

**THE**  
**13**  
**LIFE HACKS**



**Hack 3**  
**Overcoming Stress:**  
**Teacher Notes**

## Government Criteria Alignment Chart

Framework	Criterion / Theme	Covered in Hack 3
<b>PSHE (Health &amp; Wellbeing)</b>	H1: Recognise and talk about emotions	Identifying stress, noticing emotional overload, emotional reflection tasks
	H2: Understand the impact of emotions on behaviour	Exploring how stress affects thinking and actions
	H5: Managing change and pressure	Techniques like planning, breathing, and separating needs from wants
	H6: Strategies for maintaining mental wellbeing	Five practical coping strategies taught: 5 S's of Stress Management
	H7: Importance of physical activity	Section on exercise and its effect on stress and wellbeing
	H11: Strategies for resilience and confidence	SNT re-labelling, speaking back positively, time structuring
	<b>RSHE (Mental Wellbeing)</b>	Recognising unhelpful thinking patterns
Positive thinking strategies		Replacing SNTs with rational, balanced thoughts
Seeking support when needed		Encouragement to speak to a trusted adult if stress persists
<b>RSHE (Respectful Relationships)</b>	Understanding boundaries and responsibilities	Recognising limits of what you can control (separating needs from wants)
<b>Safeguarding / KCSIE</b>	Recognising signs of emotional difficulty	Stress list and reflective writing help surface deeper issues
	Knowing how and when to get help	Repeated messaging to talk to a trusted adult if needed
<b>British Values</b>	Individual Liberty – taking ownership of mental health	Promoting active stress management and self-agency
<b>SMSC – Spiritual</b>	Emotional honesty and introspection	Deep personal reflection tasks on thoughts, feelings, and values
<b>SMSC – Moral</b>	Managing pressures ethically and calmly	Challenges impulsive stress-based behaviours with thoughtful strategies
<b>SMSC – Social</b>	Navigating relationships and responsibilities	Reflects on social stressors and separating what's in your control
<b>SMSC – Cultural</b>	Respecting personal limits and self-care	Reinforces individual differences in coping, encourages non-judgemental self-kindness

## Learning Focus

This chapter introduces students to the **7 S's of Stress Management**, a practical and memorable framework for reducing stress in everyday life. Through self-reflection, thought-challenging tools, time-planning strategies, calming breathing techniques, emotional reframing, social support, and even smiling and humour, students are taught how to respond to internal and external pressures in a healthier way. The chapter empowers them with lifelong coping skills and strengthens emotional resilience.

## Key Themes

- **The 7 S's of Stress Management:**
  1. **Specifying your stressors** – becoming emotionally self-aware
  2. **Speaking back to stress** – recognising and challenging stressful thoughts
  3. **Structuring your time** – creating realistic daily routines and plans
  4. **Soothing breathing** – learning calming breathing techniques
  5. **Separating needs from wants** – reducing pressure through reframing
  6. **Support** – learning to seek help and not cope alone
  7. **Smiling** – using humour and lightness to release tension
- Building healthy self-talk and inner dialogue
- Taking control through planning instead of panicking
- Building inner calm through breath and mindset
- Learning to shift from panic to perspective

## Discussion Prompts

### 1. Specifying Your Stressors

- “What kind of things stress people your age?”
- “How can writing down your stress help?”

### 2. Speaking Back to Stress

- “Have your thoughts ever made you more stressed than the situation?”
- “What’s the difference between a fact and a thought?”
- “How could you reword a stressful thought to make it feel less scary?”

### 3. Structuring Time

- “How does poor planning cause more stress?”
- “What’s one thing that always distracts you?”
- “What’s the benefit of planning your next day the night before?”

### 4. Soothing Breathing

- “Have you ever tried deep breathing to calm down? Did it work?”
- “Why do you think breathing helps relax your brain?”

### 5. Separating Needs from Wants

- “What’s the difference between a ‘need’ and a ‘want’?”
- “How can switching ‘I need to...’ to ‘I want to...’ reduce pressure?”

### 6. Support

- “Why is it sometimes hard to ask for help?”
- “Who could you turn to if you felt overwhelmed?”

### 7. Smiling / Humour

- “Can laughter or smiling actually help with stress?”
- “What’s something that’s made you laugh during a tough time?”

## Imaginative Group Tasks

### **1. Thought Detective Game (*Speaking Back to Stress*)**

**How it works:**

Each group gets a “Stressful Thought Card” (e.g. “I’m going to fail this test!”). {See Appendix A for some card examples.} Their mission is to:

- Identify the SNT (stressful negative thought)
- Label it as “just a thought”
- Replace it with a calm, positive response

**Why it works:** Brings Step A–C of thought challenging to life in a fun, active way.

### **2. Time Boss Challenge (*Structuring Time*)**

**How it works:**

Each group is given a messy fictional student schedule (e.g. no breaks, all work, no fun). {See Appendix B for some examples}

Their challenge is to:

- Spot the problems

Rebuild it into a healthy, balanced plan

**Why it works:** Encourages time awareness and self-management in a creative, problem-solving way.

### **3. Breathe + Rate (*Soothing Breathing*)**

**How it works:**

Pairs take turns guiding each other through a 2-minute soothing breathing exercise. Then they rate their stress levels before and after (e.g. 6 → 3).

**Why it works:** Gets them to *feel* the calming power of breathing, not just talk about it.

## Imaginative Group Tasks

### **4. Needs vs. Wants Sort Game (Separating Needs from Wants)**

**How it works:**

Groups are given cards with mixed statements (e.g. “I need to win”, “I want a break”, “I need food”, “I want everyone to like me”). {See Appendix C for card examples.} They must sort them into “True Needs” and “Wants”.

**Why it works:** Builds cognitive flexibility and reframes internal pressure.

### **5. Stress Skits (Specifying Stressors + Asking for Support)**

**How it works:**

Groups create short skits showing a teen feeling stressed and either:

- a) bottling it up, or
- b) asking for help.

They perform both versions and discuss which approach helps more.

**Why it works:** Sparks emotional insight, builds empathy, and reduces shame around asking for support.

### **6. Smile Science Showdown (Power of Smiling)**

**How it works:**

Groups create a short sketch or “experiment” showing how smiling can change a stressful moment (e.g., failing a test, missing a bus). They perform two versions, one with frowning, one with smiling and reflect on the difference.

**Why it works:**

Shows how even a fake smile can shift mood and reduce stress. Fun, light-hearted, and easy to try in real life.

## Torah Perspectives

Theme in Hack	Source	Hebrew & English (in same cell)	Use in Lesson
Opening – stress impacts mood	Mishlei 12:25	דאגה בלב איש ישחנה – “Anxiety in a man’s heart dejects it.”	Supports the idea that stress and sadness are connected
How stress affects the body	Shemos 6:9 (Rashi)	מקצר רוח – “Because of shortness of breath.”	Intro to stress and physical symptoms
Specifying your stressors	Yuma 75a	ישחנה לאחרים – “Let him speak it out to others.”	Encouraging students to name and express their stress
Stressful thoughts (SNTs)	Gittin 70a	שלושה מחלישין... דאגה – “Three things drain strength: anxiety, travel, and sin.”	Demonstrates how thoughts can wear us down
Labeling SNTs as “just thoughts”	Kiddushin 40a	מחשבה טובה מצרפה למעשה – “A good thought is regarded as a good deed.”	Supports belief in the power of thoughts
Speaking back to SNTs	Tzemach Tzedek	טרחט גוט – נועט זיין גוט – “Think good, and it will be good.”	Encourages positive inner dialogue
Practicing new thoughts	Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvah 491	ההרגל נעשה לטבע שני – “Habit becomes second nature.”	Builds motivation to repeat and apply new thinking styles
More practice = real change	Sanhedrin 99a	זורע ואינו קוצר – “One who learns but does not review is like one who plants but doesn’t harvest.”	Reinforces Step D – practice makes it automatic
Structuring time	Vilna Gaon, Mishlei 19:2	הפזיזות לא תבוא על טובה – “Haste leads nowhere good.”	Links to planning and slowing down
Small steps, not overwhelm	Yuma 80a	תפשת מרבה – לא תפשת – “Grabbing too much leads to grabbing nothing.”	Helps students break down tasks
Soothing breathing	Rambam, Hilchos De’os 1:4	יהיה שש נטוב לב – “Be cheerful and calm.”	Calmness and breathing go together
Changing physical state changes mental state	Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvah 95	המעשים החיצונים משפיעים על הלב – “Physical actions influence the heart.”	Shows how breathing and movement can affect mood
Needs vs. Wants	Pirkei Avos 4:1	איהו עשיר? השמח בחלקו – “Who is rich? One who is happy with their lot.”	Reframes internal “demands” to lower stress
Being flexible not rigid	Taanis 20b	יהי אדם רך כקנה ואל יהי קשה כפארז – “Be soft like a reed, not hard like a cedar.”	Encourages flexible thinking patterns
Cheerfulness and humour	Taanis 22a	אנן מברחינן עציב – “We cheer up the depressed.”	Builds the idea that joy and laughter reduce stress

## Suggested 5 lesson plan

### Lesson 1: Understanding Stress & Spotting Triggers

#### Learning Focus:

- Understand what stress is and how it affects the mind and body
- Identify personal stress triggers and patterns

#### Key Themes Covered:

- Stress awareness
- Self-monitoring
- Emotional literacy (PSHE Health & SMSC)

#### Discussion Prompts:

- What does stress feel like in your body?
- Do certain people or situations always stress you out?
- Is stress always bad?

#### Activity Options:

- *My Stress List*
- *Stress Pattern Sorter*
- *Stress Skits* (group acting – optional)

**Workbook Pages:** 54-57

### Lesson 2: Speaking Back to Stress (Thought Tools)

#### Learning Focus:

- Learn the ABC model of stress
- Practice spotting and changing stressful thoughts

#### Key Themes Covered:

- Cognitive reframing
- Emotional regulation (PSHE Health, Mental Wellbeing, SMSC)

#### Discussion Prompts:

- What kinds of stressful thoughts pop into your head?
- Can one thought really change how you feel?
- How would your best friend respond to that thought?

#### Activity Options:

- *ABC Thought Tracker* (real-life example)
- *SNT Rewrites* (using logic, humour, or kindness)
- *Thought Detective Game* (group)

**Workbook Pages:** 58-66

## Suggested 5 lesson plan

### Lesson 3: Structuring Time & Easing Pressure

#### Learning Focus:

- Recognise how poor time habits can increase stress
- Learn how planning and balance help us feel more in control

#### Key Themes Covered:

- Organisation
- Realistic goal-setting (PSHE Life Skills, SMSC Discipline)

#### Discussion Prompts:

- What does your schedule usually look like?
- Do you leave time to relax?
- Why does a bit of planning reduce anxiety?

#### Activity Options:

- *Timetable Rebuild*
- *Mini Planner: One Step Plan*
- *Time Boss Challenge* (group)

**Workbook Pages:** 67-69

### Lesson 4: Soothing Breathing & Needs vs. Wants

#### Learning Focus:

- Learn how soothing breathing can calm the body and mind
- Understand how confusing “needs” with “wants” increases stress
- Practise reframing thoughts to reduce pressure

#### Key Themes Covered:

- Breathing as a tool for stress relief
- Separating true needs from wants
- Building resilience through perspective-shifting (PSHE Mental Wellbeing, SMSC Reflection)

#### Discussion Prompts:

- “How does your body feel after deep breathing?”
- “Why do you think slow breathing helps calm the brain?”
- “What’s the difference between a need and a want?”
- “How can changing ‘I need...’ to ‘I want...’ reduce stress?”

#### Activity Options:

- **Breathe + Rate** – pairs guide each other through 2 minutes of soothing breathing, then rate stress before and after
- **Needs vs. Wants Sort** – groups sort mixed statements into “True Needs” vs “Wants”
- **Smile Science Showdown (optional)** – act out how smiling can shift a stressful moment into a lighter one

**Workbook Pages:** 70-73

## Suggested 5 lesson plan

### Lesson 5: Support, Smiling & Consolidation

#### **Learning Focus:**

- Recognise the importance of seeking support instead of bottling up stress
- Explore how smiling and humour can release tension and lift mood
- Consolidate Hack 3 learning with recap activities

#### **Key Themes Covered:**

- Asking for help and not coping alone (PSHE Safeguarding, SMSC Social)
- Power of smiling and humour to reduce stress (PSHE Mental Wellbeing)
- Building a toolkit of stress management strategies

#### **Discussion Prompts:**

- “Why is it sometimes hard to ask for help?”
- “Who could you turn to if you felt overwhelmed?”
- “Can smiling or humour really make a difference when you’re stressed?”
- “Which tool from this hack will you keep using in your own life?”

#### **Activity Options:**

- **Stress Skits** – act out two versions of a stressed teen (bottling it up vs asking for help) and compare outcomes
- **Smile Science Showdown** – groups act out how smiling can shift a stressful situation
- **Multiple-Choice Quiz & Word Search** – quick-fire recap of Hack 3 learning (Download from [masteringyourmind.today](http://masteringyourmind.today))
- **Stress Action Plan** – reflect on which stress-busting tools students want to keep using

**Workbook Pages:** 74-76

## Appendix A

### Stressful Thought Card Examples

- 1 "I'm going to fail this test."
- 2 "Everyone secretly hates me."
- 3 "If I mess this up, it's over."
- 4 "They're all laughing at me."
- 5 "I can't cope with this – it's too much."
- 6 "I always ruin everything."
- 7 "If I don't get this right, I'm useless."
- 8 "Nobody understands me."
- 9 "I'll never be good enough."
- 10 "I have to be perfect or I've failed."
- 11 "I'm so behind — I'll never catch up."
- 12 "What if something bad happens?"
- 13 "I feel anxious — that means something's wrong."
- 14 "I'm such an idiot for feeling like this."
- 15 "People will think I'm weird."
- 16 "I'll definitely embarrass myself."

## Appendix B

### Student Schedule 1

Name: Miriam

Goal: Do well in school

#### Monday Schedule:

- 7:00 – Wake up
- 7:15 – Quick breakfast while packing bag
- 8:00–4:00 – School
- 4:30–8:30 – Homework
- 8:30–9:00 – Shower & snack
- 9:00–11:30 – Revision for tests
- 11:30 – Sleep

#### Problems:

- ✗ No free time or social time
- ✗ No breaks between tasks
- ✗ No exercise
- ✗ Sleep is too late

## **Student Schedule 2**

**Name:** Dovid

**Goal:** Relax as much as possible

### **Tuesday Schedule:**

- 7:30 – Wake up late
- 8:10 – Rush to school without breakfast
- 9:00–3:45 – School (daydreams through most lessons)
- 4:00–7:00 – Computer games
- 7:00 – Supper
- 8:00–10:00 – Chatting, Computer.....
- 10:00 – Realises he has homework
- 10:30 – Gives up and goes back to the computer
- 12:00 – Sleep

### **Problems:**

- ✗ No planning
- ✗ Screen time dominates
- ✗ Homework avoided
- ✗ Poor eating and sleeping habits

## **Student Schedule 3**

**Name:** Leah

**Goal:** Do everything perfectly

### **Wednesday Schedule:**

- 6:30 – Wake up to revise
- 8:00–4:00 – School (tries to take perfect notes in every lesson)
- 4:30–6:00 – Dance class
- 6:00–6:45 – Supper (checks homework while eating)
- 7:00–10:00 – Homework + projects + revision
- 10:00–11:00 – Worry about tomorrow
- 11:30 – Sleep (with phone)

### **Problems:**

- ✗ Overloaded
- ✗ Perfectionism
- ✗ No downtime
- ✗ Worry & phone use at bedtime

### **Student Schedule 4**

**Name:** Ezra

**Goal:** Be with friends

#### **Thursday Schedule:**

- 7:00 – Wake up
- 8:00–4:00 – School
- 4:00–7:00 – Hangs out in park with friends
- 7:00 – Supper
- 8:00–10:30 – Group call with friends
- 10:30 – Realises he forgot his homework
- 11:00 – Tries to quickly do it in bed
- 12:00 – Falls asleep with music playing

#### **Problems:**

- ✗ Too much social time
- ✗ Not enough work or focus
- ✗ Homework left too late
- ✗ No personal reflection or structure

## **Appendix C**

### **Needs vs. Wants – Sort Game Cards**

Print and cut into cards. Students sort into "True Needs" vs. "Wants/Pressure Thoughts."

- **I need everyone to like me**
- **I want to be popular**
- **I need sleep**
- **I want a new phone**
- **I need to feel safe**
- **I need food**
- **I want to win every time**
- **I want to be perfect**
- **I need to talk to someone**
- **I want to always be the best**
- **I need a break**
- **I want everyone to agree with me**
- **I need respect**
- **I want to stay in bed all day**
- **I need to finish this chapter tonight**
- **I need to be top of the class**
- **I need to do well in the ball game**
- **I need to make sure my friends don't fight with each other**