



## 4. PREVENTING ANXIETY ON A DAILY BASIS

### Introduction

This workshop should ideally be held between workshops 7 and 8 of the *student* component.

### Specific workshop objectives

At the end of the workshop, the parent will be able to:

- Identify positive and negative lifestyle habits;
- Identify stress management strategies;
- Take steps to help their child apply their lifestyle habits and stress management strategies;
- Better understand and avoid parental pressure.

### How the workshop works

Welcome the parents and present the workshop objectives and how it will work.

#### A. Discussion about your experience (10 min.)

1. Ask the parents about their day-to-day life with their child: How did the past few weeks go? Are they seeing any changes in their child or themselves?
2. Come back to the concepts seen during the last workshop: Did they have a conversation with their child about accommodation? Did they notice their own accommodating behaviours? Did they try to adopt new, more helpful behaviours with their child? How did that go? Did they encounter any problems or obstacles? Did they have any successes?

## B. Mountain meditation (15 min.)

1. Invite the parents to take a few minutes to settle in and relax with the mountain meditation. Ask them to get comfortable. They can sit on the floor or on a chair, whichever they prefer. Ask them to close their eyes if they want to.
2. You can use the script at the end of this workshop to lead the meditation yourself, or you can play the audio of the meditation available at this link (time: 8 min. 23 sec.):  
<https://sante-mentale-jeunesse.usherbrooke.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Mountain-meditation-1.mp4> (Centre RBC d'expertise universitaire en santé mentale, n.d.).
3. Inform the parents that they can access the audio of this meditation at the address indicated in their *Handy parent guide*.
4. Once the meditation is finished, talk about it as a group. For example, ask the parents how they feel now, what they remember from the mountain meditation, if there was a certain part that stood out for them, if they can make any connections with their real-life experiences, etc.

## C. Positive lifestyle habits: How can I make the soil more fertile? (30 min.)

*\*This activity was also done with the students. This will allow the parents to better identify their child's potentially positive and negative lifestyle habits.*

1. Use the metaphor of a plant and its soil to talk to the parents about lifestyle habits. Explain that soil is the plant's living environment, which allows it to grow. For the soil to be fertile, it needs nutrients, water, and sunlight. Conversely, a plant that's growing in poor-quality soil or that lacks water and light (which creates stress on the plant) will struggle to grow and may even wilt. Make them aware that, much like the plant, the environment in which the child lives (their soil) and the way in which their needs are met (by themselves and their environment) influence their emotional state and their anxiety.
2. Point out that, like the plant, their child may not necessarily have control over all the external conditions they're exposed to (e.g., lack of water or sunlight), but they do have some power over the lifestyle habits they themselves decide to put in place to take care of themselves. So, being aware of what's good and bad for them can help them to change things. Make them aware that, as parents, they too can have an impact on their child's lifestyle habits by providing an environment that promotes positive habits.
3. To find out more about positive and negative lifestyle habits, ask them to take turns reading the lifestyle habits cards in their *Handy parent guide* (attached to this workshop). After each card, ask the parents if they have any questions or thoughts about what they just heard.
4. Then ask them to take a few minutes to write down their thoughts about their child's lifestyle habits in their *Handy parent guide*. Did they identify any areas for improvement?



How can they help their child to improve their lifestyle habits? Which lifestyle habit(s) could they change themselves in order to be a good role model for their child?

5. Review their thoughts as a group.

#### D. Stress management strategies (15 min.)

1. Explain to the parents that some of the healthy lifestyle habits listed above can also be used as concrete strategies to better manage stress and anxiety. These strategies are things they can do to help their child cope better with a stressful or anxiety-provoking situation. They are concrete ways to calm down and better deal with a difficult situation.
2. Together, look at the following list of strategies:
  - Ask for help, talk about it, get support from peers or parents;
  - Do relaxation, breathing, yoga, and mindfulness exercises;
  - Get plenty of sleep, pamper themselves, show affection, take it easy, disconnect;
  - Try to see things differently;
  - Practise gratitude;
  - Live in the moment;
  - Reformulate negative thoughts into more realistic, helpful ones;
  - Laugh, have a good time, throw a party, have fun;
  - Write down or draw their emotions and thoughts;
  - Spend time with an animal that makes them feel good;
  - Play sports, or do fun or creative activities;
  - Go on a cultural outing;
  - Get in touch with nature: go for a walk in the forest, do some gardening.
3. Once this step is completed, ask the parents to identify the three strategies they feel would work best for their child in an anxiety-provoking situation. Encourage them to write these strategies down in their *Handy parent guide*. Inform the parents that their child has also identified strategies that could help them to cope with difficult situations. Encourage the parents to talk to their children about the strategies the child chose and about the ones the parents think would help them.



## Tip for facilitators

Some parents might name video games as something that makes their child feel good and helps them manage their stress.

“The danger with video games is that they create a parallel universe in which the child can take refuge. They can end up investing so much time and energy in that universe that it becomes real to them. Even after the video game is turned off, it’s the only thing the child can think about. This starts to border on a video game addiction. The child spends more time in their parallel universe than in the real world. But at some point, when they need to face the real world, they find themselves unable to cope. It’s much more frightening than their fantasy world, where they’re a powerful superhero.” Partial quote by neuropsychologist Benoît Hammarrenger, on the show *Les Francs-Tireurs* (panel on youth and anxiety), September 18, 2019, on Télé-Québec.

The idea is to make parents aware of this issue. Of course, video games can be fun and relaxing, but their use needs to be supervised and governed by strict rules.



### Tip for facilitators

To deepen the parents' understanding of the benefits of physical activity, summarize the following concepts in your own words.

"The general consensus, among the population and the scientific community, is that physical activity is the natural method with the strongest impact on well-being and mental health (Biddle, 2006; INSER, 2008; Mammen and Faulkner, 2013). The literature reveals two main streams of research on the psychological benefits of physical activity:

"1) Research on the immediate or temporary effects of a single session of physical activity, independent of physical fitness; 2) Research on the effects of regular physical activity on improving physical fitness.

"An activity of moderate intensity (50-70% of the person's maximum heart rate) for a minimum of 20 minutes, or the equivalent of a brisk walk with mild shortness of breath, produces a positive psychological effect that can last between two and seven hours.

"The psychological benefits of regular physical activity have also been demonstrated (INSERM, 2008). For example, Folkins and Sime (1981) identified 65 studies, 47 of which demonstrated effects on various dimensions of mental health and cognitive performance. An improvement was seen in the feeling of competence and self-esteem (6/8 studies), as well as affects such as mood, well-being, anxiety and depression (13/14 studies), along with cognitive functions such as memory, reaction time, problem-solving and concentration (9/13 studies). People who exercise regularly have better tolerance to everyday stress than people who are less active. They are more optimistic and positive about life experiences and less likely to be anxious."

Excerpts from Poirel (2017)

### E. Pressure (15 min.)

1. Show the parents the following video on the topic of pressure: *Toujours plus vite, toujours plus, toujours mieux!* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qdtr60C6YIM>
2. Next, lead a discussion on their thoughts about the topic.



## F. Conclusion and invitation (5 min.)

1. Encourage the parents to talk to their child about ways to adopt positive lifestyle habits and stress management strategies to increase their well-being and help them manage their anxiety better.



## COMPLEMENTARY SHEET

### Mountain meditation

#### Script:

(Bell, chime, or sound of Tibetan singing bowl)

For this mountain meditation, get into a comfortable position. Close your eyes and simply observe your breathing, without trying to change it. Observe the movement of air through your body as you breathe in and out.

Now imagine a beautiful mountain, one that you like to visit or that is just a figment of your imagination. Focus on the image of this mountain by imagining its shape, summit, nature, and colours. Let the image of the mountain become clearer and clearer in your head. It doesn't matter what it looks like—just let the mountain draw clearly into focus. Observe it in detail.

Look at the stillness of the mountain. Admire how solid and magnificent it is, from near and far. This mountain represents strength and confidence.

When you feel ready, imagine that this mountain is you. The mountain and your body, both motionless, are one. Try to feel the grounding effect of the mountain. Feel its strength and force becoming yours, little by little, even though you're sitting right here. Like the mountain, you are becoming unshakeable.

With a sense of calm, you observe the changes in your environment, the movements of the sun, the passing of the seasons. Like the mountain, you simply stand there.

It absorbs the warmth of the sun and tracks the movements of the clouds, but it remains there, completely still. It bears witness to all these changes.

The mountain receives visitors and listens to them marvel at its beauty or complain about the bad weather. Nothing affects the mountain; it always remains profoundly itself.

The strength and beauty of the mountain never change, whether or not people see it, whether or not they pay attention to it, whether or not clouds blanket its summit.

Day or night, rain or shine, alone or crowded with visitors, the mountain remains itself, solid and still.



Sometimes, the mountain experiences howling winds or raging thunderstorms. But it remains standing, traversing every ordeal, impervious to the weather.

In the same way, try to channel the mountain's strength and power in your own body. Bear witness to the changes in your environment, good and bad.

Welcome this strength and allow it to move inside you.

If you want, you can now take the time to reactivate your body by stretching gently, yawning if needed, and coming back to your surroundings by slowly opening your eyes.

(Bell, chime, or sound of Tibetan singing bowl)





### HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Maintaining healthy relationships with others and having a caring, supportive network contributes to good mental health!

Having healthy relationships with loved ones where you can share your thoughts and emotions is a way to get to know yourself better and figure out who you are as a person.

**Are you satisfied with your network of friends? Why?**

(Claes, 2003)

### SLEEP

To be able to do the things you enjoy and feel good, you need enough sleep!

Getting enough sleep can help you feel better, manage your emotions better, and have a better quality of life.

**Do you generally sleep well? How many hours a night do you sleep?**

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018; Tel-Jeunes, 2019)

### HEALTHY EATING

A healthy diet is essential to good health!

Eating a balanced diet will help you grow and give you the energy you need to get through your day. It will also help you do better in sports or school.

**Do you think you eat a balanced diet? Is this important to you?**

(Government of Canada, 2019; Tel-Jeunes, 2019)

### EXERCISE

Exercise can be a great way to take care of yourself every day!

For example, sports can be an opportunity to make new friends, improve your self-esteem, lower your stress, and improve your concentration.

**How many times a week do you play sports?**

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2019; Simon *et al.*, 2005; Tel-Jeunes, 2019)

### FUN

Taking care of yourself every day also means taking time to have fun and do things you love—alone or with family and friends!

For example, this can include spending time on a favourite hobby or simply relaxing. Having fun with loved ones is just as important as taking time for yourself.

**What makes you happy? Why?**

(Québec government, 2018)

### BALANCE

A healthy balance between the different areas of your life (family, friends, sports, school) is good for you!

In fact, having a good balance lets you focus on all the important parts of your life and pay attention to your needs.

**Do you think you have a good balance in your life? Why?**

(Tel-Jeunes, 2019; Université de Montréal, 2015)

### COMPASSION

To feel more comfortable with others and enjoy more positive energy, you need to be compassionate with others and with yourself!

For example, avoid having prejudices and making assumptions about other people. You can also do good deeds, truly listen to other people, or simply be kind to people.

**How do you show compassion for other people?**

(Lyubomirsky and Layous, 2013; Neff, 2003)

### MINDFULNESS

Practising mindfulness can help you manage your stress!

Mindfulness is a way to help you manage your emotions and resolve problems, because it teaches you to pay closer attention to the signals your body is sending you. It helps you to make links between your sensations, thoughts, emotions, etc.

**When do you practice mindfulness? Why?**

(Gosselin and Turgeon, 2015)

### SELF-ESTEEM

Nurturing your self-esteem helps to increase your well-being and create a more positive self-image!

To nurture your self-esteem, identify one of your strengths that you apply in your daily life.

Your self-esteem grows each time you think highly of yourself.

**How do you nurture your self-esteem on a daily basis?**

(Neff and Vonk, 2009; Neff, 2011; Seligman *et al.*, 2005)

### SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality is good for your mental health!

It can help you manage your stress and view the things that happen to you with a positive attitude. Spirituality isn't religion! It's a way of connecting with yourself, listening to your needs, honouring your beliefs, etc.

**Do you consider yourself a spiritual person? Why?**

(Simard, 2006)

### **SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE**

Being sedentary and not getting enough exercise has an impact on your physical and mental health!

Exercise is a good way to manage your stress on a day-to-day basis, among other reasons because it lets you blow off steam. It also has an impact on your self-image, health, and well-being. **When you exercise, do you notice any benefits? What are they?**

(Simon *et al.*, 2005; Tel-Jeunes, 2019)

### **INTERNET ADDICTION**

Spending too much time on the Internet can become a problem and even get out of control!

If you find that you're using the Internet and social media to forget about your problems, that you're not sleeping at night because you're staying up late online, or that you're spending too much time alone, talk to someone you trust about the situation.

**Do you feel the need to spend time on the Internet or social media to be happy?**

(Tel-Jeunes, 2019)

### **CONFLICTUAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Arguing with loved ones can be bad for you!

When faced with a conflict, you can decide to react or respond.

You can use problem-solving strategies to work through it: assess the conflict, consider different solutions before choosing one, then take action.

**How do you typically manage your conflicts?**

(Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Rubenstein *et al.*, 2019)

### **LACK OF SLEEP**

Frequent sleep deprivation can have a negative effect on your health and the way you handle stress!

If you don't get enough sleep or don't sleep well, you won't have the energy for all your activities. When you're sleep deprived, it's also harder to manage your emotions.

**Do you ever have trouble sleeping? Why?**

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018, Tel-Jeunes, 2019)

### **SUBSTANCE USE**

Drinking alcohol or using drugs often or excessively has a major impact on your physical and mental health!

These substances alter your perception of reality, which can increase your stress levels. Drugs and alcohol affect your behaviour and sleep, and also put you at risk of developing an addiction.

**Do you ever drink or use drugs? Why?**

(Tel-Jeunes, 2019)

### **ISOLATION**

Feeling isolated and unable to rely on support from family and friends increases your stress levels and makes you feel bad!

To get out of this situation, you might decide to talk to someone you trust or hang out with a different circle of friends.

**Do you ever feel isolated? How does this affect you?**

(Claes, 2003; Tel-Jeunes, 2019)

### **BURNOUT**

Burnout can increase your stress levels and make you feel bad!

To feel good, you need to try to find a balance and avoid taking things to the extreme. Focusing all your energy in one place is unhealthy. You need to do different activities to avoid burning out.

**Have you ever had a burnout? When?**

(Tel-Jeunes, 2019; Université de Montréal, 2015)

### **SMOKING**

Smoking can be very bad for your health and your stress levels!

You might smoke as a way to cope with stress, but this is only a short-term fix; smoking actually makes your stress worse in the long term. At first, you may feel more in control, but it won't take long before you develop an addiction that's extremely hard to break.

**Have you ever wanted to smoke? Why?**

(Conseil québécois sur le tabac et la santé, n.d.; Tel-Jeunes, 2019)