

19 stress waves: riding the waves of life

Imagine being on a rowboat in the ocean. The waves in the ocean represent everything causing you stress right now: your *stress waves*. The waves might be calm and still or crashing, fierce, and rough. A large number of waves equals many events and stressors in your life.

Jon wants very much to please his parents by getting into college. He believes he has to get good grades, play sports, and be in a number of clubs to get accepted. He feels like he has no time for his girlfriend or having fun with his friends anymore. When Jon thinks about his stress waves, he sees a huge tidal wave; he sees himself barely able to stay afloat!

Sabrina, on the other hand, finds balance between doing her homework, spending time with her friends, and going to dance classes. Sabrina finds that her waves are pretty small, and when they do come through, they are manageable. When her waves get too big, she takes it as a sign that she needs to change something in her schedule. When she does, her waves get smaller again.

Think for a minute about what is stressing you out right now. Imagine translating all of these stressors into the image of a wave. It might be a tidal wave or a very small wave; it is up to you.

activity 19 * stress waves: riding the waves of life

In the rectangle provided below, draw a picture of what your *stress waves* look like right now.



Label these waves above with the stressors, worries, and/or fears that created them.

Describe your waves (for example, as big, small, mean, fierce, calm, mellow, or another description).

What thoughts come up for you when you look at the image you drew and the labels you added on the waves?

What feelings come up for you when you look at this image and the labels on the waves?

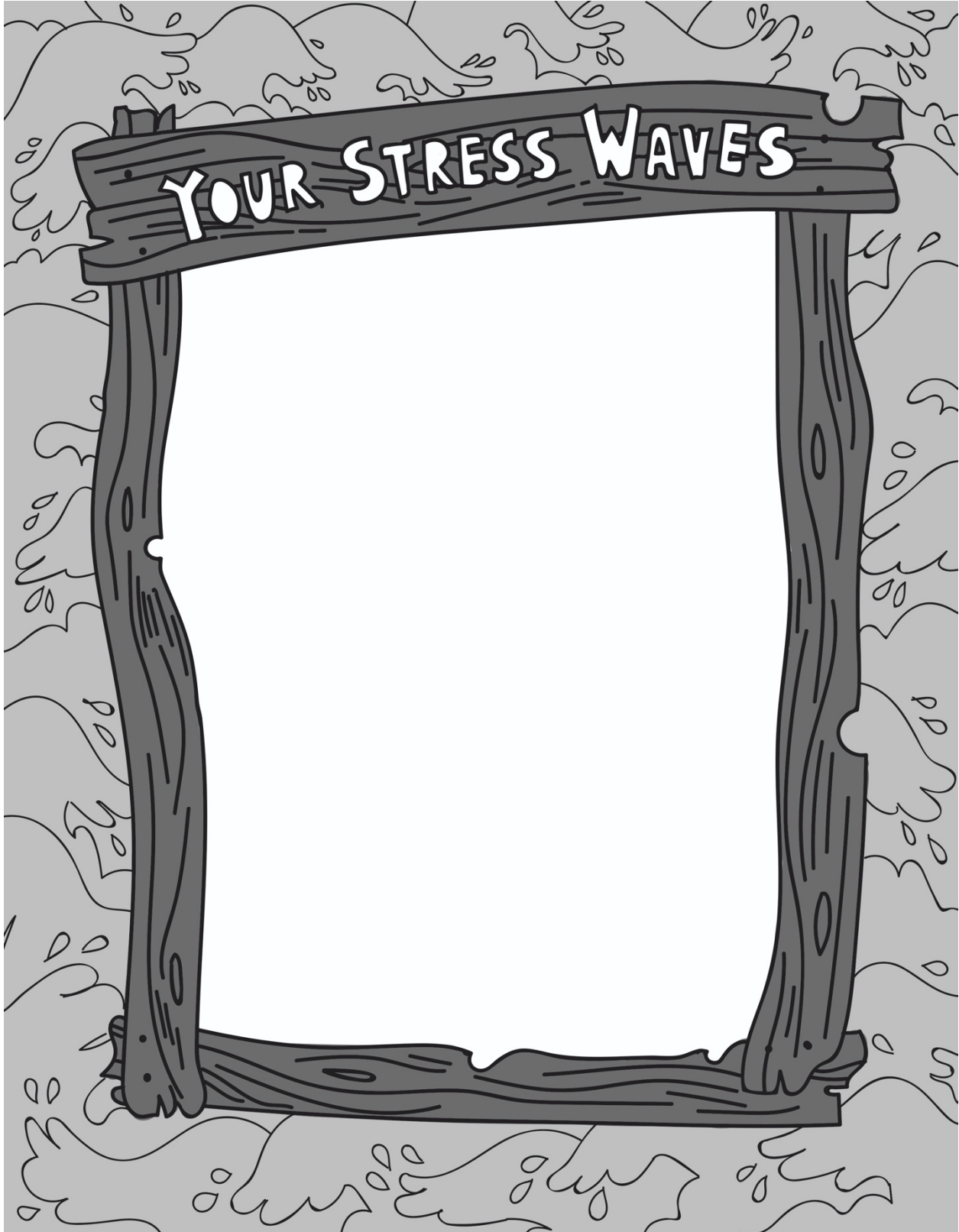
something more

Grounding Anchors: Drop Your Anchor

To reduce your stress waves, imagine you are in a rowboat in the middle of the waves you just drew and you drop an anchor deep below the surface of the water. Even in the strongest of storms with huge crashing waves on the surface of the water, deep below the waves, the water is perfectly calm and still. This grounding anchor you drop from your boat to get to your calm and still waters can be your breath, your heartbeat, noticing the air around your fingers, your feet walking on the ground, or something else that grounds you. Use your grounding anchors when you are having a lot of “stress waves.”

What grounding anchors do you have to help you drop down into the calm and still waters below your stress waves?

mindful takeaway Remember to use your grounding anchors—your breath, hands, heartbeat, or feet—when you feel that your stress waves are too big and you want to drop below into the calm, still waters below the surface.



Ride the Waves: Manage Your Stress

SHORT-TERM, ACUTE, or MANAGEABLE STRESSORS:

LONG-TERM, CHRONIC, or NOT EASILY MANAGEABLE STRESSORS:

ENDURING or UNMANAGEABLE STRESSORS:

