

GRADE 5

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

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Mental and emotional well-being refers to how a person feels, thinks and acts. 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 and has difficulty functioning in every day life. People derive those feelings about themselves, in large part, from the attitudes towards them of significant people in their lives.

Poor Mental and Emotional Well-Being

Healthy 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

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.

As opportunities present themselves in class, school or community, teachers should encourage students to demonstrate the skills and to apply the concepts. In this way, students will continue to develop positive attitudes, and will also see the relevance of what they learn to their everyday lives.

The teacher can work with individual students to help them improve in areas where they are particularly weak. Each student can be helped to set a personal goal, such as “I will try to be friendlier to other students.” The teacher can help each student identify concrete ways to work towards the goal and can, together with the student, monitor progress.

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NAME: _____

be friendlier to other people

help people who need some help

take turns

share my toys, crayons

COMMUNICATION

Communication means to give and receive messages. Communication involves more than just the words people say. The way a person looks, their tone, facial expressions and body posture all give messages. These messages are an exchange of information, ideas or feelings between people. Communication is always two-way - one person giving and the other receiving. The many different forms of communication fall into two categories verbal and non-verbal.

Verbal

- talking
- listening
- songs
- poems
- stories
- music

Non-verbal

- body language
- facial expressions
- posture
- appearance
- painting/crafts
- music
- writing and other symbols

Good communication skills enhance relationships with family and friends and make the individual an effective member of society. Communication is a learned skill.

COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOURS

Tone, attitude, wording and posture help determine whether behaviour is passive, aggressive or assertive. Assertive behaviour helps build harmonious relationships, helps maintain a positive self-concept and is most effective. Assertive behaviour is also very important in the refusal process.

REFUSAL PROCESS

Peer pressure awareness and decision-making skills are necessary to the refusal process. Individuals are often confronted with conflicting messages from the media, friends, schools, family and other groups. The ability to assess situations and issues and to behave assertively will enable informed decision-making by the individual regarding health and value issues.

Steps of the Refusal Process

1. Understand the problem
2. Practise saying 'No'
3. Ask questions about the situation
4. State your opinions or feelings
5. State the consequences
6. Suggest an alternative
7. Say what you are going to do
8. Leave the situation

DECISION-MAKING

There are many ways to make a decision including:

- letting others do it for you
- happenstance (tossing a coin, etc.)
- the formal method

The formal method can be used by individuals or groups (class, work, family, government, parish council, recreational, etc.). The following are the steps of the formal decision-making process which is used in this program.

1. Identify the problem
2. Identify the choices
3. Identify the consequences
4. Identify what is important to the decision maker(s)
5. Decide (groups can use a formal or informal voting procedure)
6. Evaluate

Step 4 is influenced by many factors including the views of family members, the school, religions and other societal groups. An individual's private reflections and the possible consequences of a decision will also affect the decision.

ADVERTISING

A study of advertising enhances the individual's ability to evaluate advertising information and make sound decisions. This awareness can be developed by studying advertising techniques and the sentiments they appeal to. Some of these are:

- appeals to basic needs such as fear, love, security etc .
- lifestyle (good times, country environments, adventures etc.)
- romance
- guilt
- bright/fun/humour/jingles
- mystery
- famous people
- normalcy (everyone has one)

Companies have large budgets for analyzing marketing techniques and their effects. The public must be able to counteract these messages with good judgement. Is the material objective or are they using a technique that is not related to the product? Are the research techniques valid? Are they supported by reputable non-affiliated professionals?

STRESS

Stress is "the body's response to any demands made on it by the environment and the people in it." (Hans Selye) Medically, stress is the rate of wear and tear on the body. Stress occurs in various forms - mental, emotional and physical. It can be positive or negative Stressors are those things that produce stress.

Positive stressors

- school dance
- birth in the family
- winning a prize
- special holidays
- first day of school

Negative stressors

- death in the family
- failing a grade
- fighting with friends
- divorce of parents
- change of schools
- confusion about future
- social isolation
- low self-esteem

Positive stress helps us do things well i.e. perform. Negative stress can harm someone who has not developed ways to cope with it. Awareness of stress, the acceptance of self and limits and the responsibility of developing coping mechanisms are important to the individual wanting to avoid the consequences of negative stress.

AWARENESS OF STRESS

The most common signals of negative stress include:

- abnormal eating practices
- pupils of the eyes dilate
- breathing speeds up
- heart beats faster
- blood pressure rises
- hearing increases
- muscles tense
- blood sugar increases (more energy)
- adrenalin is secreted
- palms become sweaty
- butterflies in stomach
- headache
- digestion slows down
- disturbed sleep pattern
- skin rashes may occur
- dizziness
- behavioural idiosyncracies (twirling hair, scratching, jiggling leg etc.)
- extreme changes in eating, smoking, drinking/drug habits
- nervous laughter
- trembling
- weight gain/loss
- headaches/migraines
- boredom, apathy
- loss of memory
- loss of rational/logical thinking
- lack of concentration
- preoccupation/obsession

- confusion
- blowing things out of proportion.
- hypersensitivity to criticism
- self-centeredness
- suspicion and mistrust
- insomnia
- hypochondria
- day dreams and fantasy
- poor emotional control (irritability, moodiness)
- helplessness and dependency
- absenteeism
- easily distracted and interrupted
- breakdown of communication
- procrastination
- job dissatisfaction
- decrease in creativity, spontaneity
- withdrawal (fear of the situation causes the individual to use excessive escape continuous television, excessive drinking, etc.)

Not even young children are immune from pressure. Teachers should be aware and take steps to help relieve factors at school that may cause too much stress on a particular student.

If the individual does not learn to deal with stress, serious physical and/or mental problem conditions could result. The following is a table listing mental disorders. They may be completely physical (physiological) in cause: they may be due entirely to stress and an individual's inability to cope with it (psychosomatic); or a combination of both.

Some problem conditions related to stress

Problem	Brief Description
<i>addiction</i>	- dependence on mood-altering substances eg. alcohol, codeine, coffee etc.
<i>anxiety</i>	- a feeling of extreme apprehension - symptoms may include: heart pounding, sweating palms, loss of appetite, insomnia
<i>anorexia nervosa</i>	- extreme anxiety may lead to loss of appetite or to seeing oneself as too fat - malnutrition results - mainly seen in teenage girls
<i>bulimia</i>	- extreme binge eating, followed by self- induced vomiting
<i>depression</i>	- a feeling of chronic tiredness, hopeless ness, apathy - often with physical symptoms - may lead to suicidal tendencies
<i>hypertension</i>	- <i>associated</i> with high blood pressure - a factor in both coronary heart disease and stroke
<i>mental illness</i>	- escape from reality as in neuroses and psychosis
<i>psychosomatic illness</i>	- emotional factors that contribute to illnesses such as ulcers, asthma, colitis

INAPPROPRIATE METHODS OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

- denial, suppression
- displacement (kick the dog)
- humour (gallows type, self-deprecating)
- projection
- fantasy
- selective memory

APPROPRIATE METHODS OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

There are physical, psychological, spiritual and organizational methods of stress management including:

- talking problems over with family members or friends
- organizing one's time
- prioritizing work
- accepting things one cannot change
- being realistic (realistic goals)
- getting enough rest and sleep
- eating balanced meals
- exercising (mild, strenuous, muscle tension reducing)
- developing an emotional support system (family and friends)
- diet
- reordering of values
- medical examination
- meditation
- resolution of interpersonal conflicts
- prayer
- time management
- arranging for enjoyable (relaxing) activities-at least daily
- developing and using assertiveness skills
- making use of humour
- being an encouraging person
- arranging for variety in your life
- job preparedness
- control of finances (budget plan)