

Target competency	Manage one's emotions and stress effectively
Cross-curricular competencies (QEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Exercise critical judgmentUse creative thinking
General objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Distinguish between emotions, sensations and thoughts



INTRODUCING THE CHARACTERS AND THE PROGRAM

If this is the first year your students are participating in the program, introduce the characters and the program using the materials provided for this purpose on the [OFF-TRAIL website](#), under Workshops and tools for students/Basic workshops/Introduction to the program and the characters.

THE ADVENTURES OF LEO AND CHARLIE

Charlie and Leo are happy to be back at Camp OFF-TRAIL. They're excited to get off the bus.

As he opens the bus door, Mr. Marcel exclaims: "OK, my young campers! Welcome back to Camp OFF-TRAIL! Grab your bags and calmly get off the bus, one at a time. And have fun!"

As usual, William, a student who's always excited to be back at Camp OFF-TRAIL, doesn't listen to Mr. Marcel's instructions. He climbs over Leo, accidentally hitting him on the head with his bag. Then he steps on Charlie's foot. William is in such a hurry to get off the bus that he doesn't even notice he's just hurt two of his fellow passengers...

Leo gets angry. He balls up his fists, wrinkles his forehead, and even clenches his teeth.

Charlie sees that Leo's face get red. She can tell he's not in a good mood, so she asks him: "Are you okay, Leo?"

Leo says to Charlie: "I just can't take William any more. He never pays attention to others. It's annoying how he's always hurrying to be first. He hit me with his bag on purpose. Right now, my stomach is in knots, and I feel like hitting something."

Charlie share an idea with Leo: "In my class last week, Miss Catherine explained that your feelings are called emotions. The anger you felt is an emotion. The knot in your stomach, your clenched fists and teeth are physical sensations caused by your anger. And when you say William did it on purpose, those are your thoughts. Take a deep breath and relax, let's unpack our bags. Then maybe you can go talk to William calmly. What do you think?"

Leo replies: "Okay... but I don't really feel like it. I don't know what to say. I'm embarrassed to talk to him about it and I feel stressed out."

Financial contribution from



Public Health Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé publique du Canada

Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Montérégie-Centre

Québec



Université de Sherbrooke



Centre RBC d'expertise universitaire en santé mentale

DID YOU KNOW?

When faced with a stressful situation, our body sends us all kinds of alarm signals through our thoughts, physical sensations and emotions.

Here are some examples of warning signals that can occur in stressful situations:

Thoughts:

I can't do it;
I'm no good;
It's impossible;
Etc.

Emotions:

I'm scared;
I feel nervous, exasperated, irritable;
I feel lonely;
Etc.

Physical sensations:

My hands are clammy;
My stomach hurts;
I'm sweaty;
My heart's pounding;
Etc.

The more students are able to recognize these different signals, the more they will be able to quickly realize that they are in a stressful situation and find strategies to deal with it. Conversely, the less sensitive students are to these cues, the more likely they are to accumulate a great deal of stress.

(Ciarrochi et al., 2014)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Explain to the students that to help Leo find the words to talk to William about what he's been through, you've decided to draw names at random. The people whose names are picked will have to go to the gym and give an improvised presentation of two minutes each in front of several classes at the school about ways to express their thoughts and emotions.
2. Now you just pretend to pick names and prolong the suspense. Before naming names, you invite students to close their eyes for 30 seconds and concentrate on how they feel. Then, inform them that there won't actually be a presentation.
3. Depending on your preference, you can either project the image of Charlie on slide 9 of the slide show, or print out a large version of the *Drawing of Charlie* teaching aid and display it somewhere accessible in the classroom.
4. Tell the students that the situation they've just experienced is probably a stressful one. Give a copy of the *Sensations, Emotions, Thoughts* handout and a pack of *Post-it*® notes to each student. Ask them to answer the following questions on their *Post-its*, then stick them in the right place on Charlie's picture. Students can use the handout for ideas.
 - What do you feel in your body (physical sensations)?
 - How do you feel (emotions)?
 - What did you say to yourself in your head (thoughts)?
5. You can read the students' answers out loud and point out that these are their reactions to stress. You can point out that the reactions vary from student to student, and that this is perfectly normal.
6. Print and give out the *Possible physical sensations of stress and anxiety* handout, or use slide 10 of the slide show. To normalize the physical sensations that have been shared, mention to students which physical sensations are often associated with stress and anxiety. Explain that they may also experience other physical sensations.
7. Now invite the students to share voluntarily a stressful situation they've experienced recently. If the students don't have any ideas, you can use a situation from the classroom as a starting point. Ask students to try to identify the physical sensations and emotions they experienced in these situations, and the thoughts that arose. The students can help each other.
8. Explain to the students that by being aware of the sensations, emotions and thoughts that arise when they experience a stressful situation, they can develop a kind of alarm system. This alarm system will quickly warn them that they're feeling stresses, much as Charlie helped Leo do. This will enable them to take steps to calm down before the stress becomes too great.
9. Conclude the story of Leo and Charlie by informing them that Leo, despite his stress, plucked up the courage to go with Charlie and talk to William. After Leo described how he'd felt, William apologized to Leo, saying that he hadn't meant to hit him at all, contrary to what Leo might have thought.

CHALLENGE

Suggest the following challenge:

- Before the next OFF-TRAIL workshop, try to classify the sensations, emotions and thoughts you feel the next time you experience stress, using the drawing of Charlie.

ENABLING REINVESTMENT

When a student experiences a stressful situation in class, you can help them identify the physical sensations and emotions they are experiencing using the *Drawing of Charlie* teaching aid. You can also help them identify the thoughts they're adopting. If these thoughts aren't helpful, you can help the student try to see the situation differently. The drawing of Charlie could also be transposed onto a large poster in the classroom.

You can also print out the poster entitled *Possible physical sensations related to stress and anxiety*, which can be found on the [OFF-TRAIL website](#) in the [Workshops and tools for students](#) section, and help students identify their physical sensations when experiencing stress.



READING SUGGESTIONS

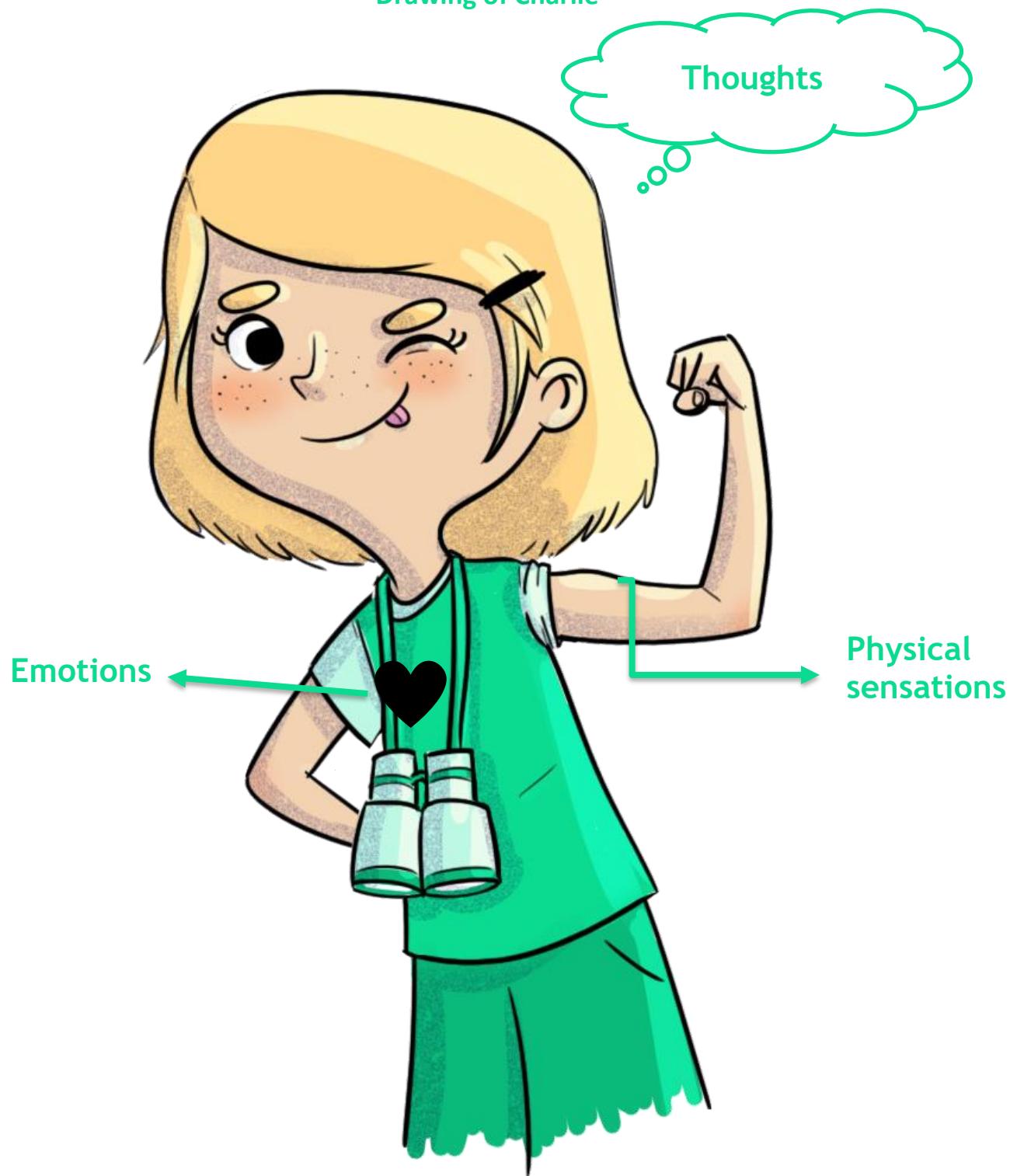
- Potter, M. (2023). *How Are You Feeling Now?: A Let's Talk picture book to help young children understand their emotions*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Robberecht, T. (2004). *Angry Dragon*. Clarion Books.
- Romain, T., & Verdick, E. (2018). *Stress Can Really Get on Your Nerves*. Free Spirit Publishing.



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.

TEACHING AID TO PRINT

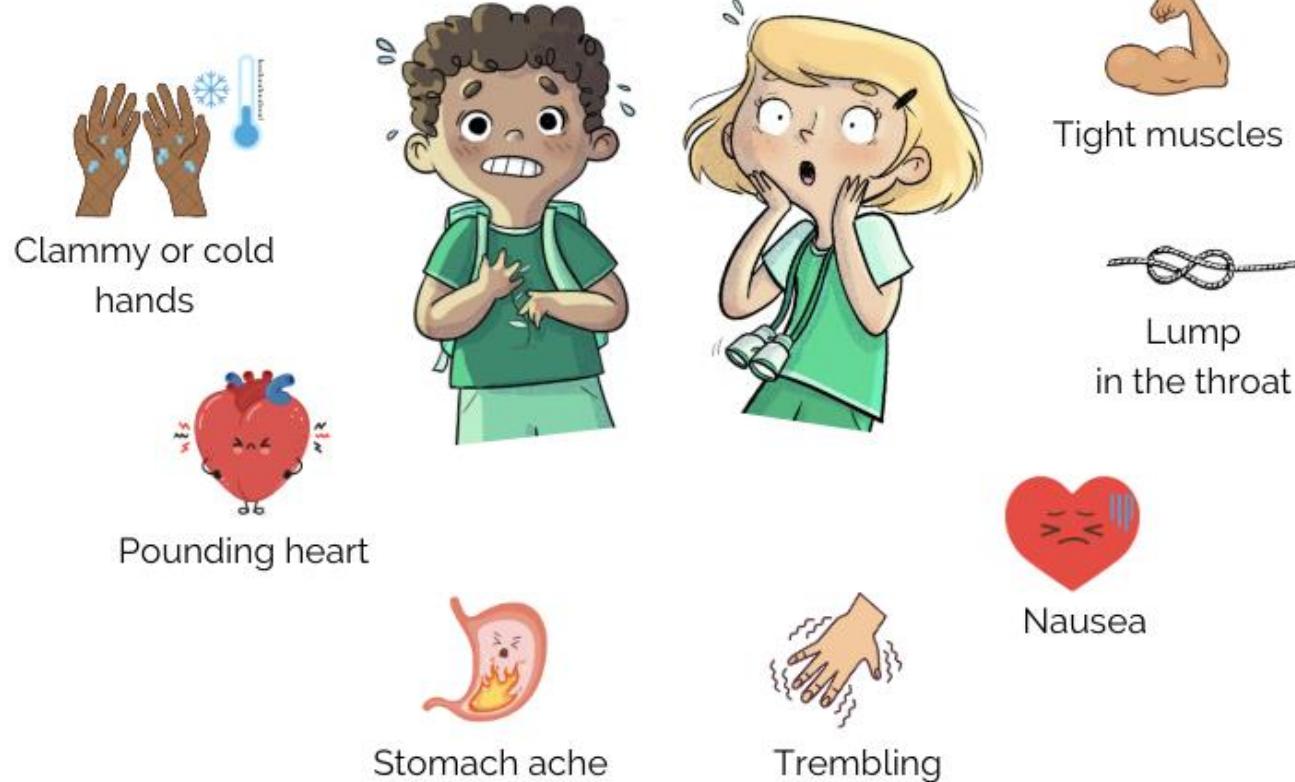
Drawing of Charlie



HANDOUT TO PRINT
Sensations, emotions, thoughts

I'm no good	I don't know how to do it	I feel like the others are going to laugh at me	Upset stomach
I don't know what to say	A lump in the throat	I can't do it	Clammy hands
Sweaty	Pounding heart	I'm afraid	Worried
Clenched jaw	Irritable	Sad	Angry
I never get it right	I'm no good	It's too difficult	Hot
Rapid breathing	Headache	I want to answer	Happy
Restless	Anxious	It sucks	I don't want to do it

HANDOUT TO PRINT
Physical sensations related to stress and anxiety



You may also experience other physical sensations

(Berthiaume, 2017)