

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Learning to cultivate non-judgment

Target competency	Manage one’s emotions and stress effectively Use prosocial behaviours
Cross-curricular competency (QEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct their identity
General objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize certain emotions and sensations that come with judging others • Use meditation to calm down and cultivate non-judgment toward others



REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS WORKSHOP

Remember, in the last workshop, we talked about pleasant and unpleasant emotions and their impact on your behaviour? Do you remember the challenge I gave you? Tell me how you did it.

* The challenge was to pay attention to their emotions and try to identify them, with the help of their parents if necessary.

THE ADVENTURES OF LEO AND CHARLIE

Leo finally summoned up the courage to cross the suspension bridge. All the students are now on the other side of this long, narrow bridge across the Campers’ River.

Miss Nathalie explains: “Since the trails are wider on this side of the bridge, you can ride two by two. I’ll count to three for you to find a partner. 1-2-3.”

As soon as the signal is given to team up, Charlie turns toward a student other than Leo. In her head, she thinks: “I really like Leo; after all, he’s my best friend! I’ll be able to spend the rest of the day with him, and I’d love to talk to other people in my group to get to know them better. Anyway, I think Leo will understand and won’t hold it against me.”

As for Leo, he’s disappointed, because he expected Charlie to choose him as usual. He has the impression that Charlie thinks he wouldn’t be a good teammate for this ride. Leo is displeased, so he gathers some other friends around him and whispers: “Charlie is really a mean girl. Don’t try to be her friend. She only thinks about herself!”

Charlie hears the other students whispering behind her back and learns that Leo is saying bad things about her. Him, her best friend! She feels really sad because she feels like her whole group is misjudging her now.

DID YOU KNOW?

You can help your students cultivate non-judgment, acceptance and curiosity through the practice of mindfulness.

Judgment of others can create an atmosphere of hostility. Some researchers have observed that regular practice of mindfulness can reduce preconceived ideas and judgment.

Mindfulness is about paying attention to what's going on inside you, such as sensations, emotions and thoughts, with curiosity and acceptance.

How does it work?

- 1- Mindfulness helps to see the whole person, and to place actions in their context rather than judging them as a permanent character trait.
- 2- It also enables us to take a step back from a situation rather than reacting quickly, and to approach new situations with a positive outlook.
- 3- It helps us see everyone as equals (though different).

As a bonus, this culture of non-judgment also has repercussions for the person practicing it, enabling them to be kind to themselves and detach themselves from the judgment of others.

(Morin and Berrigan, 2019; Suttie, 2017)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask the students if they've ever felt like Leo or Charlie. Prompt a discussion with the following questions:
 - What emotions do you feel when your friends do things you don't like?
 - Do you ever feel that others are judging you? How would you react?
 - Have you ever had the same reaction as Leo and said words that went beyond your thoughts about a friend?
 - Do you ever judge others without knowing them? Why?
 - Do you have any tricks to help you in those moments when you feel judged and it makes you experience unpleasant emotions?
2. Explain to the students that when they experience an unpleasant emotion, feel judged, or are judging others, they can use various ways to calm down before saying words that go beyond their thoughts. Ask them if they've ever tried a mindfulness activity or meditated, and how it made them feel. Tell the students that you're inviting them to try out two activities today.
3. Explain to students that mindfulness allows them to pay attention to what's going on inside them and around them. Have them try out a mindfulness activity by reading the one on the *Mindful Bridge Crossing* supplementary sheet, below. To make the mindfulness activity more active, invite students to stand up and walk around their desks to the rhythm of the meditation.
4. Explain to the students that when they experience an unpleasant emotion, feel judged or judge others, they can also use the *Kindness Meditation* you'll be trying with them to soothe themselves and cultivate a non-judgemental attitude.
5. You can explain to them that, sometimes, the word meditation can seem intimidating and serious, but that when we practice it, we do it for ourselves, to give ourselves a little break and learn to better understand how we feel. Emphasize non-judgment and invite the students to let everyone do it in their own way. Suggest that the students settle into a comfortable position in an undisturbed part of the classroom. Allow them to create their own little meditation corner away from their desk space, wrap themselves in a blanket if possible, and encourage them to get away from others to experience the activity for themselves. Students can lie down, sit or even stand if they're more comfortable that way. Invite them to close their eyes. Explain that they may be embarrassed to do so, and that's normal. If they prefer to keep them open, they can do so. Along the way, if they change their minds, that's fine too.
6. To guide the meditation, you can use the *Kindness Meditation* supplementary sheet below or use the following audio: https://sante-mentale-jeunesse.usherbrooke.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/HPP1_3.2_kindness-ix.mp3
7. End the activity with a discussion prompted by the following questions:
 - How do you feel after the *Mindful Bridge Crossing*?
 - How do you feel after the *Kindness Meditation*?
 - Did you learn anything about judging others during this meditation?
8. Give the students copies of the *Meditation* handout.



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CHALLENGE

Suggest the following challenge:

- Between now and the next OFF-TRAIL workshop, try to pause before passing judgment on someone, and ask yourself questions to better understand the other person.

ENABLING REINVESTMENT

Students may experience a situation that tends to bring out judgment of others. Encourage them to identify this emotion. You can also have your students try out other meditations to help them regain a state of calm when they arrive at school or after recess, for example. You can use previously recorded meditations such as those found on this site: <https://www.shambhala.com/sittingstilllikeafrog/?srsltid=AfmBOooBt8Z3JEHswU884Mz3m8koK6I1or69ZftAoF-koUrwGfQEck4W>

READING SUGGESTIONS

- Deal, L. (2022). *The Ugly Place*. Inhabit Media.
- Jarry, M.-H. (2021). *Nothing At All*. Simply Read Books.
- Pintadera, F. (2023). *Why Are We Afraid?* Kids Can Press.



SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

The Mindful Bridge Crossing

Imagine yourself standing in front of a suspension bridge. It's high and sways gently. Just like Leo, you have to cross it. Start by standing with your feet slightly apart and your arms at your sides. You can close your eyes if it helps you concentrate.

Take a deep breath in through your nose and breathe out through your nose.

Open your eyes and start moving slowly across the bridge. Put one foot in front of the other and pay attention to how your feet feel when they touch the ground, and how your muscles contract to lift your leg. The bridge moves gently, which is normal. Watch your posture and gestures. Are your arms moving with your body? Is your head straight? Don't worry, there's no right way to walk. Keep moving.

Pay attention to the different sounds around you. Can you hear the sound of the river under the bridge? Listen to the footsteps of other students who are also crossing.

Take one last deep breath, you're across!

Take one last moment to congratulate yourself on having the courage to cross the big suspension bridge.



SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

The Kindness Meditation

The meditation you are about to practice is called the kindness meditation. Kindness is the openness, cheerfulness and love we show to others, not the love we imagine in romantic movies. Loving-kindness. It's a love that allows you to accept people as they are, without judging them, by giving them the best of yourself. It's this love for others and for yourself that also allows you not to worry and to forgive when you feel judged.

I invite you to think that everyone is a bit like you, deep down. Everyone looks alike in some ways, wants the same things and sometimes worries about the same things. You can try to keep this in mind when you're with others and especially when you feel judged.

Make yourself comfortable. Remember that you can move gently to reposition yourself if you feel the need, along the way. I invite you to start by observing your breathing. Turn your attention to your inhaling. Feel the movement of the air entering your body and swelling your belly. Then, as you exhale, observe as the air reverses direction and exits through your nose or mouth. Don't try to change your breathing. It's perfect as it is right now. It doesn't need you to give it qualities or faults. Simply give it your attention by becoming aware of your sensations as you inhale and exhale.

Now, with your eyes closed, think of someone who loves you very much. Imagine that this person is at your side, giving you a big hug. They wish you safety, health and happiness. Take the time to feel all the love, all the positive wishes that come from the person you imagine at your side.

Take a deep breath and exhale through your nose.

Now that you've spent a moment receiving kindness, I invite you to change roles and pass on this loving-kindness in turn. Think of someone in the class you know less about or have less of a connection with. Turn all your attention toward them and start sending them a big wave of love and kindness. You and this person are similar, even if you don't know each other very well. Like you, they too want to be well, be happy, be healthy and safe. Take a moment to silently send them your kindness and good thoughts. For example, you can wish them a life filled with love, good health and well-being.

Take a deep breath in and relax your body completely as you exhale. You can repeat a few more deep breaths at your own pace. For a moment, try to observe how you feel in your body and what's going on in your head. And when you want to, gently open your eyes. Look around you to return quietly to the rest of the class and stretch, if you feel like it, to return to a more active position.

HANDOUT TO PRINT

Meditation

When you experience an unpleasant emotion, or feel that others are judging you or others, remember that you can use meditation to soothe yourself and cultivate a non-judgmental attitude.



You can listen to the kindness meditation again by following this link:



https://sante-mentale-jeunesse.usherbrooke.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/HPp1_3.2_kindness-ix.mp3

You can also find other meditations using the following link:

<https://www.shambhala.com/sittingstilllikeafrog/?srsId=AfmBOooBt8Z3JEHSwU884MZ3m8koK6I1or69ZFtAoF-koUrwGfQEck4W>



You can ask your parent or parents to do it with you.