

GRADE 1

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

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Mental and emotional well-being refers to how a person feels, and how they think and act. If s/he feels "good", this translates into positive feelings, positive relationships with other people, decisiveness and an ability to cope with the stresses of every day life. A person who does

not feel "good" has difficulty forming worthwhile relationships, difficulty functioning in every day life. People derive those attitudes towards themselves, in large part, from the attitudes towards them of significant people in their lives.

Poor Mental and Emotional Well-Being

Low Self-Esteem



Significant People

- family
- friends
- peers
- teachers
- elders
- church leaders
- community members
- other people

Attitudes

- anger
- rejection
- distrust
- discouragement
- "put downs"

Behaviours

- failure
- fear
- guilt
- aggression
- withdrawal
- mistrust

Healthy Mental and Emotional Well-Being

High Self-Esteem



Significant People

- family
- friends
- peers
- community members
- teachers
- elders
- church leaders
- other people

Attitudes

- love
- care
- acceptance
- encouragement
- trust

Behaviours

- success
- enthusiasm
- responsibility
- creativity
- co-operation
- ability to cope

The Mental and Emotional Well-Being Unit of the Health program aims to enable students to function effectively in a social context. An increase in self-understanding will lead to an enhancement of self-esteem. Together with the acquisition of decision-making, communication and coping skills, they will lead to an improvement in students' mental and emotional well-being, and in their ability to function effectively socially.

The school can contribute greatly in the development of a healthy mental and emotional well-being, through the attitudes of staff, and the atmosphere in both the classroom and the school. Positive attitudes and a positive atmosphere will enhance students' self-esteem.

For that reason, the creation of a positive classroom atmosphere is essential for teaching this unit. (Refer to "Introduction: Building A Positive Classroom Atmosphere".) Since the unit deals with very personal topics (students are, after all, learning about themselves, and nothing can be more personal than that!), teachers should be aware of the need for

sensitivity and respect. Students should all be given the opportunity to participate in discussions, but should also be given the opportunity to pass, if they feel uncomfortable in sharing information with others. Students, and teachers, will gradually become more accustomed to the teaching methods used in this unit, and will soon begin to feel quite comfortable with the unit. Pilot testing of this unit indicated that students were hesitant for the first two or three lessons, but then really enjoyed learning about themselves!

Because of the personal nature of the unit, teachers must become familiar with their cultural appropriateness. Different cultural groups have different values regarding the self, as opposed to the group. They have different ways of appropriately expressing (or not expressing) feelings. Teachers should adapt the materials as necessary to fit the local situation. Wherever possible, members of the local culture should teach culturally sensitive topics to enhance and reinforce students' understanding of these topics within the appropriate cultural context.