

# Description of the Mental Wellness Kit: Be Kind to Yourself and Others

## Why address mental wellness?

Children and youth today are experiencing more stress and anxiety than ever before. It is important that children develop the skills to enhance their mental well-being. Otherwise, the result could be poor physical and mental health, poor social skills, and even poor school achievement. This kit has been created to address mental wellness.

## How to address mental wellness:

- Mental health promotion is embedded in the Health & Life Skills curriculum throughout the Wellness Choices Outcomes and Relationship Outcomes for Grades 4, 5 & 6.
- To be most effective, promoting mental wellness should use a comprehensive school health approach:
  - Education to students and family to create awareness and develop skills
  - School environment that supports mental wellness
  - Partnership with school councils, local businesses and community agencies to promote mental wellness
- What works for one school might not work for another. You know your school community best, so create a positive mental health environment within your school.

## Getting started with this kit:

- 1 First, you may want to **inform parents** before starting this unit and invite their participation with their child in follow-up activities. A sample parent/guardian letter has been included in this section.
- 2 Turn to Teacher Guide section of this kit for an **introduction** of mental wellness that you can use in class. This includes guidelines for students anonymously completing the “Be Kind To Yourself and Others Quiz” and how to use lesson plans.

**Note:** the questions in the quiz might bring up some issues with individual students, so be prepared. We suggest completing the template for resources to support youth and families in the Resource Section of this binder, in case you need to refer children or families for assistance.

The **lesson plans/activities** in this kit address topics throughout the Alberta Education Health and Life Skills Program of Studies. In addition each lesson includes take home activities to support the learning at home.

**These topics include:**

- Body Image
  - All Dolled Up
- Healthy Communication
  - Dinner Talk
- Hope
  - Picturing Hope
- Humour
  - Humour for Health
- Peer Relationships
  - Bullying
  - Friendship
- Physical Activity & Mental Wellness
  - Move Your Mood
- Resiliency
  - Chain of Support
  - Feel Good Box
- Stress
  - Chicken Juggling
  - Listening to My Inner Voice

**Other ways to promote mental wellness in the school community:**

- 1 Organize a **school committee** in which students, staff, parents and health professionals are involved. Projects might include:
  - ✓ Supporting a safe learning environment, ensuring that teasing and bullying are not tolerated.
  - ✓ Creating healthy nutrition habits in your school. For example, reviewing the foods available in vending machines, school stores and cafeterias, food at special events, or even determining if there is a healthy environment for children to eat lunch, i.e., school lunch room, etc.
  - ✓ Promoting active living in your school. Team sports are important, but not the answer for every child. Active living can be promoted through the Daily Physical Activity Initiative, but also at breaks and lunch time.

- ✓ Making your school into a positive social environment, where all children are accepted and valued for who they are.
  - ✓ Brainstorming ways to help create a school environment that promotes mental wellness (e.g. positive recognition awards, staff wellness events, etc.)
  - ✓ Educating staff about early signs of mental health concerns, for students, themselves and their colleagues. It is important to know what to do if they recognize problems (make sure to complete the template with your community resources in the Resource Section). Talking about mental illness does not make it worse. Some of the most common mental illnesses in children and youth are anxiety, depression and eating disorders.
- 2** Organize a student **Mental Wellness Fair** (using lesson plans found in this kit). This might involve several activity stations scattered throughout the school (or school gymnasium) with students rotating through these stations. The stations could be facilitated by a teacher, school nurse, or even an older peer student educator. One idea is to train older students to facilitate these stations and then have younger students attend. This way the older students learn hands-on about the concepts, and the younger students learn from their peers.
- 3** Engage the **parents**
- Put mental wellness articles into the parent newsletters or school website. For articles that can be used, check out the Capital Health website. There are a number of previous Health Talk newsletters that have mental health topics in them that could be used again. [www.capitalhealth.ca](http://www.capitalhealth.ca) (schools and preschools).
  - Highlight mental wellness activities during usual school activities, such as student led conferences or education week activities.
  - If you organize a student Mental Wellness Fair, invite parents to attend the event. You may incorporate the event in your Demonstration Of Learning/ Student Led Conferences. This is especially effective if students are leading the education station. There is a greater chance that parents will come to the event if their children are doing a presentation.
  - Encourage students to complete all take home activities listed in each lesson plan of this kit. This will help inform parents of what their child is learning in class.

This kit has been assembled in partnership between Alberta Health Services (Regional Mental Health Program, and Community Health Services), Canadian Mental Health Association – Edmonton Region, Edmonton Public Schools, and Edmonton Catholic School District.

**Dear Parent/Guardian,**

I would like to tell you about a set of lessons being taught in your child's classroom in the next week(s). The lessons are from a kit called ***Be Kind To Yourself & Others***. This kit was developed in partnership with Community Health Services and Regional Mental Health Program of Alberta Health Services; Canadian Mental Health Association – Edmonton Region; Edmonton Public School Board; and Edmonton Catholic School District. The kit was made as a resource to support the areas of the Alberta Education Health and Life Skills Program of Studies that deal with mental wellness.

My hope is that the activities in this kit will help children learn about their strengths, and give them ideas to support their mental wellness.

A sample of topics includes:

- communication with our families
- using physical activity and relaxation exercises to make us feel better
- talking about how friendships change
- using humour for health
- bouncing back from hard times
- having a positive body image

### **Why address mental wellness?**

Children today are experiencing more stress and anxiety than ever before. These lessons will help children learn skills that will support their mental well-being, physical health, and even school achievement.

We hope you can have some talks with your child about the activities they will be doing during these lessons. We encourage you to help them in their take home activities that are part of each lesson.

Together, we can have a positive influence on children and provide them with the skills they need to achieve mental wellness.

Sincerely,



# CLASSROOM Introduction to the “Be Kind” Kit



## Discuss with students:

1 What does being healthy mean to you?

- health is a resource for everyday life
- health is influenced by many things (i.e. income, education, genetics, culture & gender, health services, justice, personal choices)

2 What does mental wellness mean to you?

- it can be seen as a resource for reaching one's full potential
- not just the absence of mental illness
- physical, mental & spiritual health are interconnected; what's happening with one, impacts the others

## Activity

- start by having students do the “Be Kind To Yourself & Others Quiz” located in this section (remind students that it is anonymous)
- after the students have completed the quiz, discuss how each statement impacts mental wellness
- after students/teacher discuss the quiz, collect & collate the results.

See “Lesson Correlation to Quiz” in this section for associated lesson plans. If student responses are mostly positive, consider discussing with the class what lesson topics they would enjoy learning more about. If you have a number of problematic responses to individual questions you may want to address it with the whole class by teaching the corresponding lesson plan.

- encourage students to ask for help if difficult feelings arise from the quiz or other lessons throughout the unit (see local resource list included in Resource Section of binder for appropriate supports).

## Be Kind to Yourself & Others Quiz

Take this quiz to learn how you're being kind to yourself and others.  
Pick one answer.

	Often	Sometimes	Never
I am able to laugh and feel enjoyment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am happy with my life right now.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a good friend.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I sleep well and wake up feeling refreshed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have an adult in my life that I feel I can talk to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel peaceful most of the time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I follow the Canada Food Guide for healthy eating.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel hopeful most of the time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have time to do the things I like to do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think I am a good friend to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worry a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like the way I look.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My family has at least one meal together every day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can change my thinking to help me feel happier and be less grouchy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get 90 minutes of physical activity every day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Thank you! Have fun using this quiz in your classroom to talk about how you can continue to be kind to yourself and others.**

## Lesson Correlation to Quiz

<b>Question:</b>	<b>Associated Lesson Plans in the Mental Wellness Kit</b>
I am able to laugh and feel enjoyment.	<i>Humour for Health; Feel Good Boxes</i>
I am happy with my life right now.	<i>Feel Good Boxes</i>
I have a good friend.	<i>Bullying; Friendship</i>
I sleep well & wake up feeling refreshed.	<i>Chicken Juggling; Humour for Health</i>
I have an adult in my life I feel I can talk to.	<i>Feel Good Boxes; Chain of Support</i>
I feel peaceful most of the time.	<i>Chicken Juggling, Humour for Health; Hope</i>
I follow the Canada Food Guide for healthy eating.	<i>refer to <a href="http://www.capitalhealth.ca/schoolsandpreschools">www.capitalhealth.ca/schoolsandpreschools</a> (elementary school education kits)</i>
I feel hopeful most of the time.	<i>Hope</i>
I have time to do the things I like to do.	<i>Chicken Juggling; Humour for Health; Listening to My Inner Voice</i>
I think I am a good friend to others.	<i>Bullying; Friendship</i>
I worry a lot.	<i>Chicken Juggling; Humour for Health; Listening to My Inner Voice</i>
I like the way I look.	<i>All Dolled Up</i>
My family has at least one meal together every day.	<i>Dinner Talk</i>
I can change my thinking to help me feel happier and be less grouchy.	<i>Feel Good Boxes; Bullying; Friendship; Listening to My Inner Voice</i>
I get 90 minutes of physical activity every day.	<i>Move Your Mood</i>

## Evaluating the Mental Health Kit

We hope the Mental Health Kit: Be Kind To Yourself and Others assists teachers in presenting various mental wellness concepts, and meeting the corresponding outcomes of the Alberta Education Health and Life Skills curriculum. Since the educators who use this kit are the best people to identify its strengths and weaknesses, please provide us some feedback.

We would appreciate feedback on all aspects of the kit, from the Classroom Introduction to individual lesson plans. Please copy as many pages of this evaluation as you need, and identify which component you are providing feedback for. Thank you for taking time to help us improve this resource!

How do you rate:

\_\_\_\_\_ section being evaluated

	Very		Not At All		If not (2 or 1) please explain:	
<b>1</b> Useful?	5	4	3	2	1	
<b>2</b> Easy to understand?	5	4	3	2	1	
<b>3</b> Well organized?	5	4	3	2	1	
<b>4</b> Received well by students?	5	4	3	2	1	
<b>5</b> Linked to Health Curriculum?	5	4	3	2	1	

Other comments

FAX your evaluation to: Community Health Services, School Health Consultant.  
780.482.4203

# Instructions for Making the Be Kind To Yourself and Others Kit

You will require a binder and dividers for the written materials in this resource. A tote box is ideal to store the lesson plan binder and props.

Props can be purchased, found at school, or brought from home. These include:

- 5–7 items for juggling, such as rubber chickens, bean bags etc. (items should be easily washable with soap and water)
- a class set of rubber bands of various colours and sizes
- name tags
- optional: a relaxation CD or similar background music to accompany the relaxation exercise

Please note: There is a section to include a Resource List in the event a child or family needs referral for assistance. We have included a template that can be completed with your local resources.



## Resources for Youth & Young Adults

(Alberta requires 10-digit dialing – use area code 780 unless otherwise noted)



### Basic Needs/Financial

Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry (AEII)  
*Income Support Contact Centre (24 hrs)* 644-5135  
 Credit Counselling Services of Alberta 408-7708  
 Edmonton's Food Bank 425-4190  
 Youth Emergency Shelter (*under 19 yrs*) 468-7070

### Crisis

Capital Health – Children's Mental Health  
*Community Response Team (CRT)* 413-4733  
*Crisis Line (telephone support; not 24 hrs)* 427-4491  
 Child & Family Services Region 6  
*Child Abuse Hotline (24 hrs)* 1-800-387-5437  
 Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868  
 Salvation Army Community & Family Services  
*Teen Support Line* 428-8336 (TEEN)  
 Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (*24 hrs*) 423-4121  
 The Support Network  
*Distress Line (24 hrs)* 482-4357 (HELP)  
*Youth One – Crisis Chat* [www.youthone.com](http://www.youthone.com)

### Counselling (\* no cost)

Catholic Social Services 420-1970  
 City of Edmonton Community Services  
*\*Assessment and Short-Term Counselling* 496-4777  
 Cornerstone Counselling Centre 482-6215  
 Family Centre, The 424-5580  
 Foundation for Families in Transformation (FFIT)  
*(referrals to peer support groups for children, youth & adults grieving a death, separation, or divorce: Rainbows, Spectrum, Prism)* 448-1180  
 Jewish Family Services 454-1194  
 Psychologists' Association of Alberta  
*Referral Line Service* 428-8255 (TALK)  
 The Support Network  
*\*Walk-In Counselling (call first)* 482-0198  
 YWCA Edmonton - Counselling Centre 423-9922 x.222

### Education/Employment/Life Skills

Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry (AEII)  
*Career Information Hotline* 422-4266  
*For local employment offices, dial* 211  
*Students Finance* 427-3722  
 Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS)  
*(careers/learning/employment info)* [www.alis.gov.ab.ca](http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca)  
 Bredin Institute – Centre for Learning 425-3730  
*Youth Connections (16-24 yrs)* 415-4968  
 Chimo – Chimo Life Skills Program (*13-17 yrs*) 420-0324

### Health and Sexuality

Alberta Health Services  
*Birth Control Centre* 735-0010  
*Pregnancy testing & counselling* 735-0010  
*STD and HIV testing* 735-0010  
*Health Link Alberta (24 hrs)* 408-5465 (LINK)  
 Eating Disorder Education Organization 944-2864  
 OPTIONS Sexual Health Association 423-3737  
*Abortion Information Line* 428-1539  
 Pride Centre of Edmonton – *Youth Outreach* 488-3234  
 SACRED (Society for Assisted Cooperative Recovery from Eating Disorders) 903-3300

### Recreation

Boys & Girls Clubs of Edmonton 422-6038  
 City of Edmonton Community Services 496-4999  
*Leisure Access Program* 496-4918  
 Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues 437-2913  
 Edmonton Sport Council (*sport referrals*) 497-7678  
 KidSport Edmonton (*funding; 5-18 yrs*) 487-2666  
 Sport Central Association (*no cost equipment*) 477-1166  
 YMCA of Edmonton – *Jumpstart (5-18 yrs)* 429-5725

### Substance Abuse/Addictions

Alberta Alcohol & Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC)  
*Adult Counselling & Prevention Services* 427-2736  
*AADAC Youth Services (12-17 yrs)* 422-7383  
 Al-Anon Family Groups (*including Alateen*) 433-1818  
 Catholic Social Services – *Genesis II – Youth and Family Substance Abuse Treatment* 471-1122

### Support

Boys & Girls Clubs of Edmonton 422-6038  
 Mill Woods Family Resource Centre 413-4521  
*Child & Youth Groups* 413-4521 x. 201  
 Northeast Teen Centre 475-2589  
 Old Strathcona Youth Society (*14-24 yrs*) 496-5947  
 Partners for Kids and Youth (*Abbotsfield/Rundle*) 471-1251  
 Terra – Centre for pregnant and parenting teens 428-3772  
 The Support Network – *Youth One* [www.youthone.com](http://www.youthone.com)  
 Youth Emergency Shelter Society 468-7070

### Volunteering

Alberta's YouthVOLUNTEER! [www.youthvolunteer.ca](http://www.youthvolunteer.ca)  
 Volunteer Edmonton [www.volunteeredmonton.com](http://www.volunteeredmonton.com)

### Youth and Young Adults At Risk

(see *Resources for At Risk Youth & Young Adults*)

For more information, or if you cannot find the particular service you are looking for:

**Within Edmonton dial: 2-1-1    Outside of Edmonton call: 482-INFO (4636)    [www.211edmonton.info](http://www.211edmonton.info)**

Inclusion of an agency or service on this list does not constitute an endorsement by The Support Network.

Last Updated: April 14, 2008 – please obtain a new copy if more than 6 months old

For copies of this and other resource lists go to [www.thesupportnetwork.com](http://www.thesupportnetwork.com) and click on "Resource Lists".

The Support Network • Edmonton, Alberta • Phone: (780) 482-0198 • Fax: (780) 488-1495

# Community Mental Health Resources for Youth and Families

Mental health related resources are located in many communities. Find out the resource agencies in your community and complete this list for easy reference in case a student or family needs assistance.

Local Community Mental Health Clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Distress Lines: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Community Health Centre: \_\_\_\_\_

Health Link Alberta Call Centre: \_\_\_\_\_

## Canadian Mental Health Association:

For information about the CMHA Branch in your area, please see the CMHA National website at [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

Your School District Support Services: \_\_\_\_\_

Kid's Help Phone: 1.800.668.6868

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# All Dolled Up

## Grade 4–6 Influences Kit

From the Grade 4–6 Body Image Kit

### Alberta Education Health and Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes

The student will...

- W – 4.4 Examine the various factors that influence body image: e.g., culture, media, peers, role models, weight loss industry;
- W – 5.4 Examine the impact that changes in interests, abilities and activities may have on body image;
- W – 6.1 Evaluate the need for balance & variety in daily activities that promote personal health; and
- W – 6.4 Examine how health habits/behaviours influence body image and feelings of self-worth.



### Teacher Background

This activity provides an opportunity for educators to address the topic of body image with their students and begin the process of decoding the multitude of societal influences and messages. The use of an activity, such as “All Dolled Up” has a number of benefits to the instructor:

- The individual instructor sets the pace. For example, if there is a particular concept that requires reinforcement, there is an opportunity to use “All Dolled Up” as a springboard for further discussion.
- An instructor can also guide their students’ journey through the activity by selecting concepts that are most appropriate to address at that time or in that grade level. “All Dolled Up” enables the students to begin a unique journey of critical thought in relation to messages from society and media, as well as from both peers and role models.
- The approach an instructor utilizes with the kit is a matter of personal preference. For example, the instructor may pose questions to the class collectively or to smaller groups of students.

### Objective

Through the use of dolls and action figures, students will interpret some common, but different cultural messages directed at males vs. females. They will have an opportunity to relate the outcomes to their own body image.



## Materials

There are six laminated pictures included of dolls/figures that represent a different message about how males and females are valued. Worksheets to use in discussion about these dolls are also included.

- 1 Female & 1 Male Beauty Ideals (i.e. Barbie/Steffie, Body Builder)
- 1 Female & 1 Male that is valued for their Intelligence and skills (i.e. Smartees)
- 1 Female & 1 Male Fun-Loving, feel good in your skin dolls (i.e. Groovy Kids)

## Get Ready

- Introduce today's lesson, e.g. "In our society, we get many messages that influence how we feel about ourselves; about how we should look and even how we should act."
- Have the group brainstorm different ways that we get messages in our society. List these on the board.
- Ask students if they feel that males and females get information about how to be male and female when they play with toys.

## Activity: "All Dolled Up"

- Divide the class into 6 groups.
- Distribute a laminated picture of a doll/action figure and worksheets to each group.
- Instruct each group to complete the worksheets together (they may need to defend their groups' ideas about the messages the doll/figure gives.)
- Once the groups complete their worksheets, reconvene and have each group share their findings.

## Optional Activity

- Invite the 3 "doll" groups to compare and contrast their dolls.
- Invite the 3 "action figure" groups to compare and contrast their action figures.
- Brainstorm ways that the male and female dolls/action figures differ from each other in the messages they convey.

## Discussion

- Are there different expectations on girls versus boys (females versus males) in our society regarding what they do at school/home, types of activities they engage in (i.e., sports, other), types of careers they choose, how much money they will make, etc.?
- What is the ideal body shape in our culture for girls (females)?
- What is the ideal body shape in our culture for boys (males)?
- Are thin people treated any differently in our society than heavy people? Is this different for girls versus boys (females versus males)?
- How does analyzing these messages impact our views of others and ourselves?
- What can you do to have a healthy body image?

## Video Streaming

- Could use the “Confident for Life” video from the “Second Generation” Body Image Kit (the one that is available from your school nurse) to support the idea of how media uses computer technology to change model appearances to create an “ideal” image.

or

- Go to [www.campaignforrealbeauty.com](http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com). Click on the “inside the campaign” link at the top of the page, then “Evolution Film”. This is a very brief film showing how the beauty industry uses computer technology to create “ideal images”. This site also has a number of educator resources on girls and self esteem. Click on link “ideas for educators”.

or

- Go to [www.media-awareness.ca](http://www.media-awareness.ca) and type into search “The Anatomy of Cool” for a lesson plan that helps students become aware of media influences on their self image. Link used with permission © 2008 Media Awareness Network, [www.media-awareness.ca](http://www.media-awareness.ca).

## Conclusion

Through the use of dolls and action figures, we have discussed some common, but different cultural messages directed at males and females. We have had a chance to discuss how in society we get messages that influence how we feel about ourselves. We have also discussed ways to counteract these messages, so that we can have a healthy body image.

## Take Home Activity

- Using the attached handout (The Three Body Types), look for varieties of body types among **television and magazines** and be prepared to discuss your observations in class (note that the ectomorph body type is over represented in the media).
- Speak to a family member or friend about body image concerns you may have.

## Assessment Strategy

- students will be able to identify 3 ways in which media/toys can influence their body image

## Reference

This activity was taken from the Grade 4-6 “Body Image Kit” (Alberta Mental Health Board, 2001). This kit contains several other activities you could also use with your students.

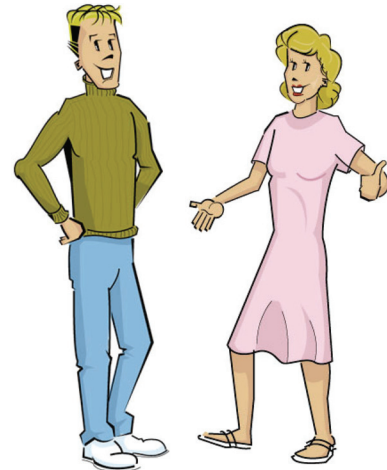
The Body Image Kit is free to borrow from several sources. Contact:

- Your school’s community health nurse (has access to original kit as well as newer “Second Generation” kit)
- Edmonton Public Schools: Physical Education Consultant (780) 429-8341
- Edmonton Catholic Schools: Physical Education/Health and Life Skills Consultant (780) 989-3019
- Alberta Health Services Regional Mental Health, Eating Disorder Prevention Specialist (780) 429-7895 Ext. 2

## The Three Body Types

### Ectomorph:

- Thin, lean body
- Lightweight frame
- Little muscle or fat
- Appears to have long arms and body in proportion to trunk
- High metabolism – can eat large amounts of food without gaining weight
- 5% of the population has this body type



### Mesomorph

- Average to large bone structure
- Broad shoulders and narrow hips
- Large bones and heavy muscle
- Well-proportioned limbs
- 90% of the population has this body type



### Endomorph:

- Average to large frame
- Stocky, soft, rounded appearance
- Higher proportion of body fat
- Legs may appear short in relation to body size
- Lower metabolism – may have trouble maintaining a healthy body weight because they store fat easily
- 5% of the population has this body type



# All Dolled Up

## Teaching Guide

### Steffi

If Steffi Were Real:

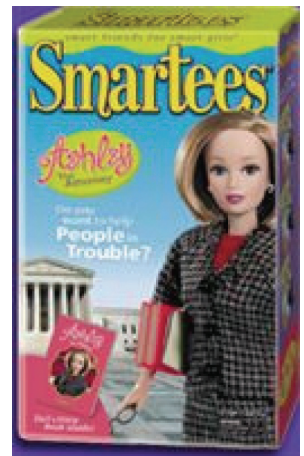
- She would be 7 feet 2 inches tall (219.45 cm)
- She would NOT be able to stand up because:
  - Her waist could not support her upper body
  - She has tiny size 3 tip toed feet



### Smartees Dolls

These Dolls:

- Have Professions/University Degrees/ Resumes
- Remind us that we should NOT let our career choices be determined by our gender
- Remind us that our appearance is only one small part of our identity



### Groovy Dolls

These Dolls:

- Portray a different image but a healthier one – that it's perfectly all right to be yourself and to be comfortable in your own body, just the way it is.



## Wrestling Figure

The wrestling figure in many ways represents the MALE equivalent of Steffi.



## GI Joe

Let's look at how the "male ideal" has changed over the years by taking a look at GI Joe (action figure):

GI Joe's biceps in real life equivalents have increased:

- 1964: 12.2" (31.75 cm)
- 1974: 15.2" (38.60 cm)
- 1994: 16.4" (41.65 cm)
- 1998: 26.8" (68.07 cm)

In comparison, the baseball player Mark McGwire's biceps are 20" (50.80 cm)



# All Dolled Up

**Describe the appearance of your doll or action figure:**

---

---

---

---

---

---



**If this doll or action figure were real, what percentage of people that you see would look like this?**

---



**What does this doll or action figure do – what is its purpose?**

---

---

---

---

---

---



# All Dolled Up

**Why might a person buy this doll or action figure:**

---

---

---

---

---



**What messages does this toy give you about how you should look?**

---

---

---

---

---



**Does your group believe (based on your discussion) that toys influence our body image? Why?**

---

---

---

---

---



























# Healthy Communication: Dinner Talk

## Alberta Education Health & Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes:

The student will...

- R – 5.4 Practice effective communication skills; e.g., active listening, perception checks
- R – 6.5 Develop and demonstrate strategies to build and enhance relationship in the family; e.g., being honest, expressing empathy



## Teacher Background

Family meals can be an important opportunity to develop strong family relationships and connection. Like other forms of parental involvement, some research suggests there is a positive relationship between frequent family dinners and positive behaviour/healthy eating in children.

Regular family meals improve children's mental and physical health. Sitting down together to eat and talk about what is happening in our daily lives reduces stress and improves communication.

Frequent family dinners have also been linked to a lower risk of a long list of unhealthy behaviours in youth, including substance abuse, inappropriate sexual activity, depression/suicide, anti-social behaviour and school problems.

The chances of maintaining a balanced, healthy diet are also much improved when families eat at home most of the time. There's also a link between family meals and healthy weights.

Shared meal times may not be the reality for every child. In such cases it would be useful to brainstorm how to encourage such family activities, i.e., meals with grandparents or other significant adult figures. The following classroom and take home activities can be adapted for children who may not have opportunity to experience a meal with family members.

- Create dinner talk questions to be used with each other.
- Create a “mock family dinner” in the classroom.
- Brainstorm how to use these questions with significant others in their lives or some day with their own families.

## Objective

To create an environment for family connection by having students design and practice “dinner talk” questions.

## Materials

- Dinner Talk handout
- Parent Information Sheet
- Parent/Student Take Home Questionnaire

## Get Ready

Ask students or have students write about their practices, traditions, routine regarding meal time in their home.

- Do they have regular meals together with all members of their household? How often? What time of day?
- What do they enjoy about family meals?
- What makes it hard to have a family meal? What are some of the barriers they face in having a family meal?
- What do they think are the benefits of eating together as a household?
- What do they typically talk about during their meals together?

## Activity

- Provide each student with a “Dinner Talk” handout. Working in groups or individually, have students create their own questions that they can bring home to help stimulate discussion during household meals (using the handout as a template for making up questions).
- Cut out squares, staple together to create a booklet.
- Encourage students to share their created questions with each other.

## Conclusion

We have talked about the benefits and barriers of eating a meal together as a family on a regular basis. We designed “dinner talk” questions to help stimulate discussion at family meals.



## Take Home Activity

Have students take home the “Dinner Talk” booklet that they created. Students are encouraged to initiate the activity at home with family members or significant others. A parent information sheet & questionnaire are included to send home with the student. Parents are encouraged to complete the questionnaire with their child and return it to school to be discussed during a follow-up classroom discussion.

## Follow-up Classroom Discussion

Using parent/student questionnaire ask the following questions:

- Did you get a chance to do the activity?
- How did the questions help your family become more aware of how each of you think and feel?
- Did family members find out anything new about each other?
- What happened when you tried this activity at home?

## Assessment Strategy

In your journal, describe other ways that families can connect with each other (e.g., playing sports together, reading together, or visiting grandparents)

# Dinner Talk

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you rather be a \_\_\_\_\_  
or \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?

---

---

---

What is your favorite \_\_\_\_\_?

---

---

---

What do you love most about  
\_\_\_\_\_?

---

---

---

Name 3 things that \_\_\_\_\_?

---

---

---

Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_?

---

---

---

What makes you feel \_\_\_\_\_?

---

---

---

What would your life be like if  
\_\_\_\_\_?

---

---

# Healthy Communication: Dinner Talk

## Parent Information

### **Making Time for Family Meals** (from [www.healthyalberta.com](http://www.healthyalberta.com))

You'd love to sit down with your whole family and eat healthy food together several times a week. Unfortunately it's sometimes hard to co-ordinate everyone's schedule. You have to get the kids to their hockey games, music lessons and/or part-time jobs. The adults in your household might work long hours.

You might also lose heart when you get everyone in the same place at the same time, because the contents of your fridge and kitchen cupboards are less than ideal.

It's possible, however, for busy families to regularly gather at the dining table and eat good meals that are easy and quick to prepare. The key is to make family meals a priority and take the time to do some careful planning.

Dr. Geoff Ball, Director of the Pediatric Centre for Weight and Health at the Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton, recommends establishing a structure around mealtimes. "Kids thrive on structure," he says.

Having a dinner where families can connect is difficult to achieve," Dr. Ball says, "but most people can find one or two opportunities a week if they make it a priority. They have to be ready for change."

Dr. Ball says some families find it works best to have family dinners on weekends. There's more time to prepare a healthy meal and to sit down and enjoy it when it's served on these days. He also thinks it's a good idea to get the kids involved in the whole process: helping to set the table, doing some of the food preparation, helping to plan menus and buy groceries

### **Why Go to the Trouble?**

Regular family meals improve children's mental and physical health. Sitting down together to eat and talk about what is happening in our daily lives reduces stress and improves communication.

Frequent family dinners have also been linked to a lower risk of a long list of unhealthy behaviours in youth, including substance abuse, inappropriate sexual activity, depression/suicide, anti-social behaviour and school problems.

The chances of maintaining a balanced, healthy diet are also much improved when families eat at home most of the time. There's also a link between family meals and healthy weights. Plan now to bring your family back to the dinner table. The family dinner table is a great place to promote and maintain your children's good health.

# Parent/Student Questionnaire

## Take Home Activity

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/caregiver please fill this out with your child after finishing the “Dinner Talk” activity. Have child bring this sheet back to school tomorrow.

Did you have a chance to use the questions?

---

---

---

What new things did family members find out about each other?

---

---

---

What made it hard to do the activity?

---

---

---



What are some ideas for getting together as a family? (if family dinners are not possible)

---

---

---

# Picturing Hope

## Alberta Education Health and Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes



The student will...

- R – 4.1 Recognize that individuals can have a positive and negative influence on the feelings of others
- R – 4.6 Identify and describe ways to provide support to others; e.g., help a friend deal with loss
- R – 5.3 Recognize that stressors affect individuals differently, and outline ways individuals respond to stress
- R – 5.5 Identify possible changes in family relationships, and explore strategies for dealing with change e.g., loss
- R – 6.3 Develop personal strategies for dealing with stress/change; e.g., using humour, relaxation, physical activity.
- R – 6.5 Develop and demonstrate strategies to build and enhance relationships in the family; e.g., being honest, expressing empathy.

## Teacher Background

Hope may be viewed as a human need that is capable of transforming a person's life. Hope enables people to look to the future and willingly participate in the journey. Hope is a positive feeling as well as a verb. Without hope, moving forward can feel frightening or sad. Helping students explore the concept of hope can help them gain new perspective, think of other possibilities, and create positive feelings. Hope enables goal setting. Envisioning and naming a future is one of the first steps to goal setting. Hope pictures should be one of the first activities to do when beginning an exploration of hope. It can also be repeated at later dates, to help students deepen their understanding of hope by comparing various drawings from different time periods.

## Objective

- To notice things which sustain and diminish our hope
- To understand the importance of noticing and paying attention to things which enhance and diminish our hope
- To appreciate that hope changes, but that there are things unique to each of us that sustain or enhance our hope

## Materials

Pens/pencils/crayons or felts  
Blank paper

## Get Ready

- Hope is the ability to desire something and expect that it will happen or be obtained. Hope is experienced and viewed differently by each of us.
- We are going to draw pictures of hope today. In order to focus on being open to what we might not realize at a conscious level, we need to refrain from labeling ideas as right or wrong or acceptable or unacceptable. We must trust that what we draw tells us something about ourselves.
- Waiting quietly for the unknown to surface sometimes takes longer than we are used to waiting.

## Activity 1

- Ask students to think about the word hope and how they might create a drawing to illustrate their hope. Ask, *“What pictures or symbols come to mind when you think about the hope and what it means to you? Draw a picture to represent what hope means to you at this time.”* (an adaptation to this activity would be for students to take photos). Encourage students to do this activity independently and without talking to each other. Tell students how many minutes they have to do this activity.
- This activity encourages students to search within and to connect to what they know about hope. This creative and reflective experience can provide a starting point for uncovering and discovering hope.
- When the drawing time is over, invite students to display the pictures on a bulletin board. Some may choose to share their pictures with the class after everyone is finished their drawings. Listen to the conversation that ensues. If students are not comfortable sharing at this time, you may ask for permission to display the pictures on a bulletin board without names on the front.
- In a group discuss:
  - What similarities did you notice about the pictures?
  - What differences did you notice about the pictures?
  - What do these pictures tell us about hope?

## Activity 2

- Show students a clip from the website [www.ladybugfoundation.ca](http://www.ladybugfoundation.ca) and click on Hannah’s ladybug speech. “Hannah’s Story” is about a school age student who provides hope to homeless people. She tells her story online.

- Show students the clip *Ryan's Story*, from [www.ryanswell.ca](http://www.ryanswell.ca). When Ryan Hreljac was in grade one, he learned how people were dying because they lacked clean drinking water. He decided to raise money to build a well in Uganda. Since then he has started a Foundation that today has built hundreds of wells in 15 countries, effecting over half a million people. The Ryan's Well Foundation has raised millions of dollars. Ryan lives in Kemptville, Ontario.
- Discussion questions:
  - o How is hope exemplified in these videos?
  - o What can happen when people feel hope?
  - o Can you share any stories of when you or your family were engaged in a hopeful activity or activities? (This question leads into the *Take Home Activity*)
  - o How does hope help you feel healthy?

## Conclusion

Today, we have talked about hope. Exploring hope can help us be positive about our lives and look forward to the future. We also heard a story of a girl your age who helped bring hope to others. This is something we can all do in our own way.

## Take Home Activity

To broaden the students' awareness of hope in their lives, assign a similar activity to be done for homework. With an adult, have students draw a picture of their family hope symbols, activities or a time when they were engaged in a hopeful activity or activities (see sample *Hope Picture Letter to Parents*).

## Assessment Strategy

Students will demonstrate an understanding of hope by:

- completing a drawing that illustrates their hope
- participating in a group discussion that helps to identify various aspects of hope
- identifying one way that hope helps them feel healthy

## References

The above materials have been adapted from *Nurturing Hopeful Souls: Hopeful Practices and Activities for Children and Youth*. Hope Foundation of Alberta, 2008. For the complete resource or more information about programs see [www.ualberta.ca/hope](http://www.ualberta.ca/hope).

Date:

Dear Parents:

**As part of our lessons on mental wellness, we are looking at hope.**

Hope may be viewed as a human need that can change a person's life for the better. Hope helps people to look to the future and willingly participate in the journey. Hope is a positive feeling. Without hope, growing up can feel frightening or sad. Helping students explore the concept of hope can help them gain a new point of view, think of possibilities, and create positive feelings. Hope helps people set goals for life.

Your child has drawn a picture of their hope in health class today. After drawing the picture, students talked about their hopes. Then they thought about how hope can look different for all of us.

In order to help them understand more about hope, we are asking you to do a family drawing. Your child is bringing a blank sheet of paper home to draw with you your family hopes. This could be in the form of hopeful activities that you do together as a family, family symbols of hope (i.e., pictures or memories), and/or things your family is hopeful about in the future.

Please have your child return this picture to school, so that it can be shared in the classroom.



# Humour for Health



## Alberta Education Health and Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes

The student will...

- R – 4.1 Recognize that individuals can have a positive and negative influence on the feelings of others.
- R – 4.2 Identify and use short-term strategies for managing feelings; e.g., dealing with excitement, anger, sadness, jealousy.
- R – 4.3 Recognize that management of positive/negative stress can affect health.
- R – 4.4 Demonstrate respectful communication skills; e.g., describe behaviours that show respect for the feelings of others.
- R – 5.3 Recognize that stressors affect individuals differently, and outline ways individuals respond to stress.
- R – 6.1 Recognize that individuals can choose their own emotional reactions to events and thoughts.
- R – 6.2 Establish personal guidelines for expressing feelings; e.g., recognize feelings, choose appropriate time/place for expression, identify preferred ways of expressing feelings, and accept ownership of feelings.
- R – 6.3 Develop personal strategies for dealing with stress/change; e.g., using humour, relaxation, physical activity.

## Objective

- Students will identify the positive effect of humour on mental well being such as reduced stress, improved memory and recall.
- They will identify body changes that can occur when experiencing the effects of laughter.

## Materials

- Joke book or humorous story book from your library or access a website like America's Funniest Home Videos

## Teacher Background

Humour, is like the “crazy glue” for humans. Humour is the glue that holds people together. It attracts us to other people and is a valued trait in relationships. It helps us make friends and keep them. Well intended humour is a “multi-used tool” that can serve us well in our relationships. It can open up communication, ease discomfort in awkward situations, and bring life to a boring conversation.

Humour can also be used in hurtful ways. Laughing at someone as opposed to laughing with someone can create bad feelings and fighting. It is important to know the difference.

## Get Ready

### **Brainstorm with students where in life you can find humour:**

- media
- friends
- family
- books
- internet

### **Brainstorm what it does to improve our lives:**

- improves our mood and helps in stress management
- heals or maintains meaningful relationships
- promotes healing of physical body
- improves our ability to think flexibly
- improves sleep

### **Discuss:**

- Ask students to think about a time when they were feeling bad, sad, worried, mad.
- Think about how your body was feeling e.g. tense muscles, heart beating fast, clenched teeth, mad face, fist balled up, “steam coming out of your ears”.
- Now imagine someone tells you a joke or a funny story that gets you laughing really hard. How is your body is feeling?
- Are there situations in life where humour is inappropriate and what might those be?

## Activity 1

Instruct students to stand up and assume a “grouchy/irritable” stance or posture. What do they notice about their muscles, breathing and other affects?

Have students read jokes from an appropriate library Joke Book, read a humorous story or watch a clip from America’s Funniest Home Video website (be sure to filter out any negative/inappropriate video clips) ([www.abc.go.com/primetime/afv/index?pn=index](http://www.abc.go.com/primetime/afv/index?pn=index)). Click on left link “videos”. Choose a humour clip from the list of topics (i.e. babies, pets).

After doing the above activity, ask students the difference they feel in their bodies and emotions after having laughed, and discuss how it may differ from the affects of the “grouchy/irritable” posture.

Laughter not only makes us feel happy, we know that it has positive effects on our bodies. Brainstorm ways in which laughter has positive effects on our bodies. Examples:

- Relaxes our muscles
- Improves our blood flow
- Exercises lungs and chest muscles
- Improves pain control by distracting us and increasing ‘natural pain killers’ or endorphins
- Lowers our pulse rate
- Improves sleep
- Humour and funny situations can inspire us to think creatively about problems and difficult situations
- Humour “unlocks” our minds and frees us to think outside of the box
- Jokes can improve our memories and recall

## Activity 2

### Humour Skit

In groups of four, students will create a humorous scenario to act out. Students will have the opportunity to share these situations with the class. Caution students about appropriate use of humour (i.e. no put downs or negative humour).

Teacher will discuss with the students the positive impact of humour in each of the scenarios.

### Conclusion

Today, we've looked at humour as a way of improving our health. We've looked at the appropriate use of humour and created some humorous skits. Now, I'd like you to take the message home to share with your family.

### Take Home Activity

Share a humorous situation that you have experienced or observed  
or

Have your parents (guardians) help you find an appropriate internet clip about a humorous situation, to share with a friend or other family member.

Be prepared to discuss your experience in class.

### Assessment Strategy

Students will be able to identify three ways in which humour can improve our lives.

### References

Bowtell, D. 1997. *Humour for Healing*. Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, Recreational Therapy Services. Edmonton, Alberta.

# Peer Relationships: Bullying

## Alberta Education Health and Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes



The student will...

- R – 4.7 Practice effective communication skills and behaviours to reduce escalation of conflict, e.g., monitor personal body language.
- W – 4.7 Describe and demonstrate passive, aggressive and assertive behaviours; e.g., assertive strategies for use in dealing with bullies.
- R – 5.7 Apply mediation skills when resolving conflict, e.g., recognize feelings of others, allow others to express opinions.
- R – 5.8 Develop strategies to address personal roles and responsibilities in groups, e.g., dealing with conflict in group situations.
- R – 6.7 Apply a variety of strategies for resolving conflicts, e.g., practice treating differences of opinion as opportunities to explore alternatives.

## Teacher Background

Bullying can still be frequent occurrences for many children at school and in the community. Bullying can lead to students experiencing school as an unsafe and stressful place. It can have devastating effects on school ethos. Students will benefit from understanding bullying behaviour and strategies for dealing with it.

## Objective

- Through an interactive game, students will choose how they would respond in a bullying situation.
- Students will be able to identify different types of bullying, strategies to help deal with bullying, and how bullying makes people feel.

## Materials

Each student requires access to a computer with audio and the internet (you might want to use earphones or that ensure the volume is set at low as the site uses sound for the activity).

## Get Ready

Ask students to share their experiences with bullying. What were the effects on the people involved? (the bully, the bullied, the bystander). Teachers should explain to the students to not use specific names in their examples.

## Activity

Have the students locate [www.teamheroes.ca](http://www.teamheroes.ca) and begin reading the section of “Facts About Bullying”. Now they are ready for the game section.

Each student will choose a character to play the game. There are 4 Episodes with various situations.

Classroom discussion is recommended after the completion of the 4 episodes.

## Discussion Questions

1. What type of bullying did you observe in the episode? Ensure each type is addressed in the discussion.

The four most common types of bullying are:

- Verbal: name calling, sarcasm, teasing, spreading rumours, threatening, making references to one’s culture, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation, unwanted comments.
  - Social: ganging up, setting people up, excluding others from a group, humiliating others, gestures or graffiti intended to put others down.
  - Physical: hitting, poking, pinching, chasing, shoving, coercing, destroying, unwanted sexual touching.
  - Cyber: using the internet or text messaging to intimidate, put down or spread rumours about someone.
2. Why do you think some people join in on bullying when they see it happening?
    - Bystanders have the power to stop bullying and joining in can make the bullying worse.
  3. What strategy did the game encourage the main character to use when in a bullying situation?
    - The game encourages the main character to take a stand and when necessary talk to an adult.

4. Can you give examples from the game where passive, aggressive and assertive behaviours are used?

- There are examples with each choice in each situation.

5. Do boys and girls bully in different ways? How?

## Conclusion

Today, we've had the opportunity to review bullying situations and choose how to respond. We've learned to identify different types of bullying, strategies to help deal with bullying, and how bullying makes people feel. By addressing bullying and dealing with it in a positive way, we can make our school and community safer and friendlier for everyone.

## Take Home Activity & Classroom Follow-Up

Provide a parent handout to every student "Imagine A School Without Bullying". Have student and parents read through the questions and write down student responses. Students bring back responses and create a web collectively in class to reflect what a school would be like free of bullying (this could be used as a bulletin board display). Prompt the students by asking:

- What would you see in a school with no bullying?
- What would you hear?
- How would you feel in a school with no bullying?

## Assessment Strategy

- Students will complete the handout "Imagine A School Without Bullying" with their parents.
- Students will contribute to a collective web reflecting a bully free school.
- Students will be able to identify positive responses to effectively deal with bullying.

## References:

[www.education.gov.ab.ca/safeschools/](http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/safeschools/)

[www.teamheroes.ca](http://www.teamheroes.ca)

[www.safeschools.gov.bc.ca](http://www.safeschools.gov.bc.ca) (Take home activity & assessment strategy from: Focus on Bullying: A Prevention program for Elementary School Communities. British Columbia Ministry of Education., pp. 280 -282.)

## Take Home Activity

### “Imagine School Without Bullying”

We want students to think about what a school free of bullying would look like, sound like, and feel like. We know that students do their best when their school environment is positive and welcoming.

We ask that you work with your son/daughter on coming up with some great ideas about building a positive school environment. These ideas will be used in a classroom discussion and assignment.

Imagine that you are coming to school one morning and you notice that something is different. The school has become a place where there is no bullying. What would you see, hear, and feel? Fill in the chart below.

	What would you <b>see</b> the students doing?	What would you <b>see</b> the adults doing?	What would you <b>hear</b> ?
<b>On the playground</b>			
<b>In the hallway</b>			
<b>In the classroom</b>			

List 3 feeling words that describe how you would **feel**:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

[www.safeschools.gov.bc.ca](http://www.safeschools.gov.bc.ca) (Take home activity & assessment strategy adapted from: *Focus on Bullying: A Prevention program for Elementary School Communities*. British Columbia Ministry of Education, pp. 280-282.)

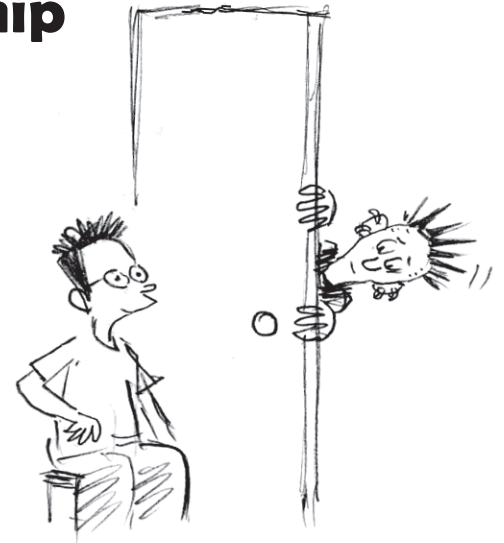


# Peer Relationships: Friendship

## Alberta Education Health and Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes

The student will...

- R - 4.1 Recognize that individuals can have a positive and negative influence on the feelings of others.
- R - 4.5 Identify changes that may occur in friendships, and explore strategies to deal with changes.
- R - 6.8 Analyze the influence of groups, cliques and alliances on self and others.



## Teacher Background

Friendships amongst children are continuously changing. It is important that they understand that change is normal and learn how to cope with the feelings associated with these changes. One dynamic that students often encounter is the social clique. A clique is a small exclusive group formed around defined rules and exclusivity. Cliques are power structures and conformity is expected.

Students need to be able to recognize positive friendship groups that allow them to learn skills and develop safe relationships. They also need to learn how to recognize a negative group or “clique” and skills to help them deal with the challenges that cliques can bring.

## Objectives

- Students will understand that changes can happen in a friendship over time.
- Students will be able to identify the differences between a true friendship and a clique.
- Students will become familiar with some survival strategies to deal with cliques.

## Materials

1. Story: *Lessons In Friendship*
2. Discussion Questions Student Worksheet: *Lessons In Friendship*
3. Checklist: *Is This a Friendship or Clique?*
4. Discussion Questions Student Worksheet: *Cliques*
5. Video clip

## Get Ready

Have students create a Venn diagram to illustrate the characteristics of a friendship compared to those of a clique. Brainstorm together characteristics of each as well as any similarities. This diagram can be added to later in the lesson as new ideas are generated.

## Activity 1: “Lessons In Friendship”

Have students read the short story ahead of time or read story aloud in class, then use attached student worksheet to guide group discussion or for individual work.

### Questions for “Lessons In Friendship”

- **How and why did Tatiana (the writer) and Sayla become friends? Do you think people have to be similar to be friends?**
  - They found out they had a lot in common while playing together, they grew up together. Everybody is unique, that’s what makes friendships interesting. It would be a pretty boring world if everybody dressed the same, talked the same, and had the same opinions. It’s ok for someone to dress, think, or act differently from you. The most important thing is to respect these differences.
- **What kinds of things caused changes in Tatiana and Sayla’s friendship? What other kinds of things can cause changes in friendships?**
  - Sayla made some new “cooler” friends, Sayla started acting mean toward Tatiana, Sayla treated Tatiana differently than her other friends. Interest in the opposite sex, values (popularity, clothes/brand names, technology, etc), new activities, losing an activity, meeting new people, time (having less time to spend with your old friends because of babysitting, sports, music lessons), etc.
- **List some strategies for coping with changes in friendships**
  - Staying in touch with friends who have moved through email, letters, etc. Patience with normal change. Finding others with similar interests. Recognize that you can have many different friends to share different activities with. Using feeling language to express your disappointment, sadness, hurt, etc. Talk it out with a trusted adult.

- **What are some qualities of a good friendship? What are some actions that make you think Tatiana and Sayla's friendship is not a good one?**
  - Caring, sharing, trust, being there for each other, feeling like you can be yourself, loyalty, listening to each other, encouraging each other, helping each other solve problems, give compliments, can disagree without hurting each other, dependable, respect, trustworthy, give each other room to change. Being mean, gossiping, not caring, not sharing, ignoring when other friends are around, "ditching", forming cliques
- **What kind of friend are you? How would you improve yourself as a friend?**

## **Activity 2: "Friendship or Clique"**

1. Have students complete the "Friendship or Clique" checklist and review the answers. (Answers: C,F,F,C,F,C,F,C,F,C,F)
  2. Have students brainstorm a list of potential cliques (groups) that can form among students at schools. For example:
    - the cheerleaders clique
    - jocks
    - computer nerds
    - skaters
    - artists
- **Randomly** place all students except for 3 into one of the cliques. Tell the students that they need to play the part of the clique they belong to. Read the following scenario to the class so they become familiar with the situation. Have them act it out. The 3 students not assigned to a clique are designated as the Student Union President and his/her 2 friends.
  - **Skit scenario:** It is the first day of school at a large urban junior high school. The area in front of the school is crowded with chattering excited students. Into the scene arrives the "preppy, overtly snobby" president of the Student's Union and her friends. They set up a student's union table on the front steps of the school. They begin calling out the name (one at a time) of students so that they can register at her table. One at a time, student's walk up to the table to register their name in the Student's Union registry (remind students to act in character). The president makes obvious gestures that she is looking the student over to categorize him/her into one of the above cliques. She quietly chats with her student union friends and loudly declares which "group or clique" the student belongs with. They meander over to the clique's gathering place and continue to quietly act within character while the selection process continues (skit ends when all students have been placed).

### **Debriefing the skit:**

- Do you think that cliques are a reality?
  - How does it feel to have other's choose which category or group you must belong to?
3. Instruct the students to complete the student worksheet on “Cliques” and discuss.

### **Questions for student worksheet on “Cliques”**

- **What is a clique?**
  - A tight group that usually has a strict code and ways to act. Often cliques are focused on maintaining status and popularity. They can make it seem like those in the clique are better than those on the “outside”. Power over another can be used to hurt others such as exclusion, meanness, or both. Often there is a “social gatekeeper”, who decides who is in and who is out (who’s hot and who’s not).
- **What is the difference between a clique and a group of friends?**
  - Friends and friendship groups are flexible and welcoming to others. They are free to socialize with others outside their group. They respect and celebrate differences.

Cliques are exclusive. They tend to do everything together (sitting together in class, socializing, etc.). Cliques can impose rules and pressure to conform in order to maintain one’s place in the group. This can lead to people within the clique starting to worry about their popularity or continuing membership in the group. Clique members often use gossip, put-downs, and manipulation to maintain their status.

Cliques aren’t just found amongst girls. Boys can form cliques around sports, gaming, style of dress, and music. They can be just as mean to those outside their clique.

**\*\*add these ideas to the Venn diagram created in “Get Ready”**



- **Why do people belong to cliques?**

- to feel like they belong
- high value on being seen as popular and cool
- don't want to feel left out
- can give some a chance to feel “in charge”
- better to be on the inside than the outside, with the risk that they could be targeted
- can offer a place to those students who tend to be followers

- **How can you survive a clique?**

- **Be true to yourself** – Ask yourself questions like: Does being part of this group make me feel good about myself? Am I worried about being excluded? Does this group actually fit my beliefs about friendship or has it become something that I'm not comfortable with?
- **Do the things you enjoy doing** – Make a list of activities you enjoy. Does being part of a clique pressure you to give up things you enjoy and spend time/money on things you don't? To deal with this, stay involved in the things that interest you. Find a group outside of school where you feel welcomed.

If you are on the outside of the clique, get involved in things that interest you. This can help you find others to share common interests with. It can also give you a break from pressures imposed by cliques.

- **Recognize that having a variety of friends is fun and interesting.** You could end up finding new friendships and having some exciting experiences.
- **Have courage** - If being in a clique doesn't feel right for you, seek out trusted people for advice. Your actions may help others who are experiencing the same feelings.

## Conclusion

Today, we've talked about how friendships grow and change over time, and the difference between cliques and true friendships. We've also learned survival strategies when affected by a clique. It's important to be able to recognize positive friendship groups that allow you to learn skills and develop safe relationships.

## Take Home Activity

Write a letter to a friend and tell them why you think they are such a good friend. Have students mail the letter to their friend if desired.

## Assessment Strategy

- Students will be able to identify the differences between a clique and genuine friendship
- Students will be able to identify strategies to build friendships and avoid cliques.
- Students will identify, through the process of letter writing, four qualities that make up a good friend (students can choose whether to send the letter or not)

## References:

Information on cliques adapted from *"How to Survive a Clique."* [www.teenshealth.org](http://www.teenshealth.org). (c) 1995-2008. The Nemours Foundation. All rights reserved.

## Lessons in Friendship: In-Class Story

Some people support their friends and stick with them, no matter what. Others make friends, but when someone else shows up who is cooler than their friend, they dump their old friend.

This story proves it.

Sayla and I had been friends for a year, ever since the first days of fourth grade. We started playing with each other and found out that we were a lot alike. We did everything best friends do – we had sleepovers, shared secrets, did all kinds of stuff together. We were inseparable. We remained close over summer vacation, but then came fifth grade.

We were in the same class, but this year we sat across the room from each other. We only talked to each other at recess and lunch. Sayla started to become friends with the two girls sitting beside her. I got the feeling that Sayla thought they were “cooler” than me. She began spending her recesses and lunches with them, and hanging out with the “cool” people – people that she said she didn’t even like at the beginning of the school year.

Soon, Sayla started acting really mean to me. For instance, when I would tell her that I liked something, she would tell me that she didn’t like it. She would smirk and act like whatever I had said, or whatever I had told her I liked, was the lamest thing on Earth.

But to her new friends she would say, “You like that? Cool! I don’t really like it, but that’s okay. People are different.” Or when I’d ask her for something, she’d say no, but if her new friends asked her for the same thing, she’d give it to them without a second thought.

I’d still try to play with Sayla, to talk to her, but she would continually ditch me. When I’d ask her what happened, she’d just say, “Things change,” as if she really didn’t care. When her other friends weren’t around, she was almost normal and sort of nice to me, but she completely ignored me when she was with them.

It hurt. It was hard, but I knew I had to get over it. And thanks to some really good friends that I made this year, I have been able to move on. Sometimes that is the best thing to do – to let go. I miss Sayla, and I wish things could have turned out differently, but I know I can’t control anyone else’s feelings – only my own.

I learned two really important things from this whole thing – what kind of friends I want to have... and what kind of friend I want to be.

Tatiana Eugenia, 10

## References

Eugenia, T. (2006). *Lessons in friendship. From Chicken Soup for the Kid’s Soul 2: Read-Aloud Character Building Stories for Kids Ages 6-10*. Ed: Canfield, J., Hansen, M.V., Hansen, P. & Dunlap, I. Health Communications: Deerfield Beach, FL. Reprinted with permission of Health Communications, Inc.

## Discussion Questions Student Worksheet

# “Lessons In Friendship”

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

How and why did Tatiana (the writer) and Sayla become friends?

Do you think people have to be similar to be friends?

List some ways for coping with changes in friendships

What kinds of things caused changes in the girls' friendship?

What other kinds of things can cause changes in friendships?

What are some qualities of a good friendship?

What are some actions that make you think the girls' friendship is not a good one?

What kind of friend are you?

How would you improve yourself as a friend?



## Discussion Questions Student Worksheet

### “Cliques”

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What is a clique?

What is the difference between a clique and a group of friends?

Why do people belong to cliques?

#### **Surviving A Clique**

Does being part of my friendship group make me feel good? Explain:

Make a list of things you enjoy doing:

Does being part of a clique put pressure on you to give up things you enjoy?

Does being part of a clique cause you to spend time or money on things you don't enjoy?

What are your friends' interests?

Are your friends' interests all the same? Are there some differences?

List some trusted people you can go to for advice on friendship:

## Friendship/Clique

Read the following statements. Mark an F in the blank if you think it seems like a friendship or a C if it seems like a clique.

Only “cool” people are let in. \_\_\_\_\_

You care about each other. \_\_\_\_\_

You are there for each other in good and bad times. \_\_\_\_\_

You must conform and follow the rules of the group. \_\_\_\_\_

There are no rules to conform, you can be yourself. \_\_\_\_\_

Others are not welcomed to join. \_\_\_\_\_

You share friendship with others. \_\_\_\_\_

It requires a choice between friends. \_\_\_\_\_

You can talk to each other about anything. \_\_\_\_\_

You lose your own identity. \_\_\_\_\_

You are loyal and stand up for each other. \_\_\_\_\_

## Rubric for Friendly Letter

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Writing Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_

	4 Standard of Excellence	3 Exceeds Acceptable Standard	2 Meets Acceptable Standard	1 Needs Improvement to Meet Acceptable Standard
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> shares four or more engaging pieces of information or ideas  <input type="checkbox"/> includes specific details that help readers create a picture in their mind  <input type="checkbox"/> chooses topics that are of special and meaningful significance to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> shares three or more interesting pieces of information or ideas  <input type="checkbox"/> includes details that help readers better understand idea or information  <input type="checkbox"/> choose topics that are of special interest to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> shares three pieces of information or ideas  <input type="checkbox"/> includes some details to illustrate information  <input type="checkbox"/> choose topics that will maintain interest of reader	<input type="checkbox"/> shares one piece of information or idea  <input type="checkbox"/> information is vague  <input type="checkbox"/> topic will not be of interest to reader
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> opening sets friendly tone and consistently engages reader  <input type="checkbox"/> ideas in logical order  <input type="checkbox"/> ending ties information and ideas together	<input type="checkbox"/> opening is friendly and interesting  <input type="checkbox"/> ideas in order  <input type="checkbox"/> ending provides satisfactory finish to letter	<input type="checkbox"/> opening is friendly  <input type="checkbox"/> ideas generally in order  <input type="checkbox"/> ending is appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> opening contains little information  <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order  <input type="checkbox"/> ending not appropriate
Skills and formats	<input type="checkbox"/> maintains first person point of view throughout  <input type="checkbox"/> return address and date at top of page are error-free  <input type="checkbox"/> uses effective and appropriate greeting and closing	<input type="checkbox"/> generally maintains first person point of view  <input type="checkbox"/> few errors in return address and date at top of page  <input type="checkbox"/> uses appropriate greeting and closing	<input type="checkbox"/> uses first person point of view  <input type="checkbox"/> some errors in return address and date at top of page  <input type="checkbox"/> uses appropriate greeting and closing	<input type="checkbox"/> inconsistently uses first person point of view  <input type="checkbox"/> return address and date missing from top of page  <input type="checkbox"/> does not use appropriate greeting and/or closing

Copyright © Resource Development Services, Edmonton Public Schools, 1999.  
Permission to copy rubrics and student pages grant to purchasing school only.

# Physical Activity & Mental Health: Move Your Mood



## Alberta Education Health and Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes

The student will...

- W - 4.1 Explore the connections among physical activity, emotional wellness and social wellness.
- R - 4.3 Recognize that management of positive/negative stress can affect health.
- R - 5.3 Recognize that stressors affect individuals differently, and outline ways individuals respond to stress.
- W - 6.1 Evaluate the need for balance and variety in daily activities that promote personal health; e.g., physical activity, relaxation, learning, sleep, reflection.
- R - 6.3 Develop personal strategies for dealing with stress/change; e.g., using humour, relaxation, physical activity.

## Teacher Background

Stress is something we all experience. Research has shown the strong relationship between physical and mental health and long term stress. The stress response is a very physical “body” response. We usually feel stress in our bodies long before we consciously know we are stressed. It is important to understand the physical symptoms of stress in order to know when there is too much stress in our lives.

Exercise can lower our anxiety levels and distract us from what we perceive as stressful. A leisurely stroll through a park can sometimes provide us with the break we need to get our minds off a problem that is consuming us. Deep breathing is also an effective way to lower our heart rate and calm our bodies so that we can face our troubles. When we are feeling blue, getting up and doing something physical can help lift our spirits and give us the energy we need to make healthy choices and feel better.



## Objectives

- Students will be able to understand how being physically active benefits our whole being (physical, mental, spiritual) by identifying activities they already do and describing how they impact their mood.
- Students will be able to describe barriers to being physically active as well as strategies to overcome them.

## Materials

1. Move Your Mood Bingo Card – photocopy one per student
2. Move Your Mood Fun Tracking Calendar – photocopy one per student

## Get Ready

- What do you think “move your mood” means?
- We know that physical activity can lower our anxiety levels and help reduce stress. Did you know a leisurely stroll through a park can sometimes provide the break we need to get our minds off a problem that is bothering us?

## Activity 1:

We are going to do an activity that will show us what kinds of physical activity students in this class are involved in.

- Distribute *Move Your Mood Bingo* card to each student.
- Have students fill in middle square with their favourite physical activity.
- Allow 5 to 10 minutes for students to circulate amongst their class mates to have their other squares signed.
- Students must have a different classmate sign each square.
- Hint: Teacher can participate too.

## Ask students:

- Does taking part in any of these activities move your mood? If yes, why? (gets your heart pumping which takes oxygen to all parts of our body, releases endorphins, gets mind off of worries, having fun)

## Activity 2:

Lead the students in acting out the following fitness song to the tune of “*The 12 Days of Christmas*” (overhead template included)

### “The 12 Days of Fitness”

“On the first day of fitness, my trainer says to me...”  
be a stork standing under a tree(stand on one leg)

On the second day of fitness, my trainer says to me...  
two bunny hops (hop on two feet) and a stork standing under a tree

On the third day of fitness, my trainer says to me...  
three muscle poses , two bunny hops and a stork standing under a tree

...four jumping jacks

...five hula hoops

...six front kicks

...seven quick jabs

...eight jogs in place

...nine side stretches

...ten knee lift

...eleven ceiling touches

...twelve lovely lunges

### Ask students:

- How does your body feel after this activity? (tired, tense, relaxed, loose, revitalized)
- What did you notice about your emotions/behaviours while doing the activity? (happy, laughter, goofy, etc)
- What stops you from being active? (money, screen time, where you live, time of day, etc.).

List the barriers on the board for use in the next activity

### Activity 3:

Choose 5 students to represent one of the barriers and stand in a line at the front of the class. Get another 5 students to line up opposite them. Begin the exercise by having one of the “barrier” students complete the sentence:

- “I can’t be active because (name barrier)”.

The student opposite them responds by completing the sentence:

- “I could be active if (name simple solution to overcome the barrier)”.

i.e. “I can’t be active because my family lives in an apartment building.”

“I could be active if I went with my friends to the local park a few times a week”.

### Conclusion

Today, we’ve discussed the benefits of physical activity on our whole being – physical, mental and spiritual. We’ve discussed activities we like doing, and also the barriers families have to being active. Overcoming those barriers is an important strategy for families to talk about, so everyone can feel the benefits of “moving your mood”.

### Take Home Activity

Have students use the attached calendar to record activities they do individually, with their family and with friends each day of the week. They are to track the activities and who participated on the calendar. They are to reflect back on the week and comment how being physically active impacted their mood. They are to return the completed activity calendar the following week.

#### Examples of activities:

walk around the block  
set up a relay  
walk up & down stairs  
dance  
toboggan

bike ride  
throw frisbee  
walk the dog  
organized sports

### Assessment Strategy

- Students complete “Move Your Mood: Fun Tracking Calendar”
- Students identify two ways that being active impacted their mood

## Move your Mood Bingo

Fill in the centre square with your favourite activity. Find someone who participates in or would like to try one of the other activities. Ask them to sign their name in one box. Find a different person for each square. Good luck and move around the classroom.

<b>Helps clean the yard / shovel snow</b>	<b>Cleans room</b>	<b>Plays hockey or ringette</b>	<b>Goes for walks with family</b>	<b>Runs or jogs</b>
<b>Water skis</b>	<b>Tae kwon do</b>	<b>Yoga</b>	<b>Gymnastics</b>	<b>Soccer</b>
<b>Plays with pets</b>	<b>Rides a bike</b>	<b>My Favorite Activity</b>	<b>Flies a kite</b>	<b>Snowboards</b>
<b>Plays kick the can</b>	<b>Rock climbing</b>	<b>Basketball</b>	<b>Lacrosse</b>	<b>Dance</b>
<b>Walks to school everyday</b>	<b>Takes the stairs instead of the elevator</b>	<b>Swimming</b>	<b>Play hide and go seek</b>	<b>Roller blades</b>



## Move Your Mood: Fun Tracking Calendar

Get involved! For one school week challenge yourself to be physically active for 90 min a day. Turn off the TV, computer, and gaming systems! Use this log sheet to track the activities you do. Examples may include: walking to school, active recess, making up a relay, stair climbing, tobogganing, skating, dance, walk dog, biking, bicep curls with soup cans, organized sport.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Name of Activity					
Number of Minutes					

It is known that being active can reduce stress and make you feel better. **Comment on how doing physical activities impacted your mood.** (Hint: did you feel happier, tired but relaxed, energized etc.)

---



---



---



---



---



---

## **“The 12 Days of Fitness”**

“On the first day of fitness, my trainer says to me...”  
be a stork standing under a tree(stand on one leg)

On the second day of fitness, my trainer says to me...  
two bunny hops (hop on two feet) and a stork  
standing under a tree

On the third day of fitness, my trainer says to me...  
three muscle poses (bicep curl), two bunny hops and  
a stork standing under a tree

...four jumping jacks  
...five hula hoops  
...six front kicks  
...seven quick jabs  
...eight jogs in place  
...nine side stretches  
...ten knee lifts  
...eleven ceiling touches  
...twelve lovely lunges

# Resiliency: Chain of Support

## Alberta Education Health and Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes



The student will...

- R - 4.6 Identify changes that may occur in friendships, and explore strategies to deal with changes.
- R - 5.6 Investigate the benefits of fostering a variety of relationships throughout the life cycle; e.g. cross-age relationships.
- R - 6.6 Develop strategies to maintain and enhance appropriate cross-age relationships; e.g. within the family, school and community.

## Teacher Background

Resiliency, or the ability to bounce back from life's ups and downs is crucial for students' success; both in school and in life. Although it's tempting to focus on identification of "at risk" children, it remains important to advocate for the success of all students.

Research suggests that although a few protective factors that increase resiliency are genetic, such as an out-going personality; many of these factors can be learned and practiced. Encouraging helpfulness and building bonds with supportive people and activities are two strategies to foster resiliency. The more significant adults in a child's life who are positive role models, the better the child's opportunities for success.

Not everyone with stressful life events will fall victim to negative influences, but based on research, we know that children with strong positive bonds are less involved in unhealthy behaviors than those without these bonds.

This lesson can be used as a strategy to address the importance of building relationships with supportive adults, and being involved with in-school and out-of-school activities.

## Objectives

- To demonstrate connections between students and people in their world who have positive bonds with them; and what can happen when some of these connections change or are lost.
- Students will be able to list the benefits of having significant relationships with trusted people.

## Materials

1. Rubber bands of different sizes
2. Name tags to designate supportive people and negative influences
3. Take Home Activity - included

## Get Ready

- Ask group if they know what resiliency means.

Provide a definition: Resiliency is the ability to recover from, or adjust easily to, misfortune, change or stress.

- Provide each student with a rubber band (Note: caution the students about the use of elastics). Instruct students that many bands are different shapes/colours just like people. Have them stretch the bands as far as comfortable. Explain to the students that some events in their lives will stretch their ability to cope. Those who are resilient are able to get “back in shape”; back to “normal functioning”. Some of us are more “stretchy” than others, and some “snap” more quickly. Have students brainstorm a list of events that might “stretch” them.
- Ask students to think about different strengths people possess (humour, ability to problem solve, self esteem, supportive people, etc) that help them get through difficult times.
- Ask students to list the people in their lives who support them (write on whiteboard). Examples: parents, siblings, other family members, neighbors, teachers, coaches, friends, friend’s parents, pastor, youth leader.
- Emphasize that students who are resilient often have positive relationships with a number of trusted adults in their lives.

## Activity

- Ask for a volunteer to be the “fictional” student - Jodie. Give them a nametag.
- Ask for 6-8 volunteers to be support people for Jodie. Give them nametags with the labels: parents, siblings, other family members, pastor, youth leader, neighbour, coach, teacher, friend’s parents, etc.
- Have 2 or 3 other students remain outside the chain, as “negative influences”. Give them nametags such as smoking, drugs, alcohol, shoplifting, gangs. If this would be too sensitive, write these words on cards and place the cards outside the circle.

- Build a chain of support around Jodie with the supporting people joining hands or linking arms, and the negative influences circling outside.
- Instruct Jodie to bump up against the chain of linked hands as you describe some common stressors that she may encounter in life (big test, fight with friend, not getting chosen for sports team). Ask the students how the people in the chain might support Jodie in each situation (e.g. getting notes organized to study better, talking about the cause of the fight and what you could do/say to resolve the conflict, finding a different activity). Increase the “seriousness” of the stressors, so all supports are called upon (e.g. grandparent dies, pastor supports family).
- Gradually “weaken” chain by removing supports (e.g. Dad takes a job out of town; best friend moves away; Jodie on another team now with a different coach; Mom is busy working 2 jobs to support family, so isn’t as available as before; moved to a new neighborhood where you don’t know anyone, doesn’t belong to any groups or in-school activities). Rest of the chain does **not** join hands to cover for the missing links.
- As you mention more stressful events, Jodie bumps up against the chain that now has openings that will allow her to slip through the chain. “Negative influences” will entice Jodie along the way. These students should quietly try to encourage Jodie to go with them. Alternatively, the teacher picks up the “negative influence” cards and explains how they might try to attract Jodie to go with them.
- Jodie’s decision about whether to go with a “negative influence” is unknown. Have students return to their seats and brainstorm a list of possible outcomes for either going with, or not going with the “negative influences”; both long term and short term.
- Ask the students to think about whether they have people to support them. Emphasize to the students that having supportive relationships will foster their resiliency.
- If they do not have many supportive relationships, then prompt the conversation with the following:
  - What are some of the ways you can find some more supports? (List may include joining an in-school or after-school group or connecting with an adult to talk to).
  - Who could help you do this? Have students brainstorm a list which may include a group home leader, teacher, uncle, grandparent, *Kid’s Help Line*.
- If you are aware of a friend or classmate who is lacking support, what could you do for them? (e.g. sit with them at lunch, include them in a game at recess, encourage them to talk to a trusted adult)

## Conclusion

Today, we have discussed a concept called resiliency; the ability to bounce back from stressful events in our lives. It is important to think about who the adults are in your life that support you and help you. Celebrate them! We also talked about some ways you can find more supports and how you can be a positive support person in someone else's life.

## Take Home Activity: My Chain of Support

Provide students with the take home activity sheet. Instruct students to discuss with their parents who the trusted adults are in their lives that provide support. The teacher can decide whether they want to have this activity handed in or included as part of the student's journal, etc.

## Assessment Strategy

Write a letter to an important support person in your life. This may be a grandparent, neighbour or student in another grade. Tell that person three things you like doing together and three reasons why you value their support and friendship.

## My Chain of Support

Discuss with your child who the significant adults are in their life that provide support. List them:

# Resiliency: Feel Good Box

## Alberta Education Health and Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes

The student will.....

- R - 4.2 Identify and use short term strategies for managing feelings; e.g. dealing with excitement, anger, sadness, jealousy.
- R - 4.3 Recognize that management of positive/negative stress can affect health.
- R - 5.2 Identify and use long-term strategies for managing feelings; e.g. dealing with disappointment, discouragement.
- R - 5.3 Recognize that stressors affect individuals differently, and outline ways individuals respond to stress.
- R - 6.1 Recognize that individuals can choose their own emotional reactions to events and thoughts.
- R - 6.3 Develop personal strategies for dealing with stress/change e.g. using humour, relaxation, physical activity.



## Teacher Background

Crucial to the resiliency process is recognizing that there are characteristics within each individual or environment that can help reduce the negative impact of stressful situations or problems. Although some protective factors are genetic, many of them can be learned and thus promoted. Feelings of hope, optimism, and recognizing personal strengths can go a long way toward helping students cope with stress and solve problems. This lesson is meant to be a beginning point for building the capacity of students to learn problem solving and stress management.

## Objective

- To help children distinguish between outside events (stressful events or pressures) and inside coping skills (strength, resiliency, hope and problem-solving skills).
- Students will identify specific stressful events and personal strengths to help solve problems, reduce stress and feel good about themselves.

## Materials

1. Box, e.g. shoe boxes, recycled containers, paper bags, paper plates folded in half and stapled.
2. 6 “*Outside you*” cards (included)
3. 14 “*Inside you*” cards (included)



## Get Ready

Brainstorm situations or events that cause the students to feel stress. Write on the whiteboard: e.g. name calling, test, family troubles, worries about safety, lack of money, fights with friends, moving, being bullied, illness in family, teachers' expectations, teasing, racism, sports.

Stressful things happen to everyone. Tell students that they will be building a "Feel Good Box" that will record their outside stressors as well as personal strengths. So, when they feel stressed, they can look at the outside of the box to see if it's something familiar to them. Chances are, they will have felt that way before and successfully gotten through it. They need to be reminded that they can solve a lot of their problems. They just need to reach inside for some strength and ideas! The following activities will help them do that.

## Activity

### Construction of the Feel Good Box

- Using materials that the students have collected, (i.e. shoe boxes) instruct the students to create their own Feel Good Box. It is recommended that the construction allow for easy insertion and removal of Feel Good cards.
- **Outside You cards:** Provide each student with a sheet of the "Outside You Cards". Remind them outside you there are lots of things happening that can make you feel worried or stressed. In the spaces on the "outside you" cards, tell the students to complete the sentences. Use words and/or pictures to describe situations and feelings that are affecting their life from the outside. Once the cards are completed, they will cut and glue them to the outside of their box (option: students can fold "outside you" cards in half prior to gluing to maintain privacy). Depending upon each student's comfort level, the sharing of card responses is encouraged.
- **Inside You cards:** Provide each student with a sheet of the "Inside You" cards. Discuss with the students what makes them feel better when they face difficult situations. They will draw from past experiences, and describe what has helped them deal with those situations. Have students complete the "Inside You" cards provided. Their responses will remind them of their strengths, their hopes & dreams, events they have enjoyed or look forward to, that help them feel hopeful, look at the bigger picture, and get perspective. Depending upon each student's comfort level, sharing of card responses is encouraged.

**Students could be encouraged to bring a special personal item such as rocks, beads, photos or something that represents their family or cultural heritage to place inside their box.**

## Discussion/ Future Use

- Ask students:
  - How do you see this activity helping you deal with difficult situations?
- In the future:
  - When students are angry, worried or disappointed the teacher can remind them to reach inside the box (i.e. inside themselves) to remind themselves of strategies for dealing with stress, pressure and disappointment.
- Continued Learning:
  - It is recommended the Feel Good Boxes remain in the classroom. They may be used as a tool to reinforce how well students may have coped the last time a stressful event occurred. As students learn new coping ideas through this and other lessons, they can add those ideas to their Feel Good Box and be reminded of them throughout their school year. This enhances the opportunity to talk about both old and new strategies for dealing with difficulties.

## Conclusion

Today, we learned that everyone experiences stressful events. You created “Feel Good Boxes” to remind you of personal strengths, hopes, dreams and events you have enjoyed or look forward to. Reaching inside your box to remind yourself of these things can help you deal with stress.

## Take Home Activity

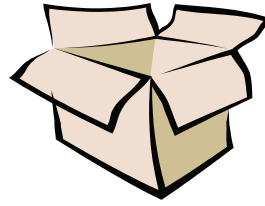
Have students take home two blank “Inside You” cards & two blank “Outside You” cards to share with their parent (or other adult). Students are to interview the adult and record their answers on the cards. Students return the cards for discussion in the classroom, so that they can gain insight into new ideas for coping with stressful events (students could make a classroom collage from the adult responses).

## Assessment Strategy

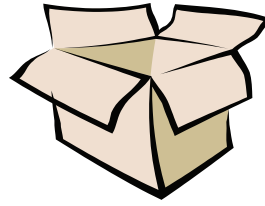
- Students will be able to list, describe, or write at least two personal strengths that they discovered by doing this activity.
- Students will be able to relate how focusing on personal strengths helps them to deal with a variety of situations they may encounter.

## Reference

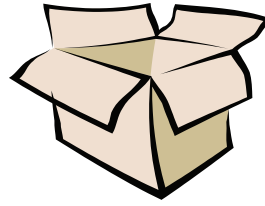
Adapted from “*Feel Good Boxes*”, a resource from Alberta Mental Health Board (AMHB) [www.amhb.ab.ca](http://www.amhb.ab.ca)

**Feel Good Box****Inside You Cards**

<b>I'm really happy about my life because...</b>	<b>I'm going to do more of my favorite activity, which is...</b>
<b>It makes me feel good when I help others, by doing ...</b>	<b>Other stuff I really like...</b>
<b>Other things that make me happy...</b>	<b>Things I dream about...</b>
<b>Something I can do that makes me feel better...</b>	<b>I know I can solve problems because...</b>

**Feel Good Box****Inside You Cards**

<p><b>If I need help with a problem I can talk to ...</b></p>	<p><b>I am really looking forward to...</b></p>
<p><b>It helps me feel strong when...</b></p>	<p><b>Here is a positive way I have solved a problem in the past...</b></p>
<p><b>If I ask for help and don't get it right away, here's the NEXT place I'll try for help...</b></p>	<p><b>It's good to ask an adult for help because...</b></p>

**Feel Good Box****Outside You Cards**

<b>If there's one thing I wish I could change it is...</b>	<b>I get stressed when...</b>
<b>Other stuff I think about...</b>	<b>It drives me crazy when...</b>
<b>Sometimes I feel scared that...</b>	<b>I worry a lot about...</b>

# Stress: Chicken Juggling 101

## Alberta Education Health & Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes

The student will...

- R - 4.3 Recognize that management of positive/negative stress can affect health.
- R - 5.3 Recognize that stressors affect individuals differently, and outline ways individuals respond to stress.
- R - 6.3 Develop personal strategies for dealing with stress/change.



## Teacher Background

Our inner reactions to outside events and inner feelings include physical and emotional responses. Being aware of signs of stress and using effective stress-management strategies have positive health benefits. Developing personal management strategies give students more control of their thoughts and actions, enhancing their physical and emotional well-being.

## Objective

- To help students understand and manage stress in a healthy way.
- Students will be able to define stress, identify their own stressors, understand how stress affects their feelings & behavior, and list five healthy ways of dealing with stress.

## Materials

1. Student handout
2. Rubber chickens (provided in kit) and other juggling objects (bean bags, scarves, juggling balls, etc.)
3. Adult volunteers (if able)
4. Assessment rubric for letter writing
5. Relaxation Activity (included)

## Get Ready

- Ask students to define stress
  - Stress is a general feeling, both physical & mental, that arises from different kinds of problems & challenges.
- Ask students whether they think everybody experiences stress
  - Everybody can experience stress over different situations and in different degrees. Similar stressors/events cause different responses in different people. It depends on genetics, culture, personality, people who support you, and ways one has learned to cope or deal with stress.
- Distribute student handout
- Have students write their own definition of stress in their handout on pg 2.
- Ask students if stress can ever be helpful (or positive)
  - Positive stress gears us up to accomplish tasks and protects and motivates us. Brainstorm some examples where stress can be positive (e.g. preparing for an exam, competitive sports, getting to school on time)
- Ask students if stress can become harmful (or negative)
  - Negative stress is stress that drags on in time and leads a person to feel tense and uptight (anxious). Anxiety (a sustained feeling of apprehension & fear) is a signal that you are stressed. If this feeling keeps up, it should alert you that the different stressors are not being dealt with effectively.
- Create a list of stressors (e.g. tests, family trouble, worries about safety, lack of money, fights with friends, moving, being bullied, illness in family, teacher's expectations, teasing, racism). Have students fill out the "Stress & Me" on page 3 in their handout.

### Stresses & Me!

My stressors are:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Activity

### Chicken Juggling 101

- Divide students into groups of 6-8 and each group forms a circle (or choose 6-8 students to demonstrate to the class).
- Tell the students that they are going to participate in a group juggling activity that will illustrate what happens to them when they experience stress.
- Explain that they are going to be working together to juggle some objects. The objects will represent a situation/event that they named earlier that can create feelings of stress. The goal will be for them to help each other **keep the objects from falling on the ground.**
- Explain that you will make a sound (use a whistle, a bell, or clap your hands) that will indicate they must stop juggling. This will provide the group with the opportunity to talk about how they are feeling both physically and emotionally.
- Begin by choosing a juggling item and name it one of the stressors from the list.
- Have a student toss it to another student within the circle establishing a pattern, so that each student receives the object once. Students should not pass the object to people standing beside them. Once each student has received the object once, return it to the starting point.
- Begin the juggling with one object.
- Sound the signal. Talk to them about how they are doing with juggling that one stress (i.e. an upcoming test). Are they feeling relaxed? What is their body feeling? Are they experiencing any difficulties?
- Add another object (stressor) to the circle. Have the students toss it around. Sound the signal. Ask if it is getting harder to juggle more stressors? What are they experiencing?
- Keep adding objects (identifying a specific stressor for each). Continue adding until it is apparent that the students are not able to manage the stressors within the circle.

While sitting in the circle together, ask the students about their experiences as more stressors were added:



**What happened to you physically?**

E.g. started to sweat, heart rate increased, muscles tensed up, agitated. Reinforce that stress can lead to sleep problems such as difficulty falling asleep, frequent waking and feeling tired a lot; changes in appetite, headaches, diarrhea, sweating, muscle tension in neck and shoulders, dry mouth, constant restlessness such that you can't sit still or concentrate.

**What happened to you emotionally?**

E.g. felt more drained/tired, got agitated, wanted to give up, felt out of control. Stress can lead to feeling mentally drained, irritability, fear of failure, depressed/down feelings, difficulties making a decision, feeling tense, lack of enjoyment in daily activities.

**What happened to your behavior?**

E.g. silly, giving up, increased tension. Stress can lead to being distracted, forgetfulness, avoiding certain situations, increased/decreased eating, anger, blowing up, using substances like tobacco, drugs, alcohol.

On handout page 4, have students identify one stressful situation they have experienced. Fill in the questions.

**Pick one situation from the page "Stresses & Me"...**

1. What physical changes do you experience?

---

---

2. What feelings do you have?

---

---

3. How do you behave?

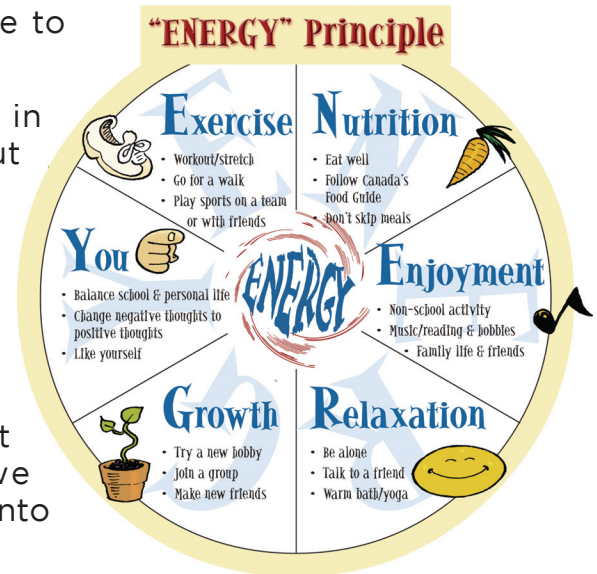
---

---

## Activity

### Learning to Deal with Stress: E.N.E.R.G.Y.

- Brainstorm some ideas students have to manage/deal with stress
- Refer to the E.N.E.R.G.Y. principle in student handout page 5. Talk about each strategy
- Lead students through the relaxation exercise (see Appendix)



### Follow-up Discussion

Since everyone will experience stress at one point or another, how can we incorporate the E.N.E.R.G.Y. principle into our daily lives?

### Conclusion

Today, we've discussed how stress affects our bodies, emotions and behaviours. We learned about the ENERGY principle, and practiced a relaxation activity.

### Take Home Activity

Have students teach a family member how to do the relaxation activity at home (provide each student with a copy of the relaxation activity).

#### Assessment Strategy

- Using the E.N.E.R.G.Y. principle, generate at least 5 strategies for coping with a stressful situation that the student has identified (this could be done verbally, in role play, think/pair/share).

or

- Write a letter to a friend offering advice on handling the stress of a new situation he/she will be facing. Consider situations such as moving to a new school, handling parents' divorce, or being cut from a sports team, etc.

### Reference

- E.N.E.R.G.Y. principle reproduced with permission from the Canadian Mental Health Association- Edmonton Region
- Alberta Education Health & Life Skills Guide to Implementation K-9

## Relaxation Activity

(Consider using different strategies to create a quiet atmosphere such as lights off/quiet music.)

### Introduction

Today, we're going to practice some special kinds of exercises called relaxation exercises. These exercises help you to learn how to relax when you're feeling up-tight and help you get rid of those butterflies-in-your-stomach kinds of feelings. They're also kind of neat because you can learn how to do some of them without anyone really noticing.

In order for you to get the best feelings from these exercises, there are some rules you must follow. First, you must do exactly what I say, even if it seems kind of silly. Second, you must try hard to do what I say. Third, you must pay attention to your body. Throughout these exercises, pay attention to how your muscles feel when they are tight and when they are loose and relaxed. And fourth, you must practice. The more you practice, the more relaxed you can get. Do you have any questions?

Are you ready to begin? Okay, first, get as comfortable as you can in your chair. Sit back, get both feet on the floor, and just let your arms hang loose. That's fine. Now close your eyes and don't open them until I say to. Remember to follow my instructions very carefully, try hard, and pay attention to your body. Here we go.

### Hands and Arms

Pretend you have a whole lemon in your left hand. Now squeeze it hard. Try to squeeze all the juice out. Feel the tightness in your hand and arm as you squeeze. Now drop the lemon. Notice how your muscles feel when they are relaxed. Take another lemon and squeeze. Try to squeeze this one harder than you did the first one. That's right. Real hard. Now drop the lemon and relax. See how much better your hand and arm feel when they are relaxed. Once again, take a lemon in your left hand and squeeze all the juice out. Don't leave a single drop. Squeeze hard. Good. Now relax and let the lemon fall from your hand.

(Repeat the process for the right hand and arm.)

**Arms and Shoulders**

Pretend you are a furry, lazy cat. You want to stretch. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Raise them up high over your head. Way back. Feel the pull in your shoulders. Stretch higher. Now just let your arms drop back to your side. Okay, kitten, let's stretch again. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Raise them over your head. Pull them back, way back. Pull hard. Now let them drop quickly. Good. Notice how your shoulders feel more relaxed. This time let's have a great big stretch. Try to touch the ceiling. Stretch your arms way out in front of you. Raise them way up high over your head. Push them way, way back. Notice the tension and pull in your arms and shoulders. Hold tight, now. Great. Let them drop very quickly and feel how good it is to be relaxed. It feels good and warm and lazy.

**Jaw**

You have a giant jawbreaker bubble gum in your mouth. It's very hard to chew. Bite down on it. Hard! Let your neck muscles help you. Now relax. Just let your jaw hang loose. Notice how good it feels just to let your jaw drop. Okay, let's tackle that jawbreaker again now. Bite down. Hard! Try to squeeze it out between your teeth. That's good. You're really tearing that gum up. Now relax again. Just let your jaw drop off your face. It feels good just to let go and not have to fight that bubble gum. Okay, one more time. We're really going to tear it up this time. Bite down. Hard as you can. Harder. Oh, you're really working hard. Good. Now relax. Try to relax your whole body. You've beaten that bubble gum. Let yourself go as loose as you can.

**Face and Nose**

Here comes a pesky old fly. He has landed on your nose. Try to get him off without using your hands. That's right, wrinkle up your nose. Make as many wrinkles in your nose as you can. Scrunch your nose up real hard. Good. You've chased him away. Now you can relax your nose. Oops, here he comes back again. Right back in the middle of your nose. Wrinkle up your nose again. Shoo him off. Wrinkle it up hard. Hold it just as tight as you can. Okay, he flew away. You can relax your face. Notice that when you scrunch up your nose your cheeks and your mouth and your forehead and your eyes all help you, and they get tight too. So when you relax your nose, your whole body relaxes too, and that feels good. Oh-oh. This time that old fly has come back, but this time he's on your forehead. Make lots of wrinkles. Try to catch him between all those wrinkles. Hold it tight, now. Okay, you can let go. He's gone for good. Now you can just relax. Let your face go smooth, no wrinkles anywhere. Your face feels nice and smooth and relaxed.

## **Stomach**

Hey! Here comes a cute baby elephant. But he's not watching where he's going. He doesn't see you lying in the grass, and he's about to step on your stomach. Don't move. You don't have time to get out of the way. Just get ready for him. Make your stomach very hard. Tighten up your stomach muscles real tight. Hold it. It looks like he is going the other way. You can relax now. Let your stomach go soft. Let it be as relaxed as you can. That feels so much better. Oops, he's coming this way again. Get Ready. Tighten up your stomach. Real hard. If he steps on you when your stomach is hard, it won't hurt. Make your stomach into a rock. Okay, he's moving away again. You can relax now. Kind of settle down, get comfortable, and relax. Notice the difference between a tight stomach and a relaxed one. That's how we want to feel—nice and loose and relaxed. You won't believe this, but this time he's coming your way and no turning around. He's headed straight for you. Tighten up. Tighten hard. Here he comes. This is really it. You've got to hold on tight. He's stepping on you. He's stepped over you. Now he's gone for good. You can relax completely. You're safe. Everything is okay, and you can feel nice and relaxed. This time imagine that you want to squeeze through a narrow fence and the boards have splinters on them. You'll have to make yourself very skinny if you're going to make it through. Suck your stomach in. Try to squeeze it up against your backbone. Try to be skinny as you can. You've got to be skinny now. Just relax and feel your stomach being warm and loose. Okay, let's try to get through that fence now. Squeeze up your stomach. Make it touch your backbone. Get it real small and tight. Get it as skinny as you can. Hold tight, now. You've got to squeeze through. You got through that narrow little fence and no splinters! You can relax now. Settle back and let your stomach come back out where it belongs. You can feel really good now. You've done fine.

## **Legs and Feet**

Now pretend that you are standing barefoot in a big, fat mud puddle. Squish your toes down deep into the mud. Try to get your feet down to the bottom of the mud puddle. You'll probably need your legs to help you push. Push down, spread your toes apart, feel the mud squish up between your toes. Now step out of the mud puddle. Relax your feet. Let your toes go loose and feel how nice that it feels to be relaxed. Back into the mud puddle. Squish your toes down. Let your leg muscles help push your feet down. Push your feet. Hard. Try to squeeze that puddle dry. Okay. Come back out now. Relax your feet, relax your legs, relax your toes. It feels so good to be relaxed. No tenseness anywhere. You feel kind of warm and tingly.

## Conclusion

Stay as relaxed as you can. Let your whole body go limp and feel all your muscles relax. In a few minutes I will ask you to open your eyes, and that will be the end of this practice session. As you go through the day, remember how good it feels to be relaxed. Sometimes you have to make yourself tighter before you can be relaxed, just as we did in these exercises. Practice these exercises everyday to get more and more relaxed. A good time to practice is at night, after you have gone to bed and the lights are out and you won't be disturbed. It will help you get to sleep. Then, when you are really a good relaxer, you can help yourself relax at school. Just remember the elephant, or the jaw breaker, or the mud puddle, and you can do your exercises and nobody will know. Today is a good day, and you are ready to feel very relaxed. You've worked hard and it feels good to work hard. Very slowly, now, open your eyes and wiggle your muscles around a little. Very good. You've done a good job. You're going to be a super relaxer.

Reprinted from Koeppen, A.S. (1974). *Relaxation training for children. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling*, vol 9, 14-21. Reprinted with permission. No further reproduction authorized without written permission from the American Counseling Association.

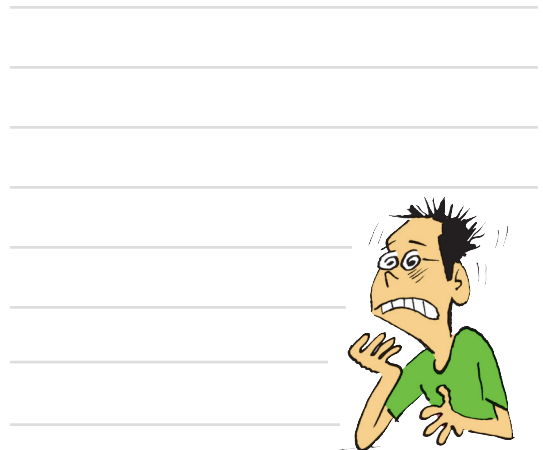
# Chicken Juggling

## Chicken Juggling 101



## Stress

What is it?



## Stresses & Me!

My stressors are:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Pick one situation from the page "Stresses & Me"...

1. What physical changes do you experience?

---

---

2. What feelings do you have?

---

---

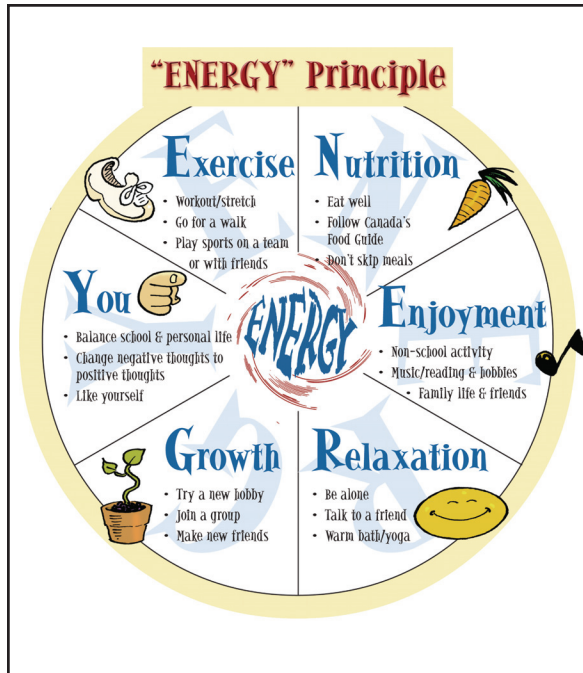
3. How do you behave?

---

---



# Chicken Juggling



## Happy Juggling!





# Stress: Listening To My Inner Voice

## Alberta Education Health & Life Skills Program of Studies Outcomes

The student will...

- R - 4.3 Recognize that management of positive/negative stress can affect health.
- R - 5.3 Recognize that stressors affect individuals differently, and outline ways individuals respond to stress.
- R - 6.3 Develop personal strategies for dealing with stress/change.



## Teacher Background

Feeling anxious is a common experience. Part of dealing with anxiety is to be able to recognize it and implement strategies to deal with it before it becomes an overwhelming problem. Emotional responses to various situations depend on how we think about the specific situation. What we think will influence how we feel. Even if we can not change the situation, we can change the way we think and therefore feel and act about it.

Everyone has an inner voice. This inner voice can be both an ally and a fearsome enemy. This voice is often referred to as negative self talk and positive self talk. It is this self talk (or interior dialogue) that guides our feelings and behaviors. Discovering how to identify our thinking and change our thoughts is a crucial step in dealing with stress and difficult feelings. At times, we have great difficulty silencing the negative voice. In this lesson, we will practice changing our inner voice from negative to positive self-talk to help deal with difficult feelings.

## Objectives

Students will understand how their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are connected as demonstrated by practicing cognitive strategies to manage stress and difficult feelings in a healthy way.

## Materials

*"Listening To My Inner Voice"* student handout

## Get Ready

### Listening To My Negative Voice

- **Explain to students** that what we think, leads to what we feel, and how we act.

Think ⇒ Feel ⇒ Act

- **Everyone has an inner voice.** This inner voice can be either positive or negative and can greatly effect both how we experience and respond to a situation.

### Activity 1:

- **Go to page 2 of the student handout.** Have students think of a situation when their inner voice said “I can’t do \_\_\_\_”. Fill in the blank. Next, students identify their feelings associated with saying I can’t do \_\_\_\_”. Fill in the “feeling” blank. Next identify the behaviour associated with the thought and feeling. Fill in the “behavior” blank.
- What impact could this negative voice have on you over 10 years? It is impossible to hide from it, this voice follows you everywhere. Imagine how you would feel and behave if your inner voice said “*You are good*”, “*You can do it*”, “*This situation hasn’t hurt me before*”...

#### Listening to My Negative Voice

I cant do:

---

---

Feeling(s):

---

---

Behavior(s):

---

---

## Activity 2: Negative Voice Scenarios

Read each of the following situations. Have students identify the feeling and behaviors associated with the negative thought. Write their answers on the whiteboard under the headings feelings and behaviours.

1. A girl asks a boy to join her study group. He thinks to himself...*She only wants to make fun of me and make me look stupid.*
  - Feeling e.g.: embarrassed, worried, silly
  - Behaviour e.g.: clams up, stomps away, makes a rude comment
2. A girl brings home a report card that is not very good. She thinks to herself...*My parents are going to be very angry.*
3. John must begin a complicated math homework assignment. He thinks to himself...*I'm lousy at math, I won't understand anything.*
4. Julie receives praise from her teacher for raising her average from 40% to 50%. She thinks to herself...*Yeah, right! She knows that I am not good. She only congratulated me so I will keep quiet in class.*
5. Jennifer teases Robert because of his acne (bad skin). He thinks to himself...*I know that I'm ugly! All the girls feel the same about me.*

## Activity 3: Listening To My Positive Voice

Go to page 3 of the student handout: Have students think of a situation when their inner voice said “*I don't need to be perfect at \_\_\_\_\_*”. Fill in the blank. Next, students identify their feelings associated with saying “*I don't need to be perfect at \_\_\_\_\_*”. Fill in the “feeling” blank. Next identify the behavior associated with the thought and feeling. Fill in the “behaviour” blank.

### Listening to My Positive Voice

I don't need to be perfect at:

---

---

Feeling(s):

---

---

Behavior(s):

---

---

## Activity 4: Positive Voice Scenarios

Change the scenarios from Activity 2 to positive inner talk. Students will need to change the negative thought to something positive. Then they can identify the new feelings and behaviours. Encourage students to use kinder words...*“I am intelligent”, “I am attractive and capable”, “I can get some help”, “Great, I’m improving”, “I don’t need to be perfect”, “Sure, I have acne, but that’s just part of my body changing”.*

## Conclusion

Remember that it is important to recognize that you have an inner voice that can impact your feelings and behaviors. Changing negative self talk to positive or more truthful self talk is one strategy for taking care of yourself.

## Take Home Activity

Have student’s take the attached story and discussion questions home to read with their parents. Students are to return form with parent signature indicating that activity was completed.

## Assessment Strategy

Students are able to identify negative and positive self talk and how this impacts feelings and behaviours. They will complete the “Listening To My Inner Voice” handout.

## Reference

Adapted from Canadian Mental Health Association – Montreal Branch  
[www.cmha.ca/mylife/](http://www.cmha.ca/mylife/)

Andrade, L. (2005). *The Shy Girl. From Chicken Soup for the Girl’s Soul: Real Stories by Real Girls About Real Stuff*. Ed: Canfield, J., Hansen, M.V., Hansen, P., & Dunlop, I. Health Communications: Deerfield Beach, FL. Reprinted with permission of Health Communications, Inc.

## Listening To My Inner Voice

### Listening to My Inner Voice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



### Listening to My Negative Voice

I can't do:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Feeling(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Behavior(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Listening to My Positive Voice

I don't need to be perfect at:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Feeling(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Behavior(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Take Home Activity

### Dear Parent,

In Health, your son/daughter has been learning about changing negative self talk into positive self talk. This is a skill that is important for building self esteem, dealing with stressful situations, and overall positive mental health.

We encourage you to take time to read the story “Shy Girl” together. Following the story, discuss a stressful situation(s) when you have changed negative self talk to positive self talk.

- Describe a situation.
- What does your negative self talk sound like?
- How does that negative self talk effect your feelings & behaviour?
- How do you change that negative talk to positive self talk? What makes it hard to do this?
- How does positive self talk change the way you feel and behave?
- Talk with your child about a stressful situation they may be facing...help them think about ways they can change their negative self talk to positive self talk.

Enjoy the story!



# The Shy Girl

**By Laura Andrade**

To say that I was shy when I was ten is an understatement – I was basically afraid of people. Kids, adults, pretty much everyone made me nervous. I was also what most teachers and parents would call a “good kid.” I followed the rules, got good grades in school and rarely questioned authority. But then one day, one single ride on a school bus changed all that.

The school bus that day was crowded, hot, humid and smelly. The windows were all rolled up – bus driver’s orders – it was simply raining too hard to have them down. Only a few of my classmates were looking through the windows at the torrents of water filling the street, overflowing the curbs and drains; most of the other kids were engaged in animated conversations, arguments and games. I sat alone as usual, speaking to no one.

I thought that the road outside looked like a flooded stream. I could make out tree limbs, bags, even an umbrella washing down the boulevard. People raced here and there, gripping umbrellas or covering their heads with bunched-up jackets and papers. Over and over, I carefully wiped a small circle through the cloud on my window so that I could see the rushing water outside.

The bus stopped, waiting for an accident to clear. The driver was particularly tense that day and had snapped at several kids who had been messing around, standing up in their seats, yelling, making faces at drivers in passing cars and even one kid who had been licking the window.

As I sat quietly, waiting and watching, I saw a kitty across the street on the other side of the road. Poor cat, I thought. He was all wet and didn’t seem to know where to go to get out of the rain. I wanted to go get the kitty, but I knew that the bus driver, Mrs. Foster, would never allow me off the bus. It was against the rules to even stand up, so I knew that I would get in big trouble for trying to rescue a cat across a busy, rainy street. I also thought that if I pointed out the miserable cat, the other kids would probably think that I was weird, even weirder than they already thought I was. I was sure that some of the kids would laugh at the soaked, dripping animal; they would see his misery as their entertainment. I couldn’t bear that; I didn’t want things to get any worse than they already were.

My window was hazy again, and when I wiped the window clear, I could see that the kitty was now struggling in what seemed to be a surging, grimy river. He was up to his neck in cold water, grasping at the slippery metal bars covering the storm drain in the street. Twigs and other debris rushed past him and down into the black hole. His body had already been sucked into the dark opening of the storm drain, but his little front paws were clinging to the bars. I could see him shaking. He swallowed water and gasped for air as he

fought the current with all of his strength. His movements revealed a level of fear that I had never witnessed before. I saw absolute terror in his dark, round eyes.

My heart was racing. Tears were rolling down my cheeks. I felt like I was drowning along with the little kitty. I wanted to rush off the bus without asking permission, and pull the stray cat from the drain, and wrap it up in my warm jacket, safe in my arms. But I also pictured getting into trouble before the cat could be saved, the other kids staring and laughing, and my parents' disappointment in my behavior.

I sat motionless, unable to act. Helpless. The bus began to move forward, the accident traffic finally in motion.

The cat's eyes locked on to mine. He was begging for help. Although the bus was noisy with the clamor of active children, I was sure that I heard his terrified meow. I could see that he was panicking and needed help right away. I glanced around, but no one else seemed to have noticed.

When Mrs. Foster yelled for me to sit down, I was startled. I hadn't even realized that I was standing up. I immediately sat back down. I did not break rules. I cried as the bus lumbered into motion. I prayed that someone else would notice and rescue my courageous friend. As our bus slowly turned the corner away from the flailing cat, I saw a car drive by the storm drain causing a wave to rise up and over the kitty's head. He appeared again coughing and sneezing but this time with some blood trickling from his mouth and nose. One ear was completely folded back, like it was flipped inside out. The weight of hopelessness blanketed down around me. None of the people on the street seemed to notice the tiny orange feline.

Somehow I managed to stand up again, directly disobeying the bus driver.

"Mrs. Foster!" I cried.

Every single person on the bus stopped talking and looked at me. Waiting.

"A cat. There's a cat in the drain," I stammered. "If we don't help him, he'll drown." I held out a shaking hand and pointed.

The bus driver, to my amazement, did not yell at me. Nor did the other kids laugh at me. Instead, Mrs. Foster pulled the bus to the side of the busy road.

"Children," she said sternly. "No one is to leave this bus."

Then the woman rushed out into the traffic and rain. She sloshed across the street to the drain as we all watched in silence. Even the boys looked concerned. No one was laughing. I noticed that I wasn't the only one crying.

With one quick movement, Mrs. Foster grabbed the cat and pulled him into the safety of her arms. She cradled the terrified, clawing creature, removed her own coat to wrap him in it, and then she raced back to the bus. We all cheered until she motioned for us to be quiet.

“We’ll have to look for his owners to see if he has a family already,” Mrs. Foster said, as she handed me the sopping bundle.

“I know,” I stammered.

“I’ll help you,” the girl sitting in the front seat whispered to me.

“Me too,” came another voice, then another and another.

The other kids did help; we put flyers up all over town, one girl’s dad put an advertisement in the paper, and we contacted the local animal shelters, veterinarians and pet stores. That means I was forced to talk to a lot of people, both kids and adults. There was no room for shyness and fear. To my surprise, I slowly gained more confidence in myself and made friends with some of the kids who had helped me. We never did find anyone to claim that cat, so he became a cherished member of my family.

Sure, I was still a pretty good kid after that day, but I learned to speak up, to overcome my shyness. I also learned to say a little prayer and then go for it when something really matters.

\*\*taken from: Canfield, Jack; Hansen, Mark Victor; Hansen, Patty; Dunlap, Irene (2005) *Chicken Soup for the Girl’s Soul: Real Stories by Real Girls About Real Stuff* (pp292-296). Reprinted with permission of Health Communications, Inc.