

**GRADE 6**

**TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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**MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING**

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## MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL BEING

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

**Eg , CLIMBING THE LADDER**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

be friendlier to other people

help people who need some help

take turns

share my toys, crayons

# RESPONSIBILITIES

These Grade six lessons concentrate on responsibilities in friendship and to society in the form of volunteerism.

The responsibilities of a caring relationship (friendship) include:

- accepting personal responsibility for the maintenance of the relationship
- keeping communication honest, open and ongoing
- a constant attempt to maintain the following attributes
  - caring
  - loyalty
  - respect
  - trust
  - understanding
  - patience
  - dependability
  - tolerance
  - co-operation, including sharing
  - support
  - interest in other's ideas, interests, conversation
  - the provision of encouragement necessary to individual development
  - sincerity
  - acceptance of change

## ADVANTAGES OF A CARING RELATIONSHIP

- shared confidences
- advice
- support of self-esteem and emotions
- opportunities to develop skills necessary for other caring relationships
- the establishment of self-worth
- the opportunity to establish a permanent caring relationship
- entertainment

There are many types of relationships that demand responsibility:

- close friendships with peers of the same sex
- group friendships with peers
- close friendships with peers of the opposite sex
- relationships with teachers, guidance counsellors, religious members, ministers, club leaders, nurses, doctors
- neighbourhood friendships
- family friendships

The process of establishing a caring relationship includes:

- initiation (a smile, using people's names)
- verbal communication (asking questions about the other person, listening attentively, humour, widening your interests, making others feel important)
- taking the time to feel comfortable and secure
- developing an understanding of the other person
- allowing and ensuring that the other person has an understanding of you
- evaluation of the other person, yourself in the relationship and the relationship itself
- acting responsibly throughout the relationship

# 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 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?

# DISCRIMINATION

Factors for discrimination vary and are usually based on stereotypes. Stereotypes are statements which generalize (i.e., Old people are forgetful. Poor people are lazy.) A stereotype ignores individual differences and is usually due to laziness, ignorance or lack of understanding. Stereotypes lead to prejudice - an unfair feeling of dislike or judgement against an individual or group.

The following is a list of examples of discrimination.

<b>Discrimination</b>	<b>Reason</b>
South Africa	colour
World War II	race
Restricted male clubs	sex
mandatory retirement	age
state decreed day of rest	religion
passport guarantor	profession
buildings without ramp access	handicap

An examination of stereotypes and the resulting discrimination will help eliminate the factors that allow these situations to occur.

# 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

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
<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, hopelessness, apathy - often with physical symptoms - may lead to suicidal tendencies
<i>hypertension</i>	- associated 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> illnesses	- emotional factors that contribute to 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)