**SCENARIO**

**Life "Beyond the Plate": How Lifestyle Affects Our Health**

1. **Teacher's Lecture**

Let's start today's lesson with a question: Do you know the saying "Your life is in your hands?" What do you think it means?

Our health, and in your case also your development, largely depend on you, and that's what this saying is about. Health is a condition that can and should be worked on throughout your life. You are in a period of significant change; your body is growing and developing intensively, soon to go through puberty. Your body needs special attention and good conditions for development.

In our health education classes, we talk a lot about healthy eating. Thanks to these lessons, you are surely familiar with at least the basic principles of a healthy diet. However, that's not all. There are other aspects of our lives that affect our health, and today you'll learn some important information about them.

Let's start with being active, known as physical activity. Do you consider yourself physically active? What do you like to do the most and why?

N supplements the statements. If N plays a sport, enjoys a particular activity, or simply loves walking or cycling, it's worth sharing this with the students.

Exercise benefits both physical and mental health, improving overall well-being. Regular physical activity prevents many diseases, including serious ones like breast cancer or heart disease. Any kind of movement that we enjoy helps prevent and treat obesity. Moreover, engaging in sports is one of the best "free medicines" for relieving stress and improving our mood.

If maintaining a slim figure is important to you, know that making sports a habit means having less time for unplanned activities, which often involve feeling bored and reaching for extra snacks. Additionally, physical exertion makes our bodies use more energy, allowing us to consume more calories compared to a sedentary lifestyle. Of course, it’s best to allocate these extra calories to quality food rather than extra servings of sweets or salty snacks.

Many of you might think of sleep as a waste of time. But is it really? Look at this infographic. You might be surprised by how lack of sleep can seriously impact your health. Some consequences of sleep deprivation are quite severe.

A cartoon of a person sleeping in a bed

Description automatically generated

N discusses the infographic

**Too little sleep can lead to:**

* Increased risk of heart disease
* Higher chances of developing diabetes
* Weight gain
* Reduced concentration
* Memory problems – worse academic performance
* Severe daytime fatigue
* Irritability throughout the day
* Mood deterioration
* Increased cancer risk

I hope that from today, if you thought sleep was a waste of time, you’ll change your mind and consider going to bed at a suitable hour. Ideally, you should aim for at least 8 hours of sleep each night. Your body needs this time to recover and gather strength for the next day's challenges.

Finally, let's talk about stress, a major issue of modern times.

**Think for a moment: Do you often feel stressed? What causes it? How do you feel when stressed?**

Everyone experiences stress to some extent. It's an unavoidable part of daily life. The key issue is how we handle and manage our stress.

Let's define stress. Stress is our body's response to situations that make us feel threatened. It manifests in physical changes, such as altered breathing or a faster heartbeat. Some people experience stomachaches or insomnia when stressed. Others may sweat more. The infographic shows what prolonged stress can do to our health.



N discusses the infographic

**Prolonged stress can cause:**

* Weakened immune system, leading to frequent illnesses
* Digestive problems – stomachaches, diarrhea, or constipation
* Risk of developing diabetes
* Weight gain and obesity
* Headaches
* Hair loss
* Skin problems like acne
* Heart issues
* General body aches
* Weaker bones, increasing fracture risk

The main problem isn’t encountering stressful situations, but rather our inability to manage stress effectively. To prevent stress from harming our health, it's crucial to regularly release the stress accumulated in our bodies.

**Do you have any ideas for improving your mood and relieving stress?**

There are many ways to take care of our stressed bodies. Physical activity that we enjoy is a great stress reliever. Additionally, other methods include:

* Mindful breathing exercises, which you'll try in a group exercise shortly
* Talking to a friendly person
* Hugging someone you love
* Laughing – recalling funny moments with friends or family
* Crying – an excellent way to release strong tension
* Engaging in creative activities – drawing, painting, or puzzles can be relaxing

1. **Group Exercise** Now, as promised, let's do a breathing exercise. You can sit comfortably on a chair or lie down on a bed or the floor.

N invites you to a mindful breathing exercise.

N reads the text:

*Sit comfortably and, if you don't mind, close your eyes. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen. Observe your body's movements as you breathe. Notice what happens to your abdomen and chest first during inhalation and then during exhalation. (about 2-3 minutes)*

*Now place your hands on your thighs. Straighten your spine and elongate your neck as if you’re trying to touch the ceiling with your head. We will count as follows – inhale through your nose, mentally counting to four (1, 2, 3, 4), hold your breath for two seconds (1, 2), then exhale slowly through your mouth, counting to six.*

*(The teacher can guide the students through a few breaths, then let them continue independently, counting in their minds). Duration: about 2-3 minutes, depending on the group's cooperation*.

Thank you for doing the exercise. **Did you enjoy it? Was it difficult? What was the hardest part? Did anything surprise you?**

**Why did you do this exercise today?** Because mindful breathing is a useful tool for managing stress in any situation. It’s something we always have with us and it costs nothing. Slow, mindful breathing helps us calm down and oxygenate our brains. It’s a perfect solution for a long, stressful day. It’s worth making mindful breathing a habit. There are many methods to learn and practice regularly.

1. **Summary and Homework** Thank you for today’s lesson. You’ve had the chance to see that we have control over our health and that, besides healthy eating, factors like how much and how well we sleep, our physical activity levels, and how we handle stress are crucial. When stress is a frequent "guest" in our lives, it can cause many health issues. For homework, you'll have the opportunity to learn another simple method effective in managing stress.

I mentioned that creative work can be a good way to relieve stress, so I invite you today to complete a special coloring activity (attachment).