

Stress ~ Under Pressure

THE **BIG** IDEA

If you're stressed, come to God for rest



POWER VERSE

Then Jesus said, come to me...and I will give you rest –
Matthew 11:28

If you happen to have a guitar, you can use it for this devotion. Otherwise, you will need one or more rubber bands.

Talk about the following questions:

- What do you think of when you hear the word “stress?”
- What are some things that are stressful to you?
- What do you think life would be like if you had no stress at all?
- How do you deal with life when you feel stressed out?

Explain to your children that stress is an inevitable part of life. In fact, without some stress, we might not ever accomplish anything! Think about the following scenarios:

- A teacher never assigns any tests or homework. Would you ever learn anything?
- Your boss sets no goals or deadlines. Would you ever complete your project?
- Your parents have no rules for you to follow. Would you ever clean your room, brush your teeth, or eat healthy foods?

If you never had any stress, would you ever do the things that aren't really fun but are really important?

Ask your children to pluck the strings of the guitar, or stretch the rubber band and have them pluck it. Then loosen a guitar string or hold the rubber band loosely and have them pluck it again. Discuss the following:

- What has to happen to the strings or rubber band in order for them to make a sound when you pluck them? (they have to have the proper tension—they need to be pulled tight)
- What would happen if we tightened the string too much or pulled the rubber band too tight?

Explain to your children that some stress in life is good, and there's even a word for it: *eustress*. It's the kind of stress that motivates you to do the things you need to do to bring good things (like good grades, health, fulfillment, etc.) into your life—the guitar string is tightened exactly right and produces a beautiful sound. *Distress*, on the other hand, is bad stress that brings anxiety, anger, worry, and other negative things into your life. It's stretching the string too tight and then watching it break.

Throughout life, we'll be exposed to situations that can bring both *eustress* and *distress*; instead of trying to get rid of all stress, we need to learn what stress is good and what stress is bad, and how to deal with each kind.

Talk about the following questions, discussing how different answers can cause eustress or distress (the first one gives you an example):

- 1) Who am I? (If I see myself as a child of God and my actions are a result of that, then that's eustress. If I see myself only as an athlete, intellectual, musician, artist, member of the popular crowd, etc. and all of my actions revolve around that, then that may become distress).
- 2) Who am I trying to please? Why am I trying to please that person?
- 3) What am I trying to accomplish? Is it worth the stress I'm experiencing?
- 4) What matters most to me? Could wrong priorities be causing my stress?
- 5) What are my limits? Could someone do this better than I can?
- 6) Who is my source? Where should I look for relief from this stress?
- 7) When should I rest? Am I taking care of my physical body?
- 8) Who do I serve? Do I believe God is ultimately in control?

Ultimately, the stress we experience will be eustress instead of distress only when we're living our lives to please God. As you pray together, ask God to help you know what He wants you to do and then have the strength to do it. Thank Him for helping you deal productively with the stress in your life.