

Target competency	Manage one's emotions and stress effectively
Cross-curricular competencies (QEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use creative thinking • Exercise critical judgment
General objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize certain manifestations of stress and emotions • Identify situations that can cause stress



REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS WORKSHOP

In the last workshop, we talked about teamwork and the strengths we each have. Do you remember the challenge I gave you? Tell me how it went.

*The challenge was, when working as a team, to name a strength that each person possesses.

THE ADVENTURES OF LEO AND CHARLIE

It's nighttime at the OFF-TRAIL campground. Everybody helped each other set up the tents before it got too dark. It's been a long day with many adventures.

Charlie got angry because some teams were having trouble setting up their tents, and she couldn't wait to sit by the fire and play Werewolf! But then Mr. Julian told her she had every right to be angry, and that everyone experiences all kinds of emotions. He asked her what she felt in her body when she got angry. When Charlie thought about it, she realized her teeth were clenched, her stomach was in knots, and her body was tensing up. Mr. Julian gave her some advice: "When you notice these feelings inside yourself, take the time to stop and understand that you're angry. Instead of yelling at a friend, take three deep breaths. Then ask yourself what you can do to make the situation better."

Charlie is getting better at recognizing the signs of her emotions. For the rest of the evening, she felt happy, because she loves to play games.

Now all the students are sound asleep in their sleeping bags... Except for Leo.

Leo's eyes are wide open and he's holding his flashlight tight. He heard that bears sometimes roam the woods at night. He's listening hard for all the little noises around him. His heart is beating fast and his hands are all sweating. What's going on with Leo? What is he feeling? What should he do?

DID YOU KNOW?

Stress is a physiological reaction that helps us cope with a new or seemingly threatening situation. Stress can bring about heightened energy levels and the motivation to respond to something unexpected.

However, there are times when it can become intrusive, or have a negative impact on concentration, learning or even health.

In children, as in adults, there are many different sources of stress. They do, however, share common characteristics, such as a certain unpredictability, an influence on one's sense of control, a novelty effect, or a threat to the ego.

To facilitate an intervention with a student, it's important to help them identify the signs of their stress (clammy hands, a knot in the stomach, mood swings, sleep problems, etc.). It may also be a good idea to try to identify the cause of their stress so that they can better deal with the situation, and to help them act on their environment, if necessary.

(Lupien, 2019; Naître et grandir, 2016d)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Print out the two cat images on the *Cats* teaching aid, below. Hang the picture of the calm cat on one side of the classroom and the picture of the stressed cat on the other side.
2. Explain to students that the first cat is feeling good. He's calm and peaceful. Then explain that the second cat is very stressed. His fur is sticking up, its claws are out, and its eyes are wide open. Ask students which cat is more like Leo feels.
3. Ask the students:
 - How would you feel if you were Leo?
 - What's going on in your body (heart beating fast, knot in the stomach, sweaty hands, tense muscles...)?
4. Use the *Stress and Emotions* supplementary sheet (below) to explain the concepts of stress and emotions to your students.
5. Present the students with different situations and ask them to go and sit next to the cat that best represents how they would feel if they were in that situation. You can start with situations experienced by students or use these suggestions:
 - Someone broke your favorite book or game
 - You received an invitation to a friend's party
 - You're watching a funny movie with your family
 - Your teacher asks you to sing in front of the class
 - You're arguing with a friend
6. Explain to the students that it's normal for them to be stressed by different situations and to feel different emotions than other people. That's why it's important to take the time to express your feelings clearly so that other people can understand you.
7. Ask students what they do to calm down when they're under stress, like Leo is in the story you just told. Write their named strategies on a poster and complement them using the supplementary sheet below. You can hang the poster in the classroom for the students to refer to.
8. Explain to the students that meditation is another good way to calm down. Suggest that students practice listening to this meditation: <https://youtu.be/iu9PjAaUCIY?si=0ugQUggc3v3UIwjS> (6 min 17 s). Ask them how they feel after meditating.



8-9



10-11



12-13



14



15



16

CHALLENGE

Suggest the following challenge:

- Before the next OFF-TRAIL workshop, when you're feeling emotional, try to calm down using a method you learned in class.



17

ENABLING REINVESTMENT

To help students reinvest the concepts they've learned in the workshop, use the emotion cards on the *Emotion Cards* handout. You can print, cut out and laminate them. If the students previously participated in the OFF-TRAIL preschool workshops, they will have received the same cards. When students are in particular situations, or at times when you feel it's appropriate to do so, take out the cards and ask them to point out the emotion they're experiencing and try to describe the physical sensations.

To practice different ways of calming down, you can print and use the *Calming Strategies Key Tags*. Fill in the blank key tags with other resources used by your students. You will find this tool in the *Workshops and tools for students* section of the [OFF-TRAIL website](#).

READING SUGGESTIONS

- Gravett, E. (2007). *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears*. Pan Childrens.
- Grenning, R. (2016). *Alligator is Angry*. Make Believe Ideas.
- Lienas, A. (2018). *The Color Monster: A Story About Emotions*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.
- van Hout, M. (2011). *Today I Am*. Fish Book Co.
- Watt, M. (2012). *Scaredy Squirrel at Night*. Kids Can Press.
- Witek, J. (2014). *In My Heart: A Book Of Feelings*. Harry N. Abrams.



Text is under a [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) licence. Graphics designed with Canva are under [Canva's content licence](#). © [OFF-TRAIL program](#) by Centre RBC d'expertise universitaire en santé mentale (2025), Université de Sherbrooke.

SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

Stress and emotions

Stress

Everyone experiences stress every day. Stress is your body's reaction to a new or threatening situation. In other words, when you experience stress, it's as if your body is preparing to focus all your energy on living through this extraordinary situation. For example, if you're walking in the forest and you come face to face with a bear, you'll need stress to alert your body and react correctly to the danger.

In your everyday life, your body reacts to stress in exactly the same way as it would to a bear. However, the dangers are really not the same and the sources of stress are different. Maybe for you, stress comes when you have to take a test, or meet someone new, or sing in front of other people, or take part in a sports competition.

It's important for you to know that stress isn't necessarily bad. It gives you the energy to get through certain situations. If you never felt stress, you'd look like... cooked spaghetti. However, it can happen that stress doesn't show up when you really need it, or that it expresses itself a little too loudly. That kind of stress can prevent you from feeling good. What can help you is to recognize those moments when stress overpowers you, and to have the tools to tame it.

Emotions

A little like stress, everyone experiences emotions, every day. This is completely normal. Emotions are little messages sent to your brain. They tell you whether you're doing well or not in a situation. When you get these messages, you can change your behaviour, or walk away from a situation if you're feeling bad.

You certainly know a lot about emotions. Sadness? Joy? Anger? Fear? Of course, you've felt them all before. These emotions are part of everyday life. For example, they enable you to relate to others, express yourself and resolve conflicts. However, we need to learn to recognize them and to live well with them.

Did you know that all kinds of things happen in your body when you experience emotions? These sensations are different for each person, but you can have fun trying to observe what you feel in your own body. For example, when you're sad, tears may run down your cheeks. When you're angry, maybe you clench your fists, or furrow your brow.

Strategies for calming down

Try to remember that you have the right to experience all these emotions and that they all have their place. They will sometimes be stronger or more unpleasant. When this happens, take a moment to take a few breaths and observe the sensations in your body. You can also learn your own ways of making yourself feel better when you're experiencing difficult emotions, such as drawing, talking to someone, playing sports, or listening to soft music, for example.

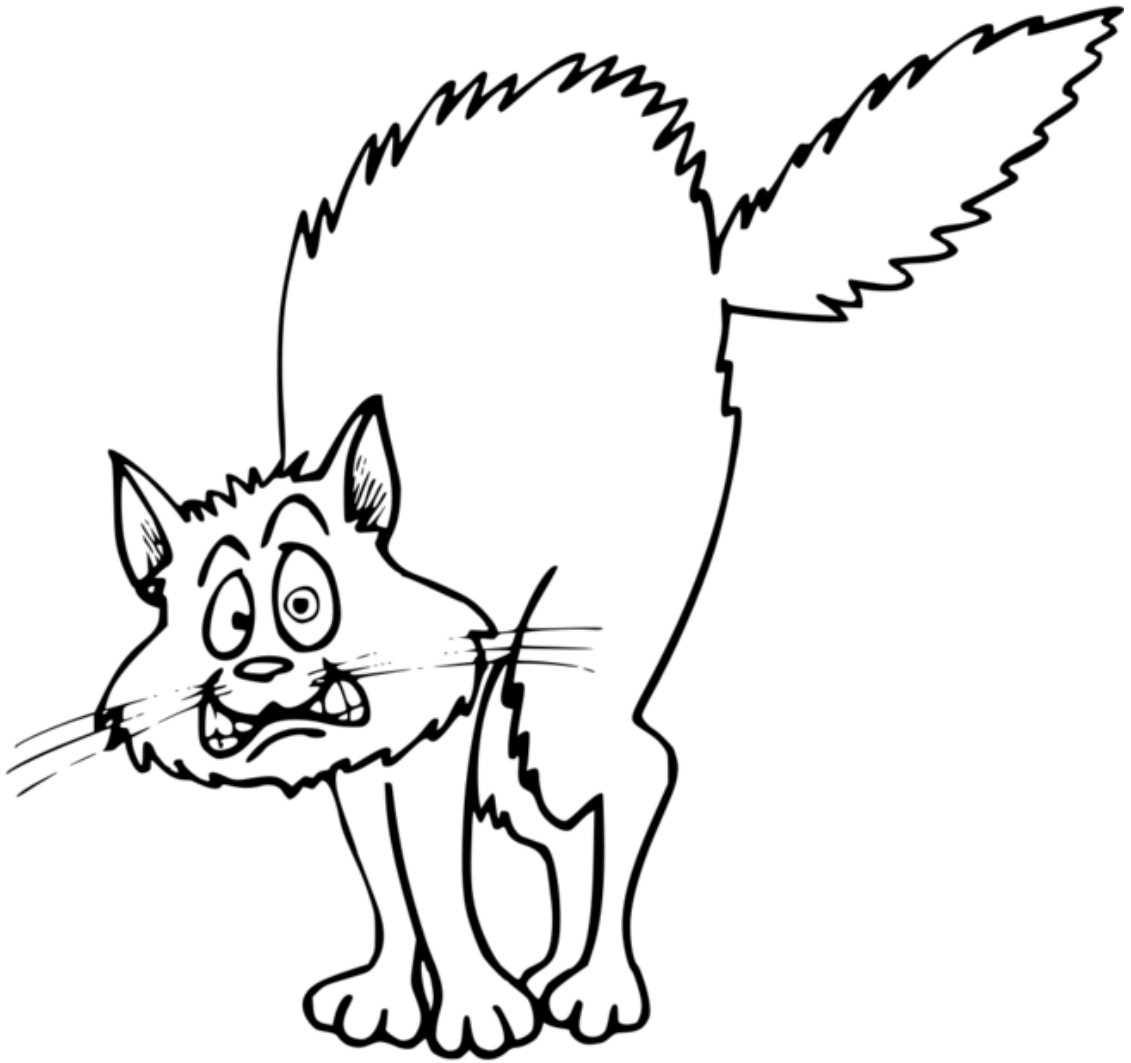
(Naître et grandir, 2015; Zakrzewski & Marsh, 2015)

TEACHING AID TO PRINT
Cats

Quiet cat



Stressed cat



HANDOUT TO PRINT
Emotion Cards in colour

ANGER



JOY



SADNESS



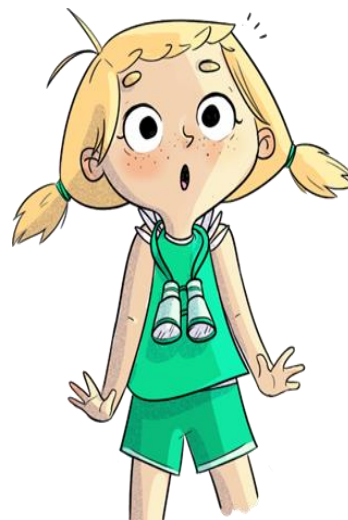
FEAR



DISGUST



SURPRISE



HANDOUT TO PRINT
Emotion Cards in black and white

ANGER



JOY



SADNESS



FEAR



DISGUST



SURPRISE

