

Target competency	Manage one’s emotions and stress effectively
Cross-curricular competency (QEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct their identity
General objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use various strategies to calm oneself



REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS WORKSHOP

Remember, in the last workshop, we talked about judgment and meditation to help us be non-judgemental. Do you remember the challenge I gave you? Tell me how you did it.

* The challenge was to pause and ask questions to understand the other person, rather than make snap judgments.

THE ADVENTURES OF LEO AND CHARLIE

On the winding trails around Camp OFF-TRAIL, the adventurous cyclists get off their mountain bikes to take a lunch break. They sit down on tree trunks and rocks they can find, and meet up in small groups to recharge their batteries. The woods are thick around them. Charlie, Leo and a few friends are seated a little way off the trail. They’re enjoying their conversation.

“There are lots of big animals that hide in the forest!” says Leo.

Nicolas adds, “Yes, there are even some that eat other animals and maybe even humans!”

“My mother has seen a bear before. It might even have been a grizzly bear!” exclaims Thomas.

Leo then tells an unusual story: “One time, my parents’ friend’s uncle came face to face with a coyote in the middle of the forest while he was hiking. Apparently the coyote, which was enoormous and looked like a wolf that hadn’t eaten in months, followed him silently without him knowing it, for several kilometres, waiting for the right moment to take him by surprise and gobble him up! But their friend’s uncle escaped and managed to hide in a cave for three days, until he could get out alive!”

Suddenly Charlie is very uncomfortable, and getting more and more nervous. She’s imagining that all sorts of animals might follow her, or even sneak up behind her, while she’s eating. At this moment, all her senses are on high alert. All the noises around her sound like they could be made by a horse with the head of a bear, or even worse... a rhinoceros with the claws of a lion! Suddenly, it’s as if her feet are frozen in concrete. She doesn’t know whether she wants to run to her bike or hide somewhere.

In her head, Charlie says to herself: “They’re probably right! The big animals are hiding and just waiting for me to pass by so they can munch on me!”

DID YOU KNOW?

There are countless strategies to help students manage stress. Sometimes, without even realizing it, students already know several of them. You can play your part by integrating some of them into the daily routine of your classroom.

Despite this wide variety of strategies, it's important to remember that every student reacts in their own way, and that there is no universal solution to stress and anxiety. That's why it's useful and enjoyable for students to try out several of them, so they can build up their toolbox and find the ones that suit them best.

What's more, it's important to remember that investing the time, openness and practice are the keys to the integration and effectiveness of the various strategies. You can help them achieve this by providing them regular times to rehearse the method of their choice, whether at a time of stress or even at a time when everything is going well. This way, when students find themselves destabilized by a stressful situation, they'll have clear reference points to put their strategies into practice and overcome the situation more optimally.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Start the activity by asking students what ways Charlie could have used to calm herself, to relieve her stress.
2. Next, explain to the students that there are several ways of calming down when we feel stressed, and that we need to try out different ways to find the ones that really help us.
3. You can use the strategies suggested on the supplementary sheet below or other strategies of your choice. Explain to the students that they will now have an opportunity to experiment with three very different calming strategies.
4. After each of the strategies has been tried, ask the following questions:
 - How do you feel after trying this method?
 - Is this the right way for you? Why?
 - In what situation could you use this method again?
5. Explain to the students that there's no perfect way to calm yourself down when you're under stress. So, we need to try out several to find out which ones work well for us and know how to use them at the right moment, depending on the situation. What's more, for a method to work well, it needs to be practiced often, at times when you're under stress and at times when you're feeling good.



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9-14



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CHALLENGE

Suggest the following challenge:

- Between now and the next OFF-TRAIL workshop, use at least one of the means presented in today's workshop to calm yourself in your everyday life.



ENABLING REINVESTMENT

To reinvest what you've learned, you can integrate certain stress management strategies into your daily routine. For example, you can practice square breathing, or any other breathing technique, when you feel that the group or a student could benefit from it at an appropriate moment, such as before an exam or an oral, when a student is experiencing a stressful situation, or when the group is overexcited. You can use the strategies suggested at the following address (currently available in French only) to try out new ones with your students: <https://sante-mentale-jeunesse.usherbrooke.ca/je-suis-un-jeune/boite-a-outils-2/strategies-pour-appivoiser-mon-stress/> As with all learning, practice makes perfect!

READING SUGGESTIONS

- Potter, M. (2023). *How Are You Feeling Now?: A Let's Talk picture book to help young children understand their emotions*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Robberecht, T. (2004). *Angry Dragon*. Clarion Books.
- Romain, T., & Verdick, E. (2018). *Stress Can Really Get on Your Nerves*. Free Spirit Publishing.



SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

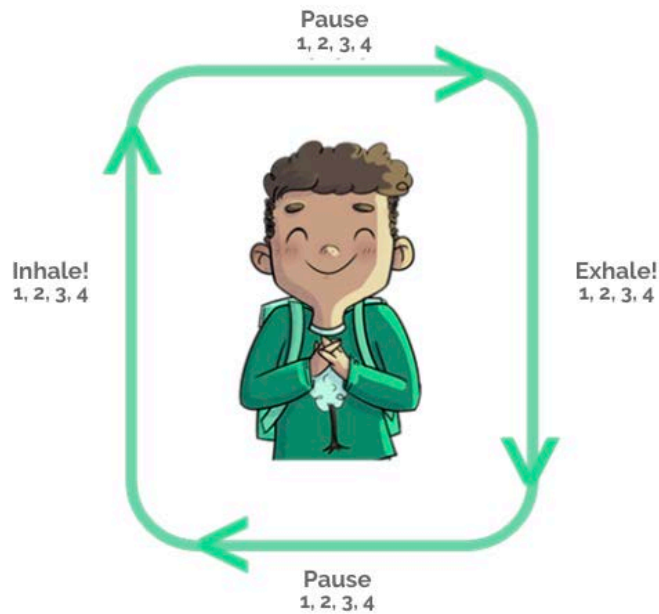
Ways to calm down

Breathing exercise: Square breathing

Explain to the students that breathing is automatic and happens all the time, without you having to think about it. On the other hand, when we experience stress or strong emotions, our breathing speeds up and our heart tends to beat faster. So, by controlling the rhythm of your breathing, you can bring your heart back to a normal rhythm. Then you'll feel calmer. Explain that there are many different breathing techniques, but today you'll be experimenting with *Square Breathing*. You can give each student the *Square Breathing* handout so they can follow along with their finger. You can count out loud to help students keep up.



9-10



Visualization exercise: The tree house

Visualization is an exercise in relaxation and concentration that consists of bringing to mind images that feel good. Visualization can help you detach yourself from uncomfortable sensations or emotions, to find yourself in a pleasant imaginary place and fill yourself with positive emotions (Éducatou, n.d.). You can invite students to assume a comfortable position, put away any objects that might distract them, and close their eyes if they wish to be guided by the words.

Here is a link to listen to the visualization: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iS6hpVT1GI>



11-12

The dance

Explain to the students that dancing is a type of physical exercise that helps your body release endorphins, a hormone that has a calming effect on our bodies (Leroux, 2016). Dance helps us to manage stress, and allows us to use our creativity. Suggest that the students clear a space in the classroom so that they can experience a dance together based on a video. You can choose a dance video that suits the moment.

Here is a suggested link to a dance video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3XyYOLfTU4>



13-14

HANDOUT TO PRINT

Square breathing

