



## 5. A HELPING HAND?

### Specific workshop objectives

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

- Identify the habits and activities that make them feel good;
- Identify the habits and situations that affect their anxiety;
- Learn different strategies for dealing with anxiety-provoking situations;
- Identify the stress management strategies that work best for them;
- Take steps to use these stress management strategies.

### How the workshop works

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

#### A. The week in review (10 min.)

1. Ask the students how their week went. How did you feel in general? Did you step outside of your comfort zone? If so, in which situations? If not, why? Did you experience a particular situation this week that made you feel emotional? Which emotion was it? Did you identify the need behind it? Did you try applying a strategy to manage it? Did it help?
2. If you want to go into more detail, you can ask the following questions:
  - Did you learn anything new about yourself?
  - Did you notice anything different about the way you perceive or react to certain situations?
  - Did you learn anything about your comfort zone and your personal objective?

## B. The WOW! effect (10 min.)

1. Start the exercise with this introduction. The Wow! effect is the wonder and awe you feel when you think about your place in the world compared to something or someone impressive. The Wow! effect brings new perspective to your everyday worries and concerns. The Wow! effect creates a sense of greatness and a flood of positive emotions that stimulate creativity and the desire to take on challenges. It increases the desire to engage in or explore your surroundings and strengthens bonds between individuals (Rudd *et al.*, 2012).
2. Ask the students to take a few breaths, with their eyes closed if they prefer, to calm down. Ask them to get into a comfortable position and remind them to pay attention to the emotions and sensations that come up during the activity. Play the *Yosemite* video (Neil and Delehanty, 2013) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6-2fVsFV8E&t=1s>). You can also find other videos that show the beauty of nature.
3. After the video, ask the students how they felt. Suggest they embrace the Wow! effect by marvelling over the little things in their daily lives that make them feel good.

## C. Brainstorming: things that make me feel good and bad (10 min.)

1. To start, ask the students to name positive situations and habits that make them feel less anxious, as well as enjoyable activities that help them express themselves, relax, have fun and take their mind off things. Ask the students to name negative situations and habits that increase their anxiety. Copy the table below on the board and write down the students' ideas.

Habits, situations and activities  
that make me feel good

Habits, situations and activities  
that make me feel bad



### Tip for facilitators

Some students might name video games as an activity that makes them 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 the students 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.

## D. My lifestyle habits: How can I make the soil more fertile? (35 min.)

1. Use the metaphor of a plant and its soil to talk to the students 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, if the plant’s soil is low in nutrients or is constantly lacking water and light (which creates stress on the plant), it will have a harder time growing and may wilt. You’re making them aware that, much like the plant, the way they take care of themselves influences their emotional state and their anxiety.
2. Point out that, like the plant, they may not necessarily have control over all the external conditions they’re exposed to (e.g., lack of nutrients), 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.
3. To help them find out more about positive and negative lifestyle habits, have the students play Snakes and Ladders, HORS-PISTE version, on lifestyle habits. This version of the popular board game introduces them to the lifestyle habits that promote good mental health and help reduce anxiety and those that are negative and anxiety-provoking. Give them the game board, tokens, a die, and the playing cards. The game involves rolling the die and moving their token the corresponding number of spaces. When the player lands on a “rappelling” square or a “ladder” square, they pick a card from that category and read it aloud to the group. They

must then answer the question before moving up or down. As you go along, make connections with the ideas given during the previous activity.

4. If you don't feel the game is appropriate for your group, simply have them pick cards and make connections with the ideas given during the previous activity.
5. Then have the students do the following individual exercise: Identify two lifestyle habits they want to develop or change and ways to get there. Give them about 10 minutes to think about it and write down their answer in their *Handy student guide*.
6. Reconvene as a group to discuss each student's answers.

## E. Stress management strategies that can make a difference (20 min.)

1. Explain to the students that some of the positive habits listed earlier can also be used as concrete strategies to better manage stress and anxiety. These strategies are things they can do to help cope better with stressful or anxiety-provoking situations. These concrete methods can help them calm down and deal better with challenging situations.
2. Together, look at the following list of strategies (Mouvement Santé mentale Québec, 2014):
  - Ask for help, talk about it, get support from their friends 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:
    - Sports, exercise, walking, martial arts, combat sports, etc.;
    - Drawing, writing, art, drama, dance, music, singing, crafts, reading, photography, etc.;
  - Go on a cultural outing;



- Get in touch with nature: go for a walk in the forest, do some gardening.

### Tip for facilitators

To deepen the students' 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."

(Poirel, 2017)

3. Then ask the students to answer the following questions individually in their *Handy student guide*:
  - What activities or strategies do I already use and which ones could I try?
  - How can I use these strategies more when I am faced with a more difficult situation?
4. Ask the students to think about how they will implement some of the strategies over the coming week, by identifying: 1) when, 2) with whom, and 3) how they plan to implement them.



## F. This week's challenge (5 min.)

1. Explain that this week's challenge (also in their *Handy student guide*) is to try to use one of the strategies to deal with a stressful situation. Explain, as needed.



### 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 sense of well-being and gives you 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 improves each time you think of yourself in a positive light.

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

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

### SPIRITUALITY

Nurturing your spirituality is good for your mental health!

Spirituality can help you maintain a positive attitude about the things that happen to you and also help you manage your stress. Spirituality isn't the same thing as 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)

