

Early Years

Virtual Field Trip 5 Stress Management and Coping

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Thought-changing



School
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Introduction

Every day, educators and students are exposed to big and small challenges that can contribute to feelings of stress. This year educators and students have risen to the challenge in innovative and creative ways, connecting and building meaningful relationships with students and families. As the impact of the pandemic continues to evolve, providing opportunities for explicit skill development will continue to be an essential part of bolstering positive student mental health. As an educator, it is equally important to prioritize your own well-being.

School Mental Health Ontario, in partnership with *Ophea*, is offering a series of lessons to support the development of stress management and healthy coping skills. The activities in these lessons provide an opportunity for skill development and modelling for both students and early years educator teams.

Each lesson will provide:

- A **minds on activity** for both early years educator teams and students.
- An **action** – through a video, classes will participate in a **'virtual field trip'** that provides opportunities for students and educators to learn, practice and develop skills to cope with and manage stress.
- A **consolidation** activity for follow up after the virtual field trip.

If students are learning virtually, parents/caregivers are encouraged to participate in the virtual field trip!





Lesson Plan

The learning experiences in this lesson series will complement the learning expectations found in the Self-Regulation and Well-Being Frame of the Kindergarten Program. Social-Emotional Learning skills help students develop the skills to foster overall health and well-being, positive mental health, and the ability to learn, build resilience and thrive.

By demonstrating a range of stress management strategies, students will have more options and ideas for staying mentally well during difficult times. It is important to note that different strategies work for different individuals. Sharing a range of strategies over time will allow students the opportunity to try them out and determine what works for them.

OVERALL EXPECTATIONS:

Self-Regulation and Well-Being Frame

OE2

As children progress through the Kindergarten program, they: demonstrate independence, self-regulation, and a willingness to take responsibility in learning and other endeavours.

Conceptual Understandings

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are responsible for our own choices and decisions. Everyone wants to be calm, focused, and alert. We each need different strategies, environments, and support to be calm, focused, and alert. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need to learn about strategies and environmental factors that can help us self-regulate. We can learn how to adapt our behaviour to suit a variety of social circumstances, including the customs of different groups of people. |
|---|--|



This chart below provides an “at-a-glance” summary of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skills. SEL has been shown to support student emotional wellness, when offered in the context of a caring, inclusive, equity-minded classroom setting. When student identity is affirmed, and skills are introduced in a developmentally-appropriate and sequenced manner, students can select and adopt social-emotional strategies that build on their strengths. The highlighted skills will be the focus of this lesson.

Students will learn skills to:	So they can:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and manage emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • express their feelings and understand the feelings of others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognize sources of stress and cope with challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop personal resilience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain positive motivation and perseverance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • foster a sense of optimism and hope
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build relationships and communicate effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support healthy relationships and respect diversity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop self-awareness and sense of identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a sense of identity and belonging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • think critically and creatively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make informed decisions and solve problems

For a more detailed overview please see [Appendix A of the 2019 HPE Curriculum](#).

LEARNING GOALS:

EDUCATOR	CLASS
<p>As educators, we are learning to build the confidence and competence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore the connection between our mental and physical health. • discuss the benefits of physical activity for stress management. • practice stress management coping skills. 	<p>As students, we are learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that everyone wants to be calm, focused, and alert • that we each need different strategies, environments, and supports to be calm, focused and alert • to practice muscle relaxation strategies that help us self-regulate

SUCCESS CRITERIA:

Co-develop success criteria with your students using the following questions:

- How will we know we are achieving our learning goals?
- What will it look like/sound like?

Re-visit the success criteria you created from [the first four virtual field trips](#). What opportunities are there to extend the learning?

For example:

- With help, I can recognize when I am calm and when I am not calm.
- With help, I can find ways to calm down when I am overwhelmed.



CONSIDERATIONS:

- ▶ **Assisting students to replace unhelpful negative thoughts with calmer more positive thoughts can lead to better ways of managing challenges. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that when students identify thoughts that reflect difficult realities, we take time to meaningfully acknowledge their lived experience. For instance, from an early age many Black, Indigenous and racialized and marginalized students are inundated with hurtful imagery, stereotypes, and narratives that can result in poor self-concept and negative self-talk. They have little control over how their identities are stigmatized in society, which can result in deeply rooted negative thought patterns. It is critical to listen and to validate a student’s experience and never to minimize the impact of societal and relational hurts. Through ongoing validation and compassion, it is possible to support students to adopt positive, identity-affirming thoughts to replace those rooted in systemic oppression, racism, bullying and/or marginalization. This takes time and must occur alongside efforts to meaningfully disrupt oppressive and racist systems and messaging at school, and in the wider society. A good starting place is to acknowledge that societal injustices exist and that in this context it can be helpful to affirm personal, cultural, and/or community strengths as a way to dispute negative self-talk.**
- ▶ Approaches to all instruction, including Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills, must be mediated through respectful conversations about students’ lived realities, inequity, bias, discrimination and harassment. Starting with self-reflection about yourself, the classroom and the situations individual students in your class may be coping with is key. It is important to remember that our students face a range of challenges that are relative to their personal, social, and cultural lived experience. They also have existing ways of coping. Be sure to consider sources of stress and examine and address structures that reinforce inequitable conditions that add stress to you, your students and entire communities. Through instruction and modelling, we can help students practise new and bolster existing coping strategies.
- ▶ This virtual field trip lesson is intended to be embedded as part of your school day. Our collective learning takes place on many different traditional Indigenous territories all across Ontario. We are grateful to be able to work and learn locally on these lands. As a school in Ontario we understand morning routines, including a land acknowledgement specific to your location, will have taken place prior to this field trip.
- ▶ The focus on emotions may be difficult for some students. Be prepared to connect students to additional supports if needed. Refer to the [ONE-CALL Desk Reference](#) for more information, and take time to consider your school and board circle of support and service pathways. Know what to do, and who to connect with, if a student seems like they might be struggling with their mental health.
- ▶ An effort has been made to include different options for each of the activities. Please feel free to offer further modifications and accommodations based on the individual student need(s) in your classroom. Also, note that all videos have subtitles. You can choose to have captions by clicking the small ‘CC’ button at the bottom right of the video screen.



MINDS ON

Do you ever notice that sometimes you get stuck in thinking negative thoughts or assuming that other people might be thinking or feeling a certain way about you? Do you spend time worrying about the future and what may or may not happen?

We call these “thinking traps” and they can happen to any of us! While these thoughts are often unrealistic or untrue, they can impact how we feel about ourselves and others. This virtual field trip focuses on **thought-changing strategies**. These strategies help us slow down and notice how we might be feeling. We can begin to identify thinking traps while developing skills to help us challenge and restructure our thinking in healthy ways. The skills we develop using thought-changing strategies can support self-awareness, self-monitoring, and communication of thoughts and feelings.

Please complete this Minds On activity before participating in the virtual field trip.

EDUCATOR	CLASS
<p>Affirmations are positive statements or reminders that we can use to encourage ourselves and others. These simple sentences can provide us with an opportunity to shift our thinking and approach our day or situation with a more positive and confident mindset. As an educator you might find you are affirming students regularly. Often, it is easier for us to affirm others, than it is to affirm ourselves. We need to remember that it is important to encourage ourselves as well. If you'd like to give it a try, here are a few positive affirmations to choose from or you might like to create your own. Consider the following affirmations to think or say to yourself and repeat throughout your day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am doing my best. • I am capable of amazing things. • I choose to focus on what I can change. • I have courage and confidence. • I deserve understanding and compassion. • I am at peace with who I am. 	<p>Choose from the following options:</p> <p>Move the Clouds Sometimes we have negative thoughts that can move in like clouds. In this minds-on movement activity students will explore the idea of shifting negative thoughts (clouds), to more positive ones (sun). See Appendix A for full instructions.</p> <p>Read Aloud There are many picture books that support self-awareness, communication of thoughts and feelings, or using positive affirmations. Choose a read aloud that you have access to, and that suits the needs of the students in your class. Two examples would be:</p> <p>What's My Superpower? by Aviaq Johnston reminds students that each of us have unique and wonderful strengths.</p> <p>The Way I Feel by Janan Cain illustrates the perspective of treating our feelings like guests. We can welcome them in, get to know them, and perhaps learn why they are visiting.</p>



ACTION TASK: VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP VIDEO

In this video, students and educators will learn about thought-changing and participate in activities to practice healthy thought habits.

The following resource cards are used in this video:

1. Four Finger Affirmation (SMH-ON)
 - [Everyday Mental Health version](#) (ETFO)
 - [Faith and Wellness version](#) (OECTA)
2. [Energy Release](#) (Ophea)

Links to view virtual field trip:

[Click here to view on YouTube](#)

[Click here to view on Vimeo](#)



CONSOLIDATION

These activities and resources are designed to provide opportunities for consolidation of learning for both the educator and the students. Also provided is a letter for parents/caregivers that shares information and possible opportunities for follow-up learning.

EDUCATOR	CLASS
<p>Choose from the following thinking prompts:</p> <p>Reflect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on your thought patterns over the past few days. Are there recurring unhelpful or anxious thoughts? Are you stuck on a particular thought that keeps coming back? Try to identify what thoughts keep returning. Every time this unhelpful thought pops back into your brain, replace it with a new and helpful thought. If you struggle to come up with helpful responses to your thoughts, it can help to put yourself in the mindset of a friend. If your friend was having the same unhelpful thoughts, how would you respond? • Consider re-visiting the five strategies introduced so far, (breathing, muscle relaxation, visualization, distraction, thought-changing), and take some time to think about what works best for you. 	<p>Choose from the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Four Finger Affirmation Take some time for students to create their own four finger affirmations as outlined in the video. Click here for a printable Four Finger Affirmation poster for your classroom. □ Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-visit the Energy Release activity shared in the video. • Re-visit previous field trips and explore how those strategies could be used in combination with thought-changing activities shared in this lesson. • <i>The Power of Yet</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyday Mental Health version (ETFO) - Faith and Wellness version (OECTA) • <i>Illusions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyday Mental Health version (ETFO) - Faith and Wellness version (OECTA) □ Reflect and Discuss Re-visit the strategies learned in the first four lessons – (breathing, muscle relaxation, visualization, and distraction). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an activity from one of the field trips that you have started using regularly? If so, which one and why do you use it? • Are you noticing which strategies, (breathing, muscle relaxation, visualization, distraction, thought-changing) work best for you? • How do you know they are working?



PARENT/CAREGIVER

Today our class participated in a virtual field trip to learn more about coping with stress, recognizing that stress is a part of life, and that there are strategies to help us cope.

We learned about how our thoughts, feelings, and actions can impact one another. We also learned about ways that we can reflect on our thoughts and feelings so that we can better recognize them and how they impact us. As parents/caregivers you have a deep impact on your child's self-esteem and their early inner voice. If you would like to continue the learning from today, here are a few prompts to ask your child.

- What did you learn today about how our thoughts, feelings, and actions are connected?
- What did you find interesting about what you learned?
- What strategies have you learned that you find helpful when you have big feelings or feel overwhelmed?

For more activities to try at home, check out this set of activity cards from *School Mental Health Ontario*: <https://smho-smsso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EDMH-ParentActivities-FINAL-EN.pdf>.

You can also access *Ophea's Resources to Support Parents and Caregivers with Health and Physical Education at Home* <https://www.ophea.net/resources-support-parents-and-caregivers-health-and-physical-education-home> and visit *Ophea Open Class* <https://teachingtools.ophea.net/lesson-plans/hpe-home/ophea-open-class> for recorded instructional videos and lessons with guiding reflection questions related to social-emotional learning to support learners at home.





Appendix A

Move the Clouds

INSTRUCTIONS:

This activity has three parts. First students will participate in a movement activity, then educators will provide a reflection time to make connections between the movements students did and their thoughts. Finally, educators are encouraged to repeat the movement activity to allow students to link the new learning about thought-changing to the physical act of moving the clouds away.

Students find a space where they can move freely without touching others or hitting furniture. This can be done inside or outside, face to face or virtual, and is best done with music playing. When the leader of the activity, (this could be an educator or a student) says, “Here comes the sun!” students are encouraged to explore different kinds of movement in response to the music being played. When the leader says, “Clouds are moving in!” students stop, freeze, and use then use their bodies to move the clouds away. Consider adding an action to accompany each of the statements or hold up images to match each statement. (You can print out the free images from Pixabay that are linked below.) Alternate the sun shining and the cloud moving in for the duration of the activity.

REFLECTION:

After the movement activity take some time to draw connections between the physical actions and their thoughts. You can use the following script to help you:

“Thoughts are words that we say to ourselves. Thoughts happen all the time without us even realizing it! Sometimes we have anxious or unhelpful thoughts that move in, and we can get stuck thinking about them. We can learn to notice our thoughts, stop, reflect, and then shift our thoughts to be more helpful. This is much like the activity we just did! When we noticed the clouds, we stopped and moved them away to make room for the sun to return. **Just as we used our bodies to shift the clouds, we can use our mind to help shift our thoughts.**”

MOVEMENT ACTIVITY:

Repeat the movement activity to allow students to link the new learning about thought-changing to the physical act of moving the clouds away.



OPTIONAL SUPPORTS:

Free images from pixabay.com to download and print.

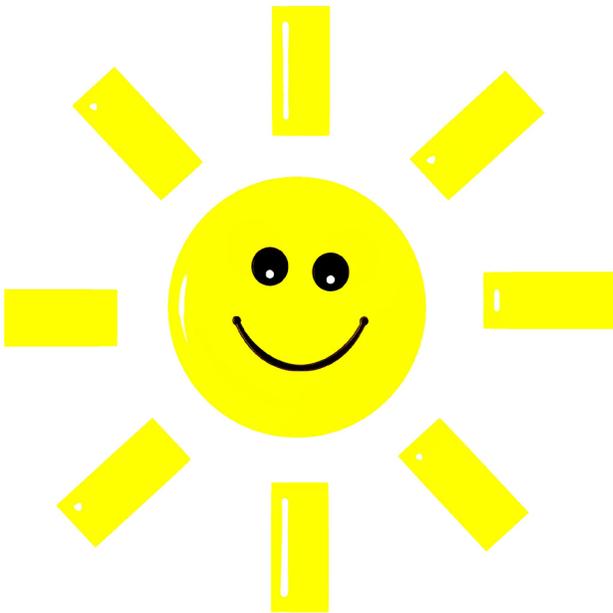
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