## **Task**: Read the article and complete the activity below.

# Exercise, the Great De-Stressor for Teens

Yikes. Sometimes it’s hard not to feel stressed as a teen, whether it’s over a test, relationship problems, or parental nagging. As a teenager myself, I can feel really stressed, especially over tests. During midterms, for example, there can be a half a dozen tests that require concentration and preparation. The pressure can seem almost unbearable.

Everyone is affected by stress in different ways – maybe you have aches and pains in your back, neck, head, or stomach. You may have less energy or have trouble sleeping. I know that whenever I get stressed out, I am much more likely to snap out at my parents. Other “I’m really stressed out” signs include irritation, impatience, and forgetfulness.

How can teenagers cope with stress? During my four years in high school, I have learned that the secret to de-stressing is through exercise. Throughout high school I participated in all 12 seasons of sports. I found this to be the best way to relieve stress. During the winter, I had two hours of track practice after each midterm and I found it helped increase my studying ability. Ironically I noticed in the few weeks between sports I would be more stressed out without having sports to help de-stress me.

I think that one of the major benefits of using exercise as an outlet for stress is that it helps your thought process become more clear. If you’re trying to study and all you can think about is ‘how am I supposed to remember the Biology unit I learned in September’?! Exercise is an effective way to take your mind off of the studying and re-direct your thoughts. It’s a change of scenery, which helps get focused on your new activity and forget about the stress of being a teenager.

In the scientific sense, exercise has many positive effects on your body’s chemical make-up. Exercise has an amazing ability to decrease stress hormones such as cortisol and increase endorphins, your body’s ‘feel good’ chemicals. After you exercise, you can easily feel a natural mood boost through the endorphins alone.

What types of exercise are the best to improve stress? I find it’s best to begin with 5-10 minutes of simple stretching. Stretching exercises stimulate receptors in the nervous system, which also helps improve your mood. Stretching before you begin to exercise is crucial in warming the body up before strenuous exercise and also helps you become more awake. Aerobic exercises such as running, biking, Pilates, and swimming provide an effective release for all of the negative emotions that stress causes.

Exercise is an effective way to relieve the tension and frustration many teenagers face. It takes around 20 minutes of solid exercise for your body to start releasing endorphins. On the flip side, it’s not necessary to spend three hours at the gym because then you’ll be cutting into your study time and just be more stressed out afterward.

You can get thorough that week of misery or that latest breakup or the death of a pet. Join me – I’m going for a run.

**(DON’T FORGET)**



**COMPLETE IN THE ARTICLE:**

* HIGHLIGHT **2** FACTS YOU LEARNED in **YELLOW**
* HIGHLIGHT **3** PIECES OF INFORMATION YOU FOUND INTERESTING in **GREEN**

**QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you do to relieve stress? **(AT LEAST 2 SENTENCES)**
2. If a friend asked you how exercise affects stress, what would you tell them? **(USE 3 PIECES OF EVIDENCE FROM THE ARTICLE)**