

## HANDOUT TO PRINT

### Ways to calm yourself down



Yoga



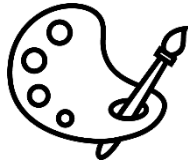
Physical activity



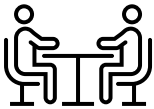
Meditation



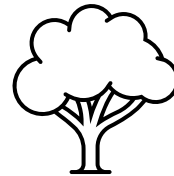
Dancing



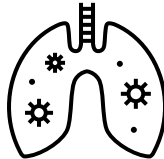
Drawing



Sharing



Nature



Breathing

**Others:**



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

## HANDOUT TO PRINT

### Stress or anxiety?

#### Stress

Did you know that stress is a normal reaction and that it's even useful to you? If you go for a walk in the forest and meet a bear, I hope you'll experience a little stress, because that'll be telling you not to go near the bear to pet it.

You can think of stress as the energy your body releases to give you the strength and courage to overcome difficult situations. For example, when you have to give an oral presentation in front of the whole class, your hands may be sweaty, your heart may be beating faster and you may be afraid of making a mistake. If this happens to you, it's normal. If it doesn't happen to you, that's okay too. Just try to understand these sensations as something positive. Stop for a moment and remember that it's your body trying to tell you that you're strong and brave, that you can do it.

Keep in mind, too, that it's constant stress or too much stress that can affect you negatively. Stress can become uncomfortable or overwhelming when it occurs on a regular, daily basis (for example, if your parents fight all the time), when you experience several stresses at the same time (for example, if you have an exam, you've been fighting with your friend and your parents tell you that you're moving) or when it's too intense (for example, if you're being bullied or assaulted). That's when it's important to use strategies to learn how to live with it and manage it better.

#### Anxiety

Everyone experiences anxiety from time to time. That's normal. But what is it, really? Anxiety is like stress that has no specific source, is exaggerated, or is a figment of your imagination. Anxiety is when you worry about something that hasn't happened and you imagine the worst is going to happen. It's a kind of "fear of being afraid." It's a bit like looking at a little kitten and seeing it as that big, dangerous bear we were talking about earlier, you know?

It's normal to feel a little anxious before an exam or an important project. What becomes problematic is imagining that your life is completely ruined because you got a bad mark on that exam. Anxiety becomes worrying when it takes up a lot of space, persists over time, prevents you from doing activities, when you have no idea what's really stressing you, or when it leads to suffering. If this happens, don't hesitate to talk about it with someone you trust, and remember to use all the tools you've acquired over the years to make you feel good.

(Lupien, 2019; McGonigal, 2013; Tel-jeunes, 2020; Yerkes and Dodson, 1908)

## Scenarios

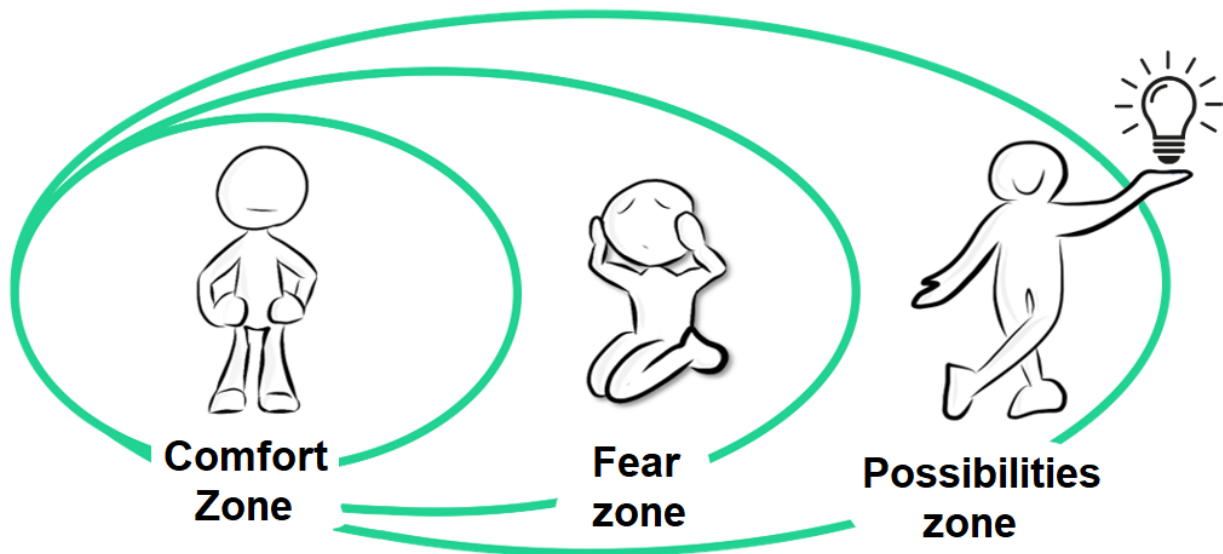
1	Your teacher informs you that you'll have to make an oral presentation in two weeks' time on a topic of your choice. You don't really like talking in front of the class because you're a very shy person. You know you'll be thinking about this presentation non-stop until it happens. You can already see yourself stammering and having a memory lapse. You're sure you'll be laughed at...
2	You felt fine when you got up. It was a beautiful sunny day and you couldn't wait to get to school. But then your teacher suddenly announces that you'll be doing a surprise math test this morning. You feel your heart start to beat very fast. You have a lot of difficulty in this subject and you're afraid of failing.
3	You and your parents are currently at the open house of the high school you're supposed to attend next year. You wander off to explore some of the kiosks. Suddenly, you realize you can't see your parents anymore. No matter how hard you look, you can't find them. Your heart starts pounding and your hands get all sweaty.
4	The open house went pretty well, after all! But you know that next year, you'll have to go to this school every day, with those big sec. 5's. You're worried about what's going to happen. You're afraid you'll get lost in the school, that you won't be able to make new friends and that you'll end up alone. Your thoughts are all over the place. The more you think about it, the worse you feel inside.
5	You're in your room doing your homework. You can hear your parents talking in the kitchen. The tone rises. They seem to be arguing. You hear the front door slam. You wonder what's going on and you can't concentrate on your homework.
6	Recently, you had a big conflict with your best friend. You've made up, but you're still worried about losing them. You're afraid you'll be seeing more of this kind of conflict in the future. To prevent this from happening again, you avoid confronting them and do whatever they want.

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### Ways to reduce and cope with anxiety

- Adopt helpful lifestyle habits (adequate sleep, physical activity, balanced diet, moments of pleasure and relaxation, etc.);
- Recognize your physical sensations and your first signs of anxiety;
- Change your non-helpful thoughts into helpful ones; learn to see things differently;
- Use strategies to deal with your emotions;
- Face up to anxiety-provoking situations instead of avoiding them, and accept going out of your comfort zone;
- Use concrete ways to calm yourself when faced with a stressful or anxiety-provoking situation:
  - Do a physical activity;
  - Talk to someone about your stress;
  - Laugh with your friends;
  - Try drawing, painting, sculpting or creating;
  - Maintain quality social relationships;
  - Perform a mindfulness or relaxation exercise.

Centre RBC d'expertise universitaire en santé mentale and partners (2019)



## HANDOUT TO PRINT

### My strengths

What is a strength? A strength is a characteristic that defines you positively and helps you overcome difficulties. It's a great, authentic ability you have, which helps you perform certain activities well, makes you enthusiastic, and facilitates certain elements of your life. Authentic means that this strength is yours, unique, that you express it in your own way and that it represents you naturally.

Here are a few examples of strengths to help you better identify and use yours and develop new ones:

Rigorous	Outgoing	Good in the kitchen	Good at sports
Good at music	Hard-working	Persevering	Creative
Resourceful	Manual	Calm	Good in sciences
Enthusiastic	Receptive	Orderly	Motivated
Respectful	Good memory	Good sense of humour	Cautious
Good cooperation skills	Courageous	Good communication skills	Patient
Curious	Honest	Friendly	Responsible

(Dubreuil, Forest and Courcy, 2012; Commission scolaire des Samares, 2010)

## HANDOUT TO PRINT

### Adapting to change

What happens when you experience a stressful change? Have you ever heard of the ability to adapt (adaptability)? It's the way your body and brain respond to change, using your mental resources. Your what? Your mental resources are tools or skills you possess that can help you cope with change, such as your determination, self-esteem, kindness, stress management techniques<sup>1</sup>. Changes happen all the time, and even if they're small, they can be emotional and stressful. We can't always foresee them, but we can train ourselves to deal with them better... It's a bit like sports, the more you practice, the easier it gets!

Remember that everyone experiences change differently. It's up to you to find out what helps you cope, and what hinders your adaptation. The more tools you accumulate to help you, and the more you experiment with them, the greater your chances of coping well with change. Here are some examples of strategies you can use:

### Coping strategies



Find solutions

Think positive thoughts



Assert yourself



Resolve your conflicts



Structure your schedule



Talk about the difficulties you're facing



Have a quiet place to relax



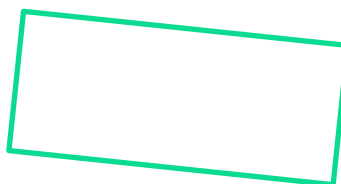
Adopt good lifestyle habits



Do things that give you pleasure



Take a moment to calm down



<sup>1</sup> Greater Good Science Center, 2018