Traffic Light Reflection

Duration: 5–10 minutes
Materials: Visual of a traffic light (digital or printed)
Description:
Students draw a traffic light and reflect on what signals indicate they are moving toward yellow or red, and what signs show they are in green. This helps them recognize stress early and plan coping strategies.

Steps:
1. Talk about eustress and distress, that stress is not always negative – it can also be a driver of development, eustress. Eustress is positive,manageable stress that boosts focus, performance, and engagement. Distress is negative, overwhelming stress causing anxiety and reduced performance.
2. Show a traffic light with three colors:
- Green: Balance – feeling good, enough challenges and recovery time. This is eustress.
- Yellow: Overdrive – demands exceed recovery, early signs of stress. This is in between eustress and distress.
- Red: Crash – exhaustion, hopelessness, burnout risk. This is distress.

2. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to identify:
- Green: What does it look and feel like when you are balanced? (e.g., calm, focused, sleeping well)
- Yellow: What are your personal warning signs? (e.g., irritability, trouble concentrating, skipping breaks)
- Red: What signals show you are overwhelmed? (e.g., fatigue, anxiety, withdrawal)

3. Discuss as a group:
- How can you act when you notice yellow signs?
- What helps you stay in green?

4. Optional: Create a personal traffic light chart for each student with their own signals and coping strategies.

Why? Helps students identify stress levels early and take steps to prevent burnout. Using a traffic light metaphor can increase students' stress awareness.

Learn more: NHS Education for Scotland. (2023). Wellbeing Planning Tool. Retrieved from https://dghscp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/NES-Wellbeing-Planning-Tool-final.pdf

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