

# Bead #8

## Yin, Yang and You

"It's not the stress that hurts us,  
It is how we react to it."

— Dr. Hans Selye (stress researcher)



## Bead #8

**Have you ever felt stressed?** Perhaps you had too much homework, were in a fight with your best friend, or were starting at a new school. Maybe you were preparing to make a speech in class, trying a cheerleading tumbling pass for the first time, or explaining your science project to a judge. Stress is how we react to a demand on us or a change in our world. We usually think

of stress as something negative but that's not always true. Stress can be caused by positive AND negative situations, and it can be useful when it helps you to be more alert and focused, plan ahead, or study harder.



**Your body has a really cool system** for handling threats, challenges or scares that come at you quickly. We already talked about the “fight-or-flight” response where your heart rate goes up, you become intensely aware, and act quickly. Think about what happens when you start to fall off your bike, or have to run from danger. Your body sets off an alarm! You don't have time to think about a response so your body does it for you. Once the stress is over, your body should return to its normal state but some people have so much stress that the alarm goes off over and over again. That is why, when stress is not recognized and managed well, it can hurt your body, your mind, and your behavior with things like stomachaches, headaches, and nervous eating (especially “comfort” food like pizza, french fries and potato chips) to name just a few.

### Things that cause you stress

(stressors) may be different from what causes stress in your friends. What is stressful for one person may or may not be stressful for another. This is why knowing yourself and not comparing yourself to others is so important. Some stress is caused by external things, such as having to move to a new city, a big test at school, watching your parents argue, or trying out for the basketball team. Other internal stressors may come from inside you, such as your fears, beliefs or attitudes. Your strategy for managing stress may be different depending on which type of stressor it is. The important thing to know is that although you may not be able to eliminate all of your stress, you can manage it.

# STRESS!

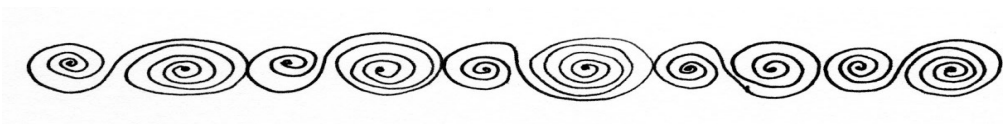





# Stressful Me

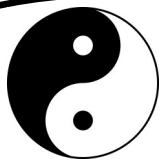
**Step #1:** Think of a time recently when you felt extremely stressed out. In the first column list the things that caused you to feel this way.

**Step #2:** Write down whether these stressors were internal or external.

**Step #3:** In the third column write what you did to cope with or handle the stressor.



| Stressors   | Internal or External   | Ways I Cope with Stressors  |
|---|--|---|
|   |  |   |
|   |  |   |
|   |  |   |
|   |  |   |
|  |  |  |



# Zen Café

"It's always calm  
at the Zen Café"

## Manage your stress at the Zen Café

Some people use harmful strategies to cope with stress, such as withdrawing, yelling, bullying, and overeating — but that only causes more stress later on. Consider trying some or all of these positive stress management strategies.

## Get moving!

Exercise and do some physical activity every single day!

## It's all about the (right) food

- Eat foods that help your body feel its best.
- Include lots of fresh vegetables and fruits.
- Focus on natural foods. Read the nutrition labeling. Natural foods tend to have fewer ingredients, while heavily processed foods frequently have a long list of preservatives and other chemicals.
- Eat foods that have beneficial components like protein, vitamins and minerals.



## Watch out for these things!

National guidelines for healthy salt (sodium) intake are no more than 2,300 mg per day (which is about a teaspoon) but others agree that staying around 1,500 mg is better. Sound easy? Did you know that a six-inch ham sub at a popular

restaurant has 800 mg of salt? And, a double cheeseburger and small french fries at another national chain has 1,200 mg of salt?

## The sweet and the not-so-sweet!

Sweet treats and drinks can be tasty, but too much sugar is damaging to your health. Sugar has no nutritional value which means you are eating “empty” calories. Sugar is addictive, can cause diabetes, damages your heart and teeth, and hurts your body’s immune system (ability to fight infection). Sugar (fructose and sucrose are the most common forms) is found in the obvious culprits: Soda, candy, cookies and cereal. But did you know it’s also found in ketchup, peanut butter, salad dressing, bread and many other foods? According to recent surveys, the average American consumes 22 teaspoons of added sugar each day. Yet, the American Heart Association guidelines suggest that pre-teens and teens consume no more than 5 to 8 teaspoons (21-34 grams) of added sugar daily. Now, go read the label on the can of soda, energy drink or sweetened iced tea in your refrigerator. Are you surprised to find it has 20 to 40 grams (5 to 10 teaspoons) of sugar per serving on the label?



### WHAT IS ZEN?

Zen is a total state of focus that incorporates a harmony of body and mind.



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## Good food? Bad food?

Although we just talked about food that is not good for you, try not to label food as good or bad. Reserve some foods as "treats" and eat them occasionally.

## Water, water everywhere!

Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Sparkling water with a slice of lemon is a fun alternative to soda.

## Don't go there!

Avoid dieting! So many young girls diet when they are unhappy with their body but it doesn't work. First, ask yourself who you are comparing yourself to. Then, if you want to make a change, start small. Chances are, if you increase your level of activity and reduce low nutrition "junk" foods and soda, you will feel better.

## Count your ZZZ's

Get enough sleep. Research shows that adolescent girls need approximately 8-10 hours of sleep every night. Many girls your age don't get enough sleep and it can really affect your mood, your attention span, and how you think and behave throughout the day. According to the National Sleep Foundation, adequate sleep is critical to many bodily functions. Adequate



sleep helps to fight off sickness by building our immune system, building muscle and releasing hormones needed for growth and proper appetite. It is also a time when our brains reorganize what we learned and consolidate memory. So, next time you think staying up extra late to study will help, think again – the opposite may actually be true.

## To help yourself sleep:

- Try to go to bed at about the same time every night.
- Avoid stimulants like caffeine after about 4:00 p.m. Many beverages have caffeine so learn to read labels.
- Avoid bright light including the television and computer screen for about an hour before bedtime. Light tells your brain it's time to wake up.
- Relax your mind by reading something light or writing in your journal. Finish your homework early so you have some down time. Avoid scary or violent movies and books, and turn off your phone. Conversations, texting and drama can keep you up too late!
- Treat yourself to a relaxing bath or cup of hot, calming, decaffeinated tea.
- For most people a dark and cool room is best for sleeping.



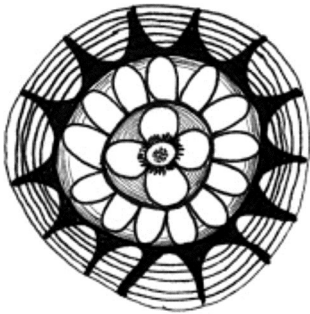


# Zen Café

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## Calm your mind

Practice relaxation techniques such as meditation, visualization, and deep breathing. Don't be scared off by words like "meditation" and "visualization." They can be very simple techniques — such as picturing your favorite pet or a peaceful beach —

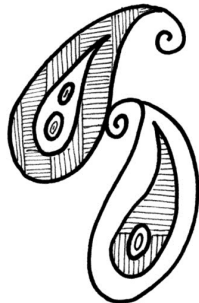


that can help you stay in the present, focus on your breath and calm your mind. If you want more information, go online to research it. There are plenty of great resources. Once you learn

some simple techniques, you can use them throughout the day as needed — like right before a test, before a big game or when you are having trouble falling asleep.

## Yoga and you?

Practice yoga. If you have never tried yoga you are in for a real treat. You might feel scared or embarrassed to try yoga for the first time but know that many girls your age, love it once they try it! Your park district or a local studio may offer classes. Your cable television provider might offer yoga classes "on demand" or you can buy a yoga DVD (or get one from library), but



know that it is more helpful to take a class with other students. One of the great benefits of yoga is that you can start at any level, don't have to be athletic and will never be judged for how "good" you are. Awesome, eh?

## A few more ways to get Zen!

- Talk with an adult about how you use or how you waste your time. Do you have too many activities? Do you procrastinate? Set goals you can accomplish but that stretch you a bit.
- Engage in activities you enjoy such as hobbies, reading and socializing. Make sure these are non-competitive and don't judge yourself on how well you do.
- Journal about your feelings.
- Talk with an adult such as a parent, relative, friend or spiritual person you trust.



"Adopting the right attitude  
can convert a negative stress  
into a positive one."

— Dr. Hans Selye  
(stress researcher)

## Activity

**Noelle went to the doctor** complaining of headaches and stomachaches that are so bad she doesn't feel like going to school. Her doctor didn't find a physical cause so he asked her about her life. Here is what he learned:



Noelle just moved to Illinois from California because her dad is in the Army and was sent overseas for nine months. She is living with her mother and grandmother in a small apartment until her mom can find a job. Noelle is a good sixth grade student but just failed her first science test. She had several friends back home that she misses terribly. She tries to call them almost every day after school. Noelle loves to draw and paint but her mom signed her up for cheerleading hoping she can make friends. Tryouts are in two days and Noelle is scared about the tumbling part and worried she won't make the squad. Noelle feels so sad that she just watches TV after school and often cries herself to sleep.

Write down the stressors in Noelle's situation. Write down whether they are internal or external sources. What are some of the strategies Noelle uses to deal with her stress? Brainstorm healthy strategies Noelle might try.

| Noelle's Stressors  | Internal or External? |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
|                     |                       |
|                     |                       |
|                     |                       |
|                     |                       |
|                     |                       |
| Noelle's Strategies | Healthy Strategies    |
|                     |                       |
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|                     |                       |

**Think about what causes you stress** right now. List those people, events or situations in the table below and indicate if they are internal or external. Then, write down what you have done in the past to deal with that stress. Finally, make a list of new, healthy strategies you would like to try when you are faced with stress in the future.

| Your Stressors | Internal or External? |
|----------------|-----------------------|
|                |                       |
|                |                       |
|                |                       |
|                |                       |
|                |                       |

| Your Strategies | Healthy Strategies |
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**FINDING BALANCE**

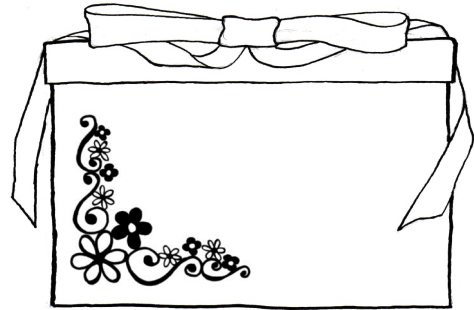




## Activity

**It is important to have** some strategies to calm down when you are feeling stressed. We mentioned some already. Getting plenty of sleep, eating well, and exercising are three really important winning strategies for handling stress. Here's a cool idea to create something that will be waiting for you when stress hits.

**We are going to create** a **SACK** (Soothing And Calming Kit). Choose something to hold your items. You might use a small box, old purse, plastic bag or small drawer. Our favorite is a shoe box that can be decorated. Next, take several index cards to write your calming strategies on. Take your time creating and decorating these cards to make these tips uniquely your own.



**Using your own words and style, write these stress management tips on the cards:**

**Card #1** - Get plenty of sleep. Eight to 10 hours per night is recommended.  
(Include the tips provided to help you fall asleep.)

**Card #2** – Eat high nutrition foods that make you feel good.

**Card #3** – Exercise! Do what you enjoy. Just get out there and move.

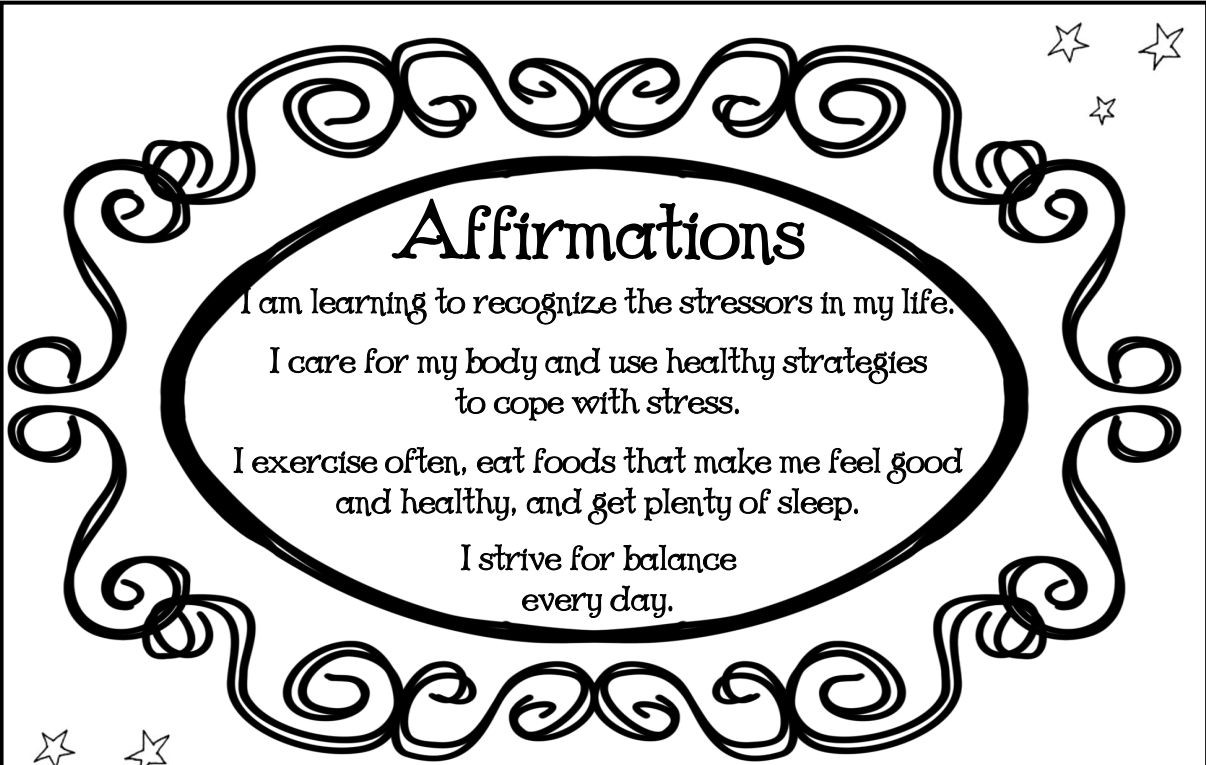
**Card #4** – Breathe. Here is another way to practice deep breathing: Close your eyes and breathe in deeply through your nose while silently counting to five. You should feel your breath all the way down to your belly, not just in your lungs. Exhale through the nose to the same count. Try to extend the breath to a longer count (six, seven or eight seconds). Focus on your breath and calm your mind. When thoughts appear, let them drift by.

**Card #5** – Love yourself. Write down all the ways you are **AWESOME**. Seriously. We are often so hard on ourselves with constant criticism such as pointing out flaws and failings. It can be exhausting. Make sure you balance the negative with positive statements about all the ways in which you are amazing. Fill up more than one card if you want.

**Now, add other items** to the box that help you to calm down and remind you that you are **LOVED**. Examples:

- Photos of your family, friends or pet; pictures of your favorite places, such as a vacation spot, cottage, or grandparents' house.
- Your favorite CD of calming music. If you play a musical instrument, put a photo of that in there to remind you to play it (if you find that calming).
- Your journal to help you sort out your feelings.
- A small bottle of your favorite scent. Lavender is a calming scent.
- A small stuffed animal that you can hug.





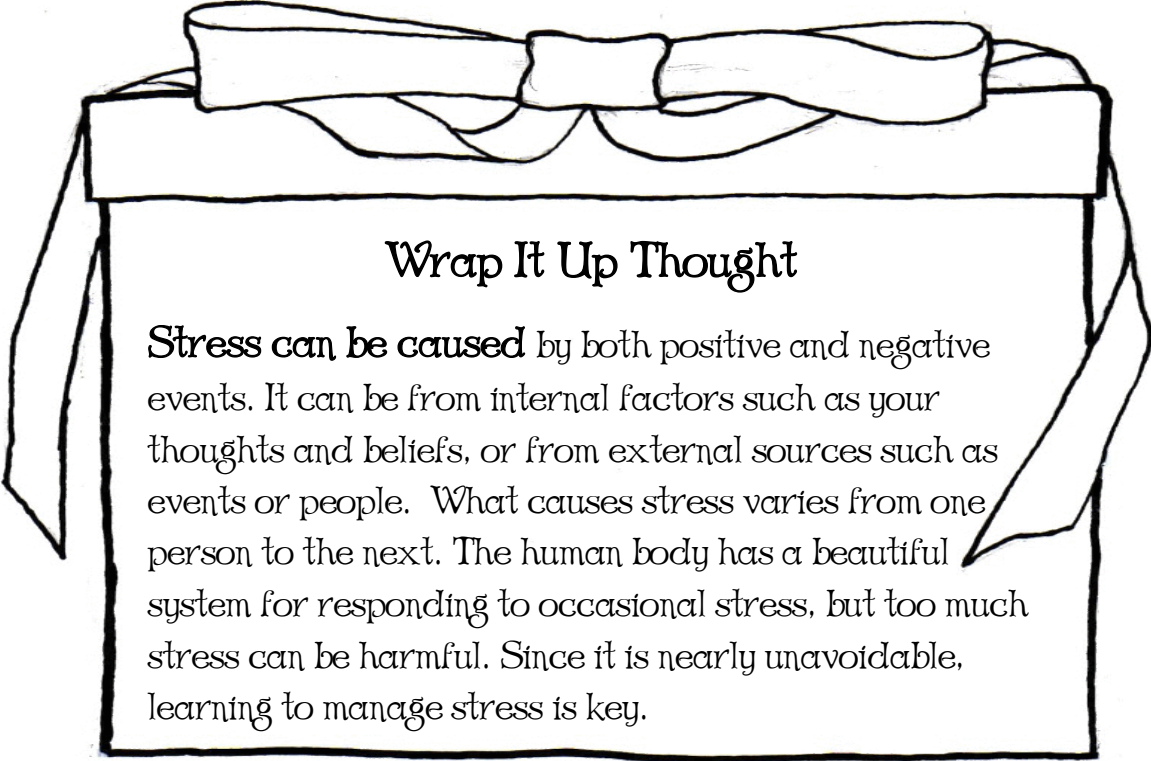
# Affirmations

I am learning to recognize the stressors in my life.

I care for my body and use healthy strategies to cope with stress.

I exercise often, eat foods that make me feel good and healthy, and get plenty of sleep.

I strive for balance every day.



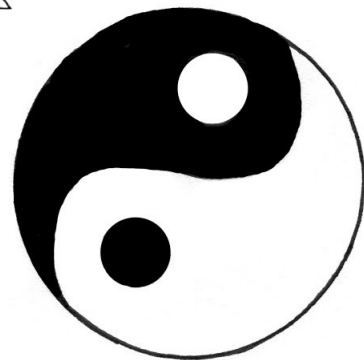
## Wrap It Up Thought

**Stress can be caused** by both positive and negative events. It can be from internal factors such as your thoughts and beliefs, or from external sources such as events or people. What causes stress varies from one person to the next. The human body has a beautiful system for responding to occasional stress, but too much stress can be harmful. Since it is nearly unavoidable, learning to manage stress is key.

Bead #8

**You may recognize** the Yin and Yang symbol because it is widely used now. It is a basic principle of Chinese medicine and it dates back to 700 B.C. Yin and Yang translates to “dark and light” and shows how things that appear as opposites are interrelated and dependent on each other. For example: dark and light, hot and cold, male and female, and earth and air. It’s a really beautiful way to show how we are all connected even if we are different.

**According to Chinese medicine principles,** Yin and Yang need to be in balance and harmony for a person to feel healthy. Balance is a perfect symbol for the stress bead. When you are feeling bad from negative stress, recognize that something may be out of balance. You can’t always avoid stress, such as big changes or final exams, but you can learn to manage it. Incorporate the strategies learned in this section so that you will learn to thrive during stressful times.



explore, embrace, empower

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