

6th-8th Grade Levels | 35-60 Minutes

Transformation: From Stress to Strength

OBJECTIVE

Help students identify sources of stress and express them creatively and then reframe those feelings into something empowering or calming.

Materials Needed:

- Paper (plain or sketchbook style)
- Colored pencils, crayons, or markers
- Optional: calming background music

Activity Instructions:

1

Introduction | 5-10 Minutes

Discussion Question:

Everyone feels stress sometimes. Stress is like carrying around a heavy backpack that weighs us down. One way to manage stress is by getting it out of our heads. Today we will use art to get our stress out of our heads onto a piece of paper.

2

Draw Your Stress | 10-15 Minutes

Art Prompt:

On the left side of your paper, draw your stress. Don't worry about making it pretty—just get it out. Your stress might look like shapes, colors, scribbles, or even a scene or symbol. There's no wrong way.

Encourage your students to be abstract and to lean into symbolism. Stress can be shown as heavy rocks, tangled lines, storm clouds, zigzagged lines, or colored shapes. Anything works. Also, encourage your students to fill in the entire side of the page.

3

Transform It | 10-15 Minutes**Prompt:**

Now, on the right side of the paper, transform your stress into something else—something calmer, stronger, or more hopeful. You could turn storm clouds into rain that is feeding flowers, tangled lines into a path, or a monster into a funny cartoon.

Emphasize that the act of changing the drawing represents finding new ways to think about stress.

4

Optional Sharing | 5-10 Minutes

Students can share their “before and after” drawings with a partner or small group. Sharing should not be mandatory. It’s important that students feel at ease and comfortable during this exercise.

Sharing Prompt:

Here’s how I showed my stress, and here’s how I changed it.

5

Closing Reflection | 5-10 Minutes**Discussion Questions:**

- What did it feel like to draw your stress?
- What did it feel like to change it on the other side of the page?
- What are some real-life options we all have to transform our stress into strength?



Mental Health Angle:

- The activity emphasizes transformation—students don't just express stress, they actively reshape it into something more positive.
- The metaphor of “stress art” turning into “strength art” gives them a visual reminder of resilience.

Extensions and Variations:

- **Movement Tie-In:** After drawing, ask students to stretch, shake out, or move in a way that feels like “releasing stress.”
- **Writing Add-On:** Students can write one word on their “before” drawing that represents the stress, and one word on their “after” drawing that represents their new perspective.

