What would it look like for Christina to address the problem?
#4	Devon bought a new pair of expensive sneakers. It took him a month to save up the money to buy them. At lunch, Roger is not looking where he is going and spills his drink on Devon's new shoes. What should Devon do?	What would avoidance look like? What would attacking look like? What would it look like for Devon to address the problem?
#5	Julia is playing basketball after school when one of the other girls on the team, Stacy, gets very aggressive. Stacy starts trash talking and making fun of Julia's skills in front of the other girls. What should Julia do?	What would avoidance look like? What would attacking look like? What would it look like for Julia to address the problem?
#6	Felicia approaches Andres in the lunchroom and tells him that she heard from David that Andres' family was evicted because his mom was using drugs. This is not true, and Andres is very upset. What should he do?	What would avoidance look like? What would attacking look like? What would it look like for Andres to address the problem?

Three Conflict Strategies: Looks Like/ Sounds Like

When we think about three conflict strategies—flee, fight or face—what does that look like? What does it sound like? Brainstorm with your peers to fill out the t-chart below.

Strategy	Looks Like	Sounds Like
Flee (Avoid)		
Fight (Attack)		
Face (Address)		

Introduction to Mindfulness

As we watch the video on mindfulness, jot down some ideas about the following:

What does it mean to be mindful?

What are some benefits of being mindful?

What are ways we can practice mindfulness?

Mindfulness Myths

Read the mindfulness statements below and decide whether they are facts or myths.

Mindfulness Statement	Fact	Myth
1. Mindfulness can only be practiced by adults.		
2. To be mindful, you need to be sitting in a quiet room.		
3. Mindfulness is just about paying attention and being intentional.		
4. Identifying negative thoughts is part of being mindful.		
5. Practicing mindfulness can make you smarter.		
6. Mindfulness can change your brain.		
7. Mindfulness can reduce your stress level.		
8. In order to be mindful, you need to clear your mind.		

What You Say vs. What You May Feel

Part of being mindful is being able to label how we are feeling. Read the statements below and identify the feelings that are represented by the statement. Think about ideas for things the person could do—or a friend could do—to help them feel better.

1. “Leave me alone. Nobody cares about me.”

Feelings: _____

Action ideas: _____

2. “I don’t need your help. I can do this alone.”

Feelings: _____

Action ideas: _____

3. “We’re supposed to be best friends! I can’t believe you told on me!”

Feelings: _____

Action ideas: _____

4. “Yeah, I guess I was mean to her. I shouldn’t have said what I did.”

Feelings: _____

Action ideas: _____

5. “I can write in my book if I want. It’s mine. I can do what I want with it.”

Feelings: _____

Action ideas: _____

6. “You never get mad at *her*, just at me!”

Feelings: _____

Action ideas: _____

7. “I’ll never do as well as he does, no matter how long I practice.”

Feelings: _____

Action ideas: _____

8. “There’s nothing to do. I’m bored.”

Feelings: _____

Action ideas: _____

9. “I give up. I can’t figure it out. I’ll never be able to figure it out.”

Feelings: _____

Action ideas: _____

10. “This is dumb! I hate school.”

Feelings: _____

Action ideas: _____

My Video Reviews

Tell the authors what you think by circling your response to each question:

Video #1—*Neuroplasticity*:

1. How important was the information in this video?

Not at all important Somewhat important Very important

2. How boring was the video?

Very boring Somewhat boring Not boring

3. How confident are you that the video will encourage viewers to not give up when they confront challenges?

Not confident Somewhat confident Very confident

4. Overall, would you rate the video as rotten or fresh?



Rotten



Fresh

Video #2—*“You Can Learn Anything”*:

1. How important was the information in this video?

Not at all important Somewhat important Very important

2. How boring was the video?

Very boring Somewhat boring Not boring

3. How confident are you that the video will encourage viewers to not give up when they confront challenges?

Not confident Somewhat confident Very confident

4. Overall, would you rate the video as rotten or fresh?



Rotten



Fresh

My Partnership's Prediction¹

Agree on a prediction to make, use a marker to write it in the box below, and be ready to hold it up for everyone to see when your teacher asks all partnerships to reveal their predictions.

What % of 15-year-olds **disagree**
with the statement: “Your
intelligence is something that you
can’t change very much?”

--

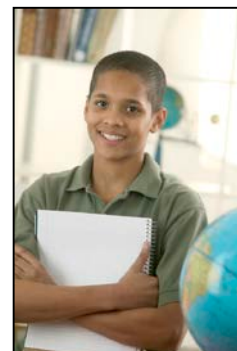
¹ If you would prefer students to display their prediction on a sturdy card rather than a flimsy sheet of paper, just print this page on cardstock (one for each pair of students)

Positive Self-Talk = More Stamina and Enthusiasm

Who do you talk to the most every day? Your best friend? Your teacher? A parent? Wrong.

The person you talk to the most every day is *yourself*.

That's right. What is playing on the podcast inside your head? On your internal "chat" with yourself? Is it positive or negative? Researchers who study human behavior have concluded that paying attention to what you say to yourself—and changing that message to one that is more encouraging, positive, and productive — can help you to avoid discouragement or depression and find the stamina and enthusiasm that you need to accomplish your goals.



Many teens are bombarded by disparaging messages from a variety of sources, by negative voices that write them off, disrespect their potential, and suggest that they will never amount to much. That is why it is essential that our self-talk and our mindsets be voices of truth that remind us that the sky's the limit, because of our brain's growth potential and because of the learning opportunities, strategies, supports, and wise counsel available to us when we confront challenges.

Think about your own self-talk. Does it reflect a hopeful, can-do mindset that encourages you to sustain prolonged effort to meet your goals? Do your beliefs and internal messages encourage you to embrace challenges and take strategic actions to make things better?

Positive self-talk means correcting the disparaging things you say to yourself or hear from others and replacing them with positive messages that highlight possibilities for change and improvement, rather than giving up hope. This is important! People that embrace an optimistic view -- a conviction that they are of value and importance and have a hope and a future -- get back on their feet and find a path forward when they get knocked down by negative events.

Read about a challenging event, disparaging self-talk, and positive self-talk in the chart below. Then think about how to apply positive self-talk to other situations.

The Event	Disparaging Self-Talk	Positive Self-Talk
Joe doesn't want to be my friend anymore	I'm unlovable.	I didn't work hard enough at that relationship.
I failed the unit test in math.	I'm stupid. I always do badly in math.	I could have done better if I'd studied more and reached out for some tutoring. I'll try both these things on the next unit.
I didn't get the part I wanted in the school play.	I don't get big parts because I have no talent. And, the director hates me.	I'll ask the director about tips on what to work on and on an acting coach, class, or summer program to help me improve.

Practicing Positive Self-Talk

The Event	Disparaging Self-Talk	Positive Self-Talk
It’s next year. You have just started high school. Very few of your acquaintances are in your class section. None of your close friends has the same lunch period as you. High school feels like a lonely, friendless place where you don’t belong.		
You have to do a science fair project, but you’ve never done one before. It seems like some of your classmates already know what to do because they did science fairs in their old school.		
Your freshman English class requires a lot of writing every week. But, you’ve never had a class teaching you about how to write. You struggle deciding what to write about and how to best convey your ideas in words.		



Confronting Challenges: Managing Stress

Student Activity Sheet: Moving On from Failure

Think about a time when you made a huge mistake or failed miserably at something. **Describe** that time in several sentences. Discuss **what happened** (including important background details) and **how it made you feel**.

What are some **lessons** you can learn from this failure? (Consider how these may include one or more of the following: new ways of doing things, things to avoid, people to consult, ways of thinking, etc.)

What would help you to keep on trying in the future, in spite of this failure? (Who can you call on for help?)