



## 6. HORS-PISTE ACTIVITY

### Specific workshop objectives

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

- Step outside of their comfort zone in a group activity;
- Expose themselves "in vivo" to more anxiety-provoking situations;
- Experiment with the concepts learned in previous meetings;
- Create ties with the other participants.

### How the workshop works

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

#### A. The week in review

1. Explain to the students that you will review the challenge during the next workshop.

#### B. Mindful breathing (10 min.)

1. Tell the students you are going to give them a breathing exercise that will calm them down. You can use the attached script.
2. Read the text slowly, pausing frequently and keeping your voice soft and low.

#### C. Time to think outside the box! (50 min.)

1. Do the chosen activity using the complementary sheet.

## D. What did I get out of it? (15 min.)

1. Ask the students about their experiences during the activity. How did you feel about the activity? You can ask some of the questions below to get them talking. Keep the discussion moving by telling the students what you observed as they were doing the activity:
  - Did you step outside of your comfort zone? If so, in which situations?
  - How did it make you feel? What things did you observe about yourself (emotions, sensations, thoughts, behaviours)?
  - Did you try new things? If not, how could you do this the next time?
  - Did you think about the situation differently, less dramatically, less judgmentally? If not, how could you reformulate some of the thoughts that overwhelmed you, held you back, or prevented you from trying?
  - Did you reach out to other people? If not, were there opportunities when you could have done so?
  - Were you proud of yourself for any reason?
  - Did you learn anything today?
  - Did you observe any strengths or positive qualities in yourself or the other students?
  - Did you feel more comfortable, less nervous, more confident? How do you explain this?
  - Did you have fun? Were you fully present? What helped you?
  - Would you be willing to take the next step, another challenge?

## E. What are my parents learning? (10 min.)

1. Explain to students that their parents will be learning about a new concept called accommodation. Explain what accommodation means:

Accommodation consists in parents altering their parenting style to prevent or lessen the discomfort their child feels because of their anxiety. All parents use accommodation—it's perfectly normal. But while accommodation reduces anxiety in the short term, it increases it in the long term, mainly because it promotes avoidance. Accommodation can include letting a child skip a social event or stay home from school, doing things or answering on their behalf, changing the family routine or sticking to rituals.

2. Explain that their parents will be encouraged to talk about ways to accommodate them less. Tell them this might make them feel worried, scared or otherwise emotional. Emphasize the importance of understanding that their parents are doing this to help lessen their anxiety.
3. Wrap up by saying that the program will teach them and their parents new tools for coping with anxiety-provoking situations. Their parents need to be present and attentive to help them use these tools.



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

1. Explain that this week's challenge (also in their *Handy student guide*) is to notice situations where their parents might have tended to accommodate them but didn't. Ask them how this made them feel. Explain, as needed.

Tell the students they will need to dress for outside for the next workshop.



## COMPLEMENTARY SHEET

### Breathing exercise

Sit in a comfortable position.

Now focus your attention on your breathing.

(PAUSE)

Breathe normally, without forcing or trying to change anything about your breathing.

Pay attention to the movement created by the air entering and leaving your body.

Notice your stomach and chest rising when you inhale.

(PAUSE)

Now shift your attention to your stomach and chest falling as you exhale.

Pay attention as you inhale and exhale a few times.

(PAUSE)

If you feel comfortable, you can try inhaling and exhaling for one or two seconds longer, to try to take deeper breaths and increase your sense of calm.

(PAUSE)

Now go back to your normal way of breathing.

Take as much time as you need to inhale and exhale, without any extra effort.

If your thoughts wander, simply refocus them on your next inhale.

Take the time to take two or three more deep, calming breaths.

(PAUSE)

Now open your eyes and reconnect with your surroundings.

If you feel calm, try to hold onto the feeling for as long as possible, focusing on your breath as needed.



## COMPLEMENTARY SHEET

### HORS-PISTE activities

#### What's the point?

The main objective of the HORS-PISTE activities is to allow the students to try new things, with your guidance, outside of their normal environment, hence the name HORS-PISTE. These activities will allow them to:

- Step outside of their comfort zone in a non-school group activity;
- Expose themselves “in vivo” to more anxiety-provoking situations;
- Experiment with the concepts learned in previous meetings;
- Create ties with the other participants.

During the program, students are required to step outside of their comfort zone, learn new behaviours, and expose themselves to anxiety-provoking situations. These activities are an opportunity for them to safely test out new situations, with your guidance and with support from the other students.

It's not always easy for young people to recognize the situations that make them anxious or the behaviours they adopt in these situations. These activities are an opportunity for you to observe them, in order to then help them become more aware of their reactions and ultimately improve their capacity for introspection and self-awareness.

The HORS-PISTE activities give you materials and concrete examples that you can use during the workshops. Through their interactions, body language, and behaviours, the students will often reveal more about themselves than during most discussions.

These activities are an opportunity to test the concepts seen during the workshops, which significantly increases the chances that the students will adopt these new behaviours after the program (Furman and Sibthorp, 2013).

Since each student is different, with unique challenges, it's important to identify in what way the experience challenges them. For example, it may seem more obvious to challenge students who are more socially anxious. Simply being in a group provides opportunities. A student with performance anxiety, but who is very comfortable trying new things, for example, will need to think about their quest for perfection, their fear of being judged when seen with others, and their ability to experience things for enjoyment versus results.



It's also an opportunity to encourage mutual support, since not everyone has the same challenges. Experiencing something together builds relationships, and these relationships lead to mutual support and possibilities. During reviews, encourage the students to interact with each other.

These activities will allow the students to experience successes, as well as learn about themselves, learn to observe themselves, and learn to recognize and welcome their experiences without judgment. As Nelson Mandela said: *"I never lose. I either win or learn."*

Reviewing, reflecting on, and discussing the experiences are the keys to getting the students to learn from the experience. It's an opportunity for them to reflect on what they've learned and the challenges they encountered, to identify areas for improvement, and to rethink things to deepen their understanding of certain concepts (Chapman *et al.*, 1995). To help you with your observations and review, here are some sample questions you can ask the students.

- Did you step outside of your comfort zone? If so, in which situations?
- How did it make you feel? What things did you observe about yourself (emotions, sensations, thoughts, behaviours)?
- Did you try new things? If not, how could you do this the next time?
- Did you think about the situation differently, less dramatically, less judgmentally? If not, how could you reformulate some of the thoughts that overwhelmed you, held you back, or prevented you from trying?
- Did you reach out to other people? If not, were there opportunities when you could have done so?
- Were you proud of yourself for any reason?
- Did you learn anything today?
- Did you observe any strengths or positive qualities in yourself or the other students?
- Did you feel more comfortable, less nervous, more confident? How do you explain this?
- Did you have fun? Were you fully present? What helped you?
- Would you be willing to take the next step, another challenge?

## What is it?

There are a few options you can choose from, but you're also free to create or adapt your own activities. The possibilities are endless. It all depends on how willing and open you are. The HORS-PISTE activities can be very straightforward, but if they get you, as the facilitator, to step outside of your comfort zone, then you'll also find it much easier to work with the students.



The key to the HORS-PISTE activities is that they all share the same objective: to create informal situations where the students can observe each other and expose themselves to potentially anxiety-provoking situations.

### Examples of activities:

- Do an outdoor activity such as a hike or a snowball fight;
- Watch a short news report and then talk about the topic and their impressions;
- Make a short video featuring a message of encouragement for future Expedition program participants or describing the experience to family or friends;
- Play a board game that involves little or no sharing of materials;
- Organize a “show and tell” session; each student will have to introduce the others to a favourite object or experience, for example, their favourite music, book, or hobby. You can also introduce a theme, such as “something I’m proud of” or “my biggest dream.”

