

# Managing Stress and Fostering Positive Mental Health

## *Lesson Plan*

**Resource:** H&PE Elementary Resources

**Unit:** Human Development and Sexual Health

**Grade(s):** 5

**Lesson:** 5 of 5

## H&PE Curriculum Expectations

**2019 H&PE Curriculum Expectations:** A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A1.4, A1.5, D2.5, D2.6

## Materials

- 1 index card per student
- Access to a shared document (chart paper and markers or online interactive tool [optional])
- **Teacher Resource: Recordable Assessment Tool (Checklist)**

## Learning Goals

- We are learning how to describe the emotional and social stresses related to puberty and apply strategies to cope with these changes.
- We are learning how to explain ways to help someone with their mental health.
- We are learning how to identify trusted people who can help in distressing situations.

## Overall Assessment

Using the Teacher Resource: Recordable Assessment Tool (Checklist), observe and provide oral and written feedback on students' understanding of stresses related to puberty, coping strategies, and where and when to seek help in distressing situations.

## Minds-On

Remind students of the ground rules/agreements that were established to create a safer and inclusive environment for everyone.

Ask students to close their eyes and imagine something that they love to do (e.g., engaging in physical activity, socializing with friends, reading). Ask them to open their eyes then share with an [Elbow Partner](#) how they feel when they are engaged in that activity. Encourage students to describe their feelings using adjectives such as happy, content, relaxed. Invite students to share their responses with the class.

Ask students to close their eyes again and imagine a situation that might cause them stress (e.g., being sick and missing a test, having a disagreement with someone, losing a friend). Ask students to share how the stressful situation made them feel (e.g., sad, anxious, nervous). Invite students to share their responses with the class.

Explain to students that growing up can be a happy and exciting time as they learn new skills, meet new friends and become more independent. It can also be a stressful time as they learn to cope with physical and emotional changes they experience during puberty.

## Action

Divide students into groups of 3 and provide access to a shared document. Use a [Mind Map](#) strategy and the following teacher prompts to facilitate small group discussions about the concept of stressors they experience now, as they begin puberty (provide time between each prompt for groups to discuss and record their ideas on their mind map).

- **Teacher prompt:** Write the word, “Stress” in the middle of your document. “What are some things that could lead to stress during puberty?” Work collaboratively to generate and record these stressors on your mind map.

*Student responses:*

- - “Feeling awkward about physical changes that are happening.”
  - “Confusing or intense feelings for someone.”

- "Changes in friendships."
- "The influence of photos and videos on social media and the impact on our self-concept and body image."
- "Moving to a new school."
- "Competing on a higher-level team or activity."
- "Not making a team."
- "Disappointment with achievements in or outside of school."
- "Family breakup."
- "Conflict with friends, siblings, parents."
- "Bullying in person and online."
- "Parent(s) financial difficulties."
- "Managing homework."
- "Conflicts between personal feelings and family or cultural teachings and practices."
- "Personal health issues or the poor health of a loved one."
- **Teacher prompt:** "When you think about how to respond to stress, consider what is within your control and what is not. What are some of the things you can control and some things you cannot control?" On your document, indicate which things are in your control and which things you cannot control (e.g., use a different colour marker, a different font, place them in a different spot on the mind map to distinguish between them).

*Student responses:*

- ○ Within our control:
  - "Having a positive or negative attitude about things."
  - "Showing respect for myself and others."
  - "Asking for help when needed."

- “Being involved in activities at school and in my community to help reduce stress and connect with other people.”
- “Being open to new ideas.”
- “Making our own decisions about things or being influenced by others.”
- “My actions. For example, I may feel self-conscious about my body when I am running or swimming, but I like these activities and I will continue to do them.”
- Outside of our control:
  - “What others may think about where I was born or who is in my family.”
  - “How much money my family has.”
  - “Personal characteristics such as my skin colour, hair colour, sexual orientation, and body shape and structure, or whether I have a learning disability, a physical disability, or a health issue.”
  - “How others view me, but I can control what I do and how I act.”
- **Teacher prompt:** “It is normal to have stress and to have different feelings, including being happy, sad, angry, and excited at different times. Part of taking care of your mental health and emotional well-being is learning to be aware of and to monitor your own feelings. What are some ways your body can show the stress that you might be feeling? How might your feelings indicate that you are feeling stressed?”

*Student responses:*

- - “In my forehead because I get headaches.”
  - “Sweating on my back, arms or neck.”
  - “In my stomach and I feel nauseous.”
  - “My shoulders get really tense.”
  - “Sometimes, if I am really stressed, I get jittery.”
  - “Sometimes, I feel angry or impatient and I know it is because I am stressed.”
  - “I can feel unhappy or sad and then realize I am stressed.”

- **Teacher prompt:** “Developing new kinds of relationships and new feelings that you have not had before can become stressful. Understanding how to respond to these new feelings and situations can reduce some of the stress that goes with them. For example, if you feel you ‘like someone in a special way’, what are some appropriate ways of sharing that information with that person and what are ways that are inappropriate?”

*Student responses:*

- - “You can show that you like someone by being extra nice to them.”
  - “Talking with them more, spending time with them, or telling them that you like them.”
  - “Touching them without their permission is not appropriate.”
  - “Spreading rumours about them to others in person or online and making fun of them in order to get attention isn’t ok.”
  - “Sharing private sexual photos with others or posting sexual rumours online is hurtful, unacceptable, and illegal.”
- **Teacher prompt:** “Stress can be positive such as the stress you might feel when you are expected to perform at a big family event, an athletic competition, or a celebration. It can help you focus, perform at your best and helps you develop skills to manage stress in other situations. It can also have negative outcomes if it is not managed. It is important to know how to manage stress when it arises, to take care of your mental health and well-being. What are some ways you can manage your stress?”

*Student responses:*

- - “Being physically active.”
  - “Writing feelings in a journal.”
  - “Accessing reliable information about their concerns.”
  - “Talking to a trusted peer or adult.”
  - “Deep breathing.”
  - “Thinking positive thoughts.”
  - “Laughing”

- “Playing with a pet.”
- “Seeking advice from elders.”

After groups have discussed and recorded their responses to all prompts, invite groups to share their ideas with the class, encouraging groups to add any new ideas they hear to their mind map.

Have groups select one cause of the stressors they identified on their mind map and demonstrate it in a chart (a still or posed image created with their bodies to represent a scene). Invite groups to demonstrate their chart for their classmates. Have the class identify the stressors they see represented within the chart by the group performing and generate ideas to manage the stressor being depicted.

Using Direct Instruction, explain to students that stress is a normal part of life. Learning to cope with or adapt to stressors and changes in life helps them build resilience as they grow and mature. Everyone experiences stress and it is important to learn healthy strategies to manage stress that work for them to support their mental health. This includes knowing when to ask for help such as when the feelings last a long time, not knowing what is causing the feelings, changes in mood, isolating themselves from others or falling behind in their schoolwork. It is also important to know how to support a friend who is dealing with stress, including seeking help.

Use an [Inside/Outside Circle](#) strategy and the following teacher prompts for students to reflect on their role in supporting others who may need mental health support and who they or their friend might go to for help with their own stressors.

- **Teacher prompt:** “How might you know that a friend, or someone you know, might be trying to manage a mental health problem and may need help?”

*Student responses:*

- - “I might notice a mood change or behaviour that is a lot different from what I usually see.”
  - “I might notice that the person doesn’t join the group anymore.”
  - “I might notice that they seem to be feeling sad.”
  - “They might not be doing homework or falling behind in classwork.”

- “I’d pay attention if I heard them saying things about wanting to feel better but not knowing how to change.”

- **Teacher prompt:** “What could you do to help a friend?”

*Student responses:*

- - “I can try to encourage them by reminding them of things that have worked for them in the past.”
  - “I can encourage them to take a break or invite them to do something fun together outside.”
  - “I can remind them how we learned to take some deep and grounding breaths.”
  - “I can encourage them to ask for help.”

- **Teacher prompt:** “What is important to understand about the limits of how you can help?”

*Student responses:*

- - “If they don’t ask for help and I’m really worried about them, I can tell an adult I trust.”
  - “I need to remember that getting help is important. Especially if I’m worried that the person might hurt themselves or be in danger.”
  - “I need to make sure I’m not trying to help on my own.”

- **Teacher prompt:** “If the problem seems like something you need help from an adult to deal with, who could you ask for help?”

*Student responses:* “My teacher, my coach, a family member, an elder, a Métis Senator, or another trusted adult in my community.”

After each teacher prompt, invite students to share their responses and then move to meet with a new partner before asking them to discuss the next prompt.

If time permits, have the groups return to their Mind Map to create a list of people, services and resources they could go to when experiencing a personal problem (e.g., a trusted adult, community support services, and online help service). Invite groups to share one person, service or resource that can be a source of support when an individual requires help.

Have groups post their Mind Maps for other groups to view and reference during the consolidation.

## Consolidation

Provide each student with an index-card-size piece of paper. Using an [Elbow Partner](#) strategy, have students identify one emotional or interpersonal/friendship/relationship stress that might occur at puberty (e.g., getting in a disagreement with a parent about wanting to be more independent, conflict between demands of family and time with friends, losing a friend because of a disagreement, pressure from peers that conflicts with one's cultural traditions).

Have students crinkle up their paper into a "snowball" and roll it across the room. Students continue to roll the "snowballs" until given a stop signal. Students retrieve one "snowball" each and form a group of 4. Students review the four "snowballs" and select one to use to create a role-play. Groups plan and perform a role-play of the situation, demonstrating how the main character(s) choose to effectively solve the problem and manage the stress. Encourage groups to reference the posted Mind Maps for ideas.

Following the performance, have students viewing the role-plays share how the role-plays were successful in helping to solve the problem and manage stress while preserving the relationship. Ask the students if there were other ways the characters could have managed the stress related to puberty.

## Notes to Teachers

Teachers should be aware of student disclosures and/or triggers and of appropriate actions to take. Know who to go to for help if you need it. Be familiar with internal board support as well as community agencies or organizations that provide contact information for resource people within the school and the community to whom you can refer students.

For additional information about mental health, consult your local public health unit or visit these websites:

- [School Mental Health Ontario](#)
- [Ophea's Virtual Field Trips Stress Management and Coping](#)

## Duty to Report Children in Need of Protection



If any person, including “a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children,” has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, the act requires that the person report their suspicions “immediately” to a children’s aid society and provide the information on which the suspicions are based. Therefore teachers, principals, and other professionals who, in the course of performing their professional or official duties, suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, must report this information without delay to a children’s aid society. *(Extracted from: Government of Ontario. (2021). **Program Policy Memorandum 9: Duty to Report Children in Need of Protection**.)*