

COOLING YOUR JETS

Using strategies to calm yourself down

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



REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS WORKSHOP

In the last workshop, we talked about ways to calm yourself down when you're feeling stressed. Do you remember the challenge I gave you? Tell me how it went.

* The challenge was to pay attention to the sensations, emotions and thoughts experienced during a stressful situation and classify them using the drawing of Charlie.

THE ADVENTURES OF LEO AND CHARLIE

The moon is beautiful tonight. The sky is full of stars. With a branch in one hand, Leo and Charlie are toasting marshmallows over the campfire. After an emotional arrival at camp, there's nothing better than relaxing around a magnificent fire.

A very happy Charlie asks Leo: "Tomorrow we're going rock climbing! Are you looking forward to it?"

Leo, looking sad, mumbles: "Yeah, that'll sure be fun..."

"Fun? Hey, it's gonna be sick! We're going up the Mysterious Giant Rock, we're gonna climb that monster! We're gonna conquer our fears! We're gonna..." gushes Charlie.

Suddenly, Charlie falls silent and looks at Leo... "You're not excited, eh?"

Leo agrees: "No, not really... I'm scared and stressed out..."

"Oh! Even sitting here, in front of the fire, you don't feel calm?" asks Charlie, gently.

Leo nods again: "Nope. How do you relax? I never seem to be able to relax..."

Charlie enthusiastically announces to her friend: "Oh Leo! I'm just the person to help you. Come on, finish your marshmallow and lie on your back. I'm going to show you all my techniques to "zombie-zen-chill-relax!"

"Zombie whaaat?" asks Leo.

Charlie laughs and explains: "Never mind! I'll just show you some ways you can relax. Are you ready?"

DID YOU KNOW?

Relaxation improves concentration and facilitates learning. Since school is an important place for learning and experimentation that requires a great deal of concentration, the use of relaxation techniques can be beneficial for students.

Yoga is one of many activities that can be easily integrated into the classroom, requiring little equipment and space. A yoga sequence can be brief, easily slipping in between two teaching activities.

Yoga allows you to develop a certain interiority, to recognize sensations, to be present to yourself; thus it facilitates creativity, intuition and relaxation, while stimulating awareness of the present moment. Relaxation is not a waste of time. On the contrary, it gives the brain a break to better absorb what it has learned.

It's worth noting that the teacher's participation in an activity such as yoga is particularly beneficial to the students' engagement and also enables them to be better guided in the execution of the postures.

(Giammarinaro & Lamure, 2015)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Review Leo and Charlie's situation, and ask the students what ways they use to calm down in their daily lives.

2. You have two options for the next step:

Option 1:

Ask a few students who have named ways of calming themselves to share them with the class.

Option 2:

Use the strategies suggested in the Supplement section below to get students to try out stress management strategies.

3. After trying each strategy, ask the following questions:

- Did you like this strategy?
- How do you feel after trying it?
- In what situation could you use this strategy again?

4. Explain to students that there's no magic formula that works for everyone. Everyone needs to find a strategy that works for them. What's more, to work well, they need to practice this strategy regularly, both when they're feeling stressed and when they're doing well. The more they practice it when they're feeling good, the easier it will be to use when they're stressed.

5. Give the students the *Ways to Calm Yourself Down* handout.



CHALLENGE

Suggest the following challenge:

- Before the next OFF-TRAIL workshop, use at least one of the strategies presented in today's workshop and in the handout to calm yourself down in your everyday life.



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ENABLING REINVESTMENT

To help the students explore and practice different stress-relief strategies, you could set a time each day or each week to practice one in class (for example, after lunch or recess). You can consult the following site for ideas on stress management strategies: <https://health.choc.org/7-stress-relief-techniques-for-kids/>

After trying out several strategies in class, you could invite them to write two winning strategies on *Popsicle*® sticks and hand them in. At appropriate moments, you could suggest that students choose a technique by picking one of the sticks and practice it together.

READING SUGGESTIONS

- Grant, J. (2023). *Finding Calm in Nature: A Guide for Mindful Kids*. Augsburg Fortress Publishers.
- Harrison, I. (2023). *The Calm Workbook: A Kid's Activity Book for Relaxation and Mindfulness*. Sky Pony.
- Macauley, D. (2019). *I Am A Feeling Body: Body Awareness And Mindfulness For Children*. Author Solutions Inc.
- Williams, R. (2020). *Slow Down: 50 Mindful Moments In Nature*. Magic Cat.



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SUPPLEMENT

Strategies for calming down

Physical exercise:

Explain to the students that it's well known that physical exercise can have a calming effect and helps us relieve stress. When we exercise, our bodies secrete endorphins, the so-called “happy hormone”! (Leroux, 2016).



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Spread the students out in a large enough space, free of obstacles, so that they can make large movements without bumping into others (if you have opportunity to go outside, that's even better).

Perform each movement for about 15 seconds:

- Gentle yes and no motions with the head;
- Shoulder rotations, forward and backward;
- Walking on the spot, swinging your arms;
- Walking on the spot with your arms in the air;
- Walking on the spot, raising your knees high;
- Jumping on the spot with feet together;
- Jumping on the spot, from one side to the other;
- Jogging on the spot;
- Very quick small steps on the spot;
- Walking on the spot, gradually slowing down and ending up sitting on the ground.



Yoga:

Ask the students if they've ever done yoga. Take a moment to explain (or remind them) that yoga is not a competition, and that it's okay if one person's posture is different from another. Also explain that, during the poses, students are invited to concentrate on their breathing and perhaps even close their eyes to help them calm down. You can use soft music to create a relaxing atmosphere during the activity. If you're used to doing yoga, feel free to have students try the poses of your choice. Alternatively, you can use the following sequence of poses by reading the instructions or using the following audio:

https://sante-mentale-jeunesse.usherbrooke.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/HPp1_4.2_yoga-ix.mp3

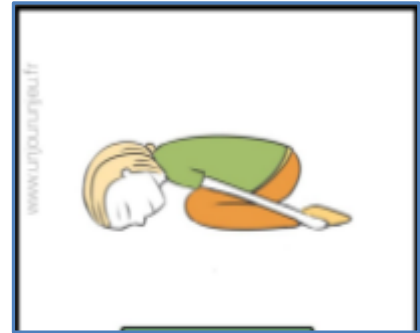


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These postures and exercises can all be performed on or near their chair, to save space.

- **THE WELCOME (CENTERING):**

- **Child's pose** (sitting): ask students to rest their heads on their desks and close their eyes. Both feet are on the ground. Your arms can be at your side or stretched out on the desk. Invite the students to take a few breaths to begin with, and observe how their bodies move as they breathe. Ask the students to focus on a positive phrase or word that they can repeat in their heads three times. For example, the phrase could simply be: *I am myself, I am courageous* or any other strong phrase that makes the student feel good.

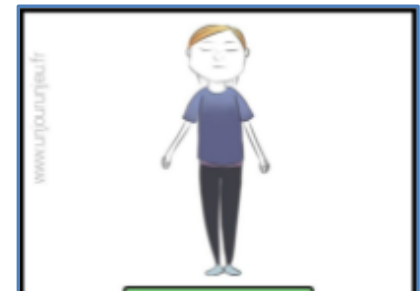


- **Bee breathing:** the students can lean against their desks and keep their eyes closed. Ask the students to plug their ears, breathe in and, when breathing out, keep their lips closed and make the sound “mmmmmm” (you'll hear the sound of a beehive). This breathing exercise helps you relax, concentrate and reduce external distractions.

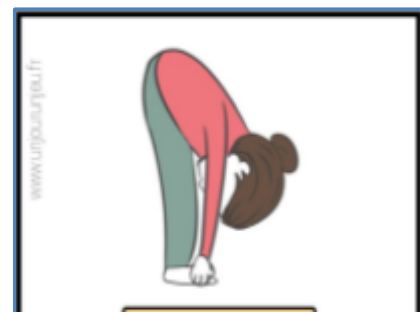


- **POSES:**

- **The mountain:** the students stand behind their chairs, feet slightly apart or glued together. Invite them to imagine their feet as rooted to the ground, to feel strong and still, like a mountain. They can keep their eyes open or closed. Hold this pose for three breaths.



- **The standing forward bend** (pincer): invite students to lean forward, so that their bellies rest on their thighs. They can bend their knees if necessary. The feet are always in the initial position. Now, they can close their eyes and feel their breathing and the sensations of their belly inflating against their legs. They can grab their elbows with the opposite hands or wrap their hands around their legs, as if hugging themselves upside down. Otherwise, the hands can be placed on the floor. Hold this pose for a few breaths.



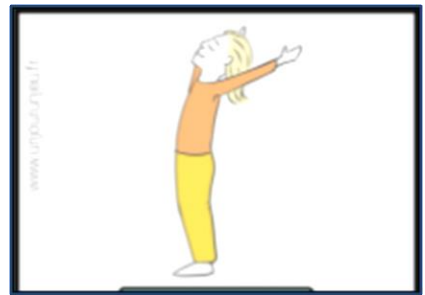
- **The warrior:** ask the students to turn perpendicular to their desks (their hip could be resting against the chair). Invite them to take a big step back with their left leg. The left heel remains off the ground. They can now slightly bend the right knee forward and find themselves in a kind of high lunge. Guide them to take a deep breath, while raising their arms to the sky. Their palms can be brought together above the head. Shoulders should stay away from the ears. Students can stare at a point far ahead and breathe fully, while feeling brave and strong like a warrior. Guide them to bring the left foot back beside the right foot. Repeat the same instructions for the other leg.



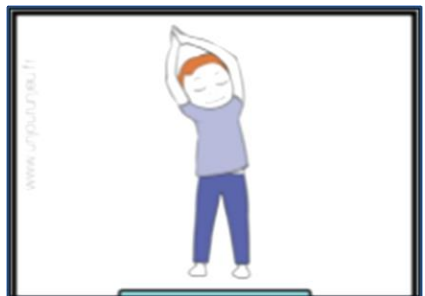
- **The tree:** ask the students to return to their desks and take a breath in the mountain pose (standing, with feet firmly planted on the ground). Invite them to lift their right foot and place it either on the side of the left ankle, on the left calf or on the inside of the left thigh (the greater the height, the more balance is required; never place the foot on the knee joint). Arms can be raised to the sky or hands can join over the heart. **Caution!** This is a balancing act. It requires concentration. Those for whom balance is more difficult can support themselves by placing their hands on the chair. Ask them to place their foot back on the ground and repeat the process on the other side.



- **The arrow:** with both feet firmly on the ground, allow your students to stretch their entire body toward the sky, bringing their arms as high as possible toward the ceiling. The heels can even lift off the ground and the hands can join above the head. Exhale and repeat a few times.



- **The ½ moon:** holding the arrow pose, hands clasped and pointing toward the ceiling, ask your students to point their hands toward the wall to their left, while remaining tall and long. They are creating a ½ moon shape with their left side. Ask them to return gently to the centre while breathing in. Then, on their next exhalation, suggest they repeat the movement toward the wall on their right to create the ½ moon on their right side. Inhale and return to the centre with them. You can repeat the movement 2 or 3 times on each side and then relax.



- **THE CONCLUSION:**

- **The child's pose** (sitting): invite students to sit again and rest their heads on their desks, with their arms stretched out in front or alongside their bodies. You can conclude the session by naming body parts and inviting students to release them. Take the time here to let the students settle and take several breaths. Leave a moment of silence at the end of the practice for the students to enjoy.



Cardiac coherence:

Ask the students if they've ever felt their hearts racing, beating faster and harder, when they're overwhelmed by a strong emotion? Explain that our emotions do indeed have an impact on our heartbeat, but the reverse is also true. We can calm our emotions by controlling the rhythm of our heart. Explain that this can be achieved simply by breathing. In fact, studies show that the speed of our breathing is directly linked to the speed of our heartbeat (Leroux, 2016). Optimally, five to seven breaths per minute are needed to create a relaxing effect. Fortunately, we don't need to count, as there are several apps (e.g., Respire) and YouTube videos to help us with this exercise. You can try out a cardiac coherence exercise with this video:

<https://youtu.be/XqwCr1qISd4>



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HANDOUT TO PRINT
Ways to calm yourself down



Yoga



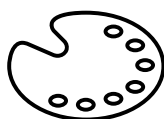
Physical activity



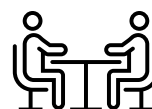
Meditation



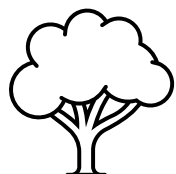
Dance



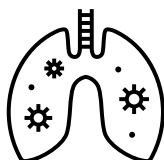
Drawing



**Talking
about it**



Nature



Breathing

Scan me



To learn more about ways you can calm yourself down (website currently available in French only):