

Stress Scale

The stress scale is designed to define indicators, identify/reflect upon stress levels and to instruct the student and significant adults in strategies to manage stress that interfere with the learning process or with relationships with others. The child's indicators of stress are broken down into five distinct levels, from low to high.

Although "just right" can be assigned the number one position, the team may consider the number two position for times when the child is drowsy or below optimal levels of energy. Level three is generally used for the first indicators of stress, such as sighing, pencil tapping or light complaining, etc. Level four is generally used for more escalated behavior such as swearing, single kicking of objects, loud complaining, ripping papers, etc. Level five usually refers to the tantrum, or "melt-down" stage, when the child is so escalated that he/she is unable to reason and seems out of control. This may include yelling/screaming, physical aggression against people or objects, sobbing or flight.

Have the child's team brainstorm what his/her indicators are for each level of stress and hypothesize what the "message" is, such as "I feel stupid." The team should also brainstorm strategies, accommodations and modifications that might be helpful at each level of stress.

When this is completed, have a trusted person work with the child to help identify his/her own stress levels, including what they look like, how he/she feels and what helps/might help. Use the information drawn from the team discussion to help stimulate the conversation. Worksheets are available for younger children.

If strategies are difficult to come up with, consider enlisting the aid of the child's therapist, if applicable, the child's physician, or an occupational therapist.

A second scale is then created for staff and caregivers to aid in identification of the signs of stress and actions staff should take at each level. Replacing

the “feels like” column is a “message is” column. This column is used to help the adult to speculate possible antecedents or causes of the state. These may include statements such as the aforementioned “

Work with the child periodically to help him/her learn the indicators, determine his/her level of stress and to learn the coping strategies for each level. A color-coded, numbered thermometer can be used as a visual support and to allow non-verbal communication of the child’s state of stress. During the first signs of stress elevation, suggest a break, or the use of one of the other defined strategies. Before returning to work, process lightly to help the child identify the stress indicators and actions he/she might have initiated him/herself. Do not attempt to engage the child when at a level five. The team should discuss the appropriateness of intervention during level four states.

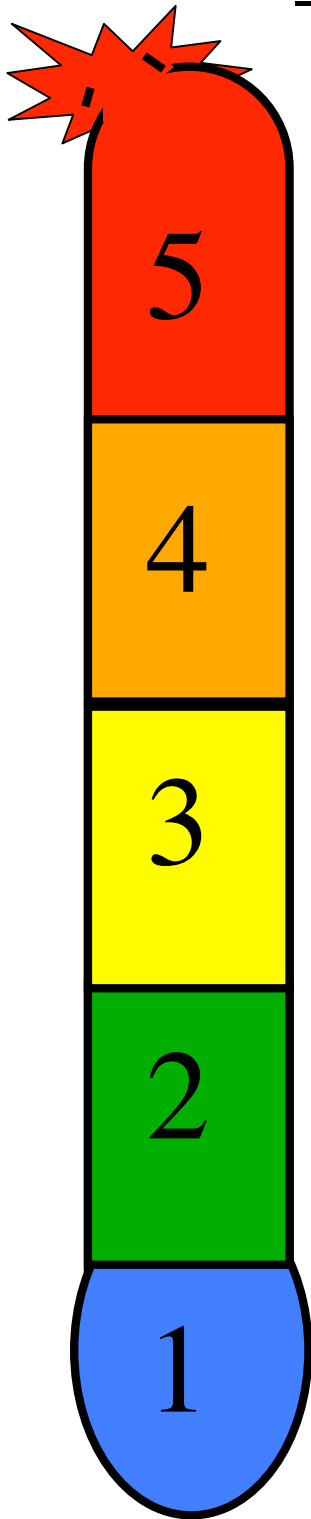
Following states of heightened stress, or the occurrence of potential stress triggers, process with the child using the scale. Use the scale as a springboard to guide him/her to recognize the levels of stress experienced during the incident. In addition, compliment the child for appropriate use of defined strategies and/or discuss alternative actions that might have created a more positive outcome.

This scale can also be used to simplify data collection. If an incident occurs, for example, data collection forms can include a space for the stress level exhibited, reducing the amount of writing that might otherwise have been necessary.

Stress levels can be tracked over time and graphed to determine if any patterns exist. Patterns may indicate immediate causes of stress, such as stressful transitions or time of day. Additionally, patterns may be found with long-term cycles of stress/behavior that could be an indicator of an underlying biochemical difference. In fact, the format may also be used to break down levels of depression/mania. This is a particularly important use of the tools when managing school integration of a child who is identified as being severely depressed with or without suicidal ideation.

For assistance with this program, contact Kathryn Whitaker at kwhitaker@northcountryschools.org.

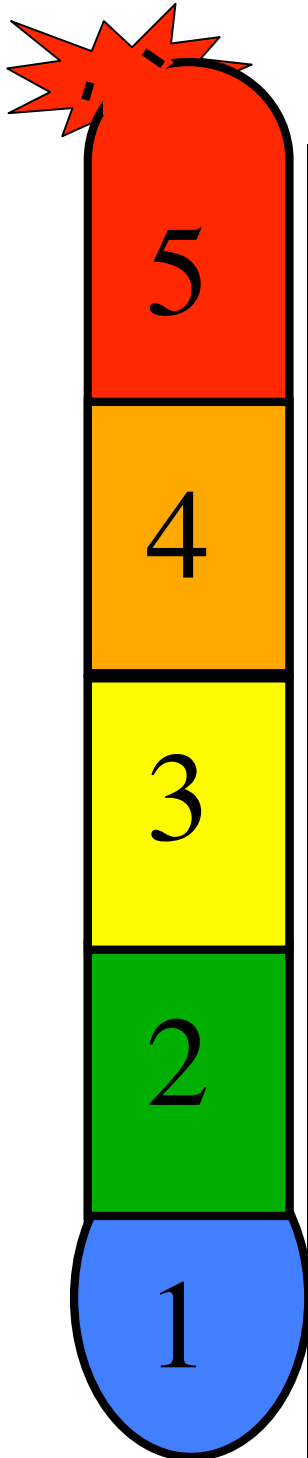
's Stress Scale



Looks like	Feels Like	"I can"

's Stress Levels:

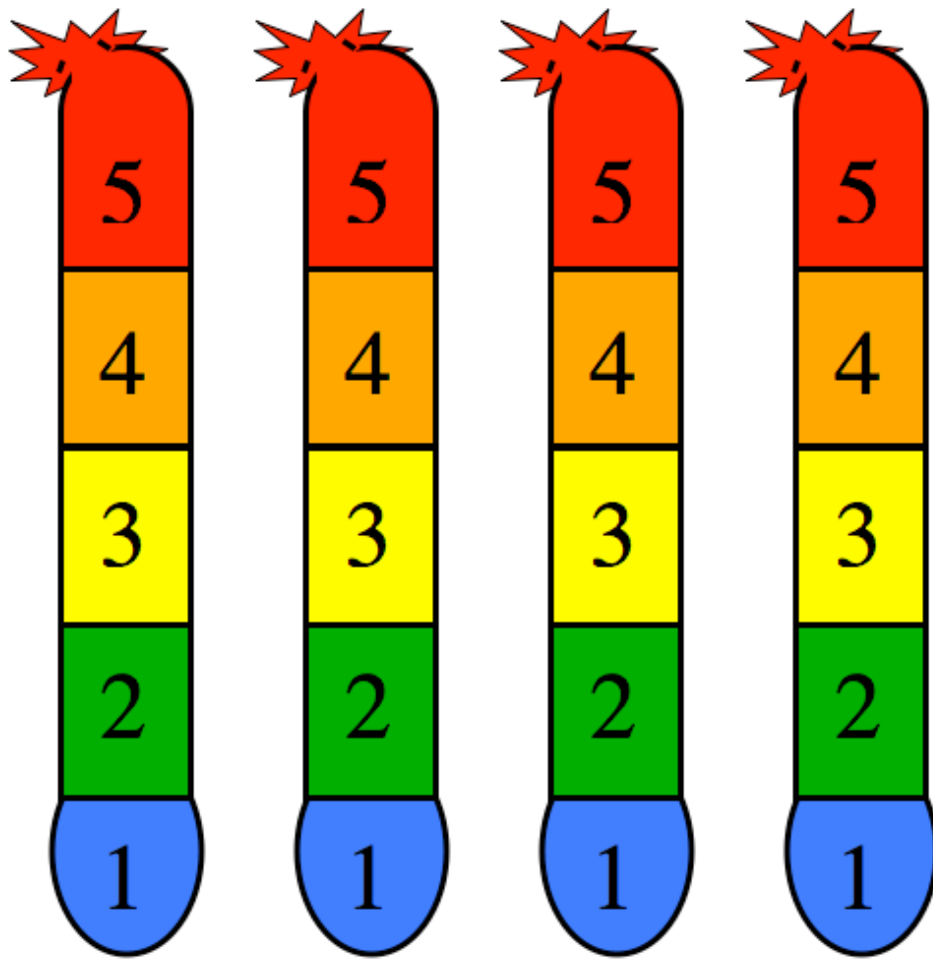
Caregiver Guide



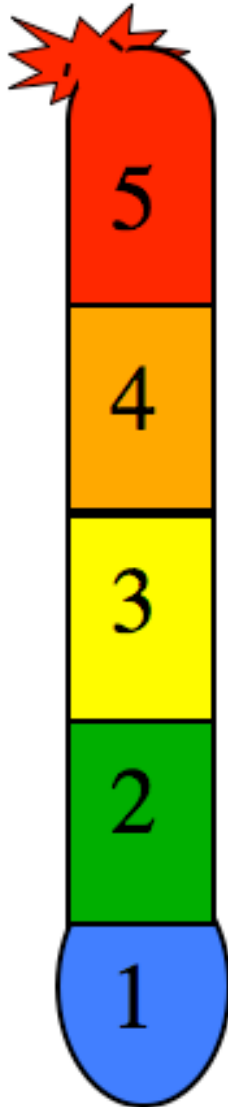
Looks like

Feels Like

Staff Can:





Joseph's Stress Scale



Looks like	Feels Like	"I can"
Swearing Yelling Hitting Throwing things	"I can't take it any more." "I'm so mad I could punch someone." AARRGGGHHH!	Use my break pass Go to safe place Take deep breaths Get to a 4
Stamping feet Yelling/loud I talk really really fast I rip my paper I cover my ears	"I am mad!" "This is stupid" "Shut up!!!" Grrrrrrrr	Use my break pass Take a break Exercise Draw or read Take a walk with staff Get to a 3
I break my pencil I walk around I talk really fast	Can't stand all the talking. Getting agitated "This is hard" Feeling stupid	Take a quick break with jumping jacks Deep breaths Get back to a 2
I'm nice to people I talk to people I smile I do my work	Aaaaaahhhhhh Just right Good Happy	Check in with myself to make sure I stay at a 2 Have fun
Eyes half closed Droopy Blah Head on my desk	ZZZZZZZZ... Sleepy Like I want to curl up under my blankets	Get a drink of water Stretch Do my "wake up" exercises

Joseph's Stress Scale- Staff Guide

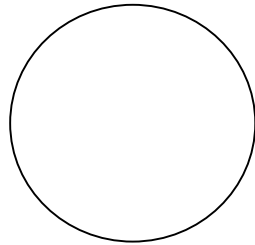
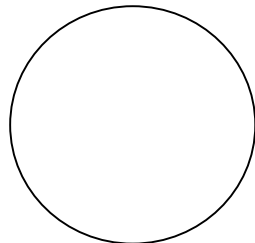
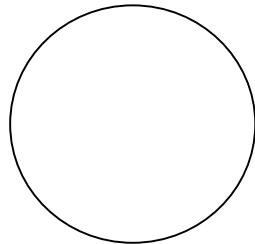
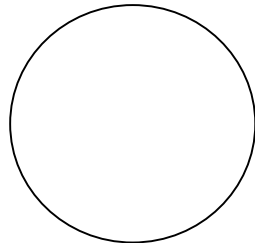
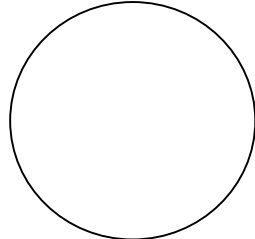
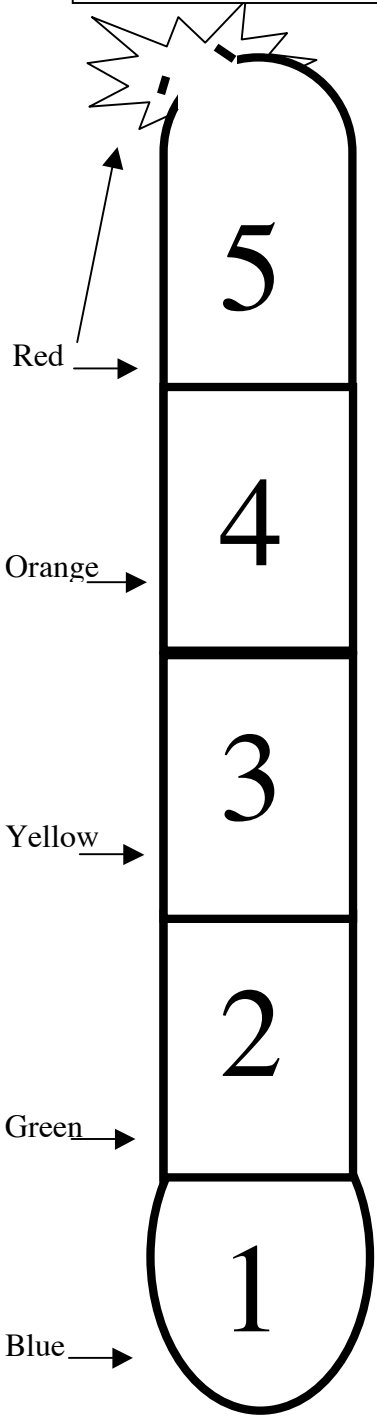
	Looks like	Feels Like	"I can"
	Swearing Yelling Hitting Throwing things	"I can't take it any more." "I'm so mad I could punch someone." AARRGGGHHH!	Use my break pass Go to safe place Take deep breaths Get to a 4
	Stamping feet Yelling/loud I talk really	"I am mad!" "This is stupid" "Shut up!!!"	Use my break pass Take a break Exercise

The Stress-o-Meter

Color each part of the thermometer the color shown by the arrow

Draw your face the way it looks at each level of stress.

List three words for each level that say how you feel.



5. _____

4. _____

3. _____

2. _____

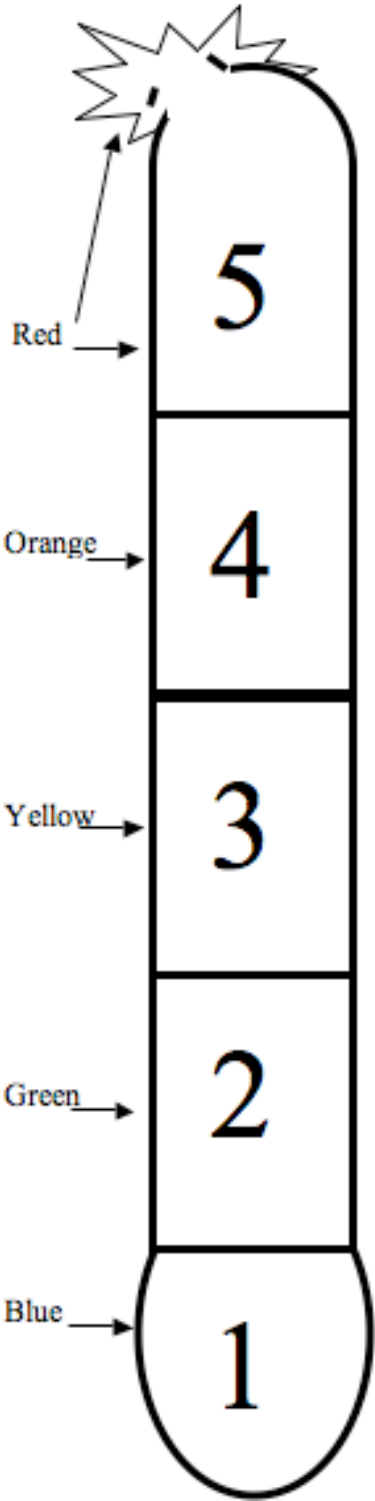
1. _____

Stress... What can I do?

1. _____

Color each part of the thermometer the color shown by the arrow

Write three things you can do when you are at each stress level. Have an adult help you.



5. _____ _____ _____
4. _____ _____ _____
3. _____ _____ _____
2. _____ _____ _____
1. _____ _____ _____

My Stress Levels Poem

By _____

Name

Copy the words on your stress thermometer worksheet that go with each of the five stress levels to the five lines below. Use ink or marker that matches the color for each level.

Red

Orange

Yellow

Green

Blue