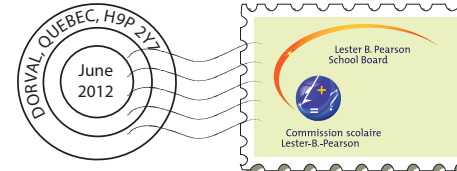




To: Our colleagues throughout Quebec From: The Lester B. Pearson School Board, SSD



Talking about Stress and Coping

Another school year is drawing to an end! Although this time of year is marked by joyful moments, it can also be a stressful time for students and staff. Exams are soon approaching, and many students will be experiencing transitions. At the Centre of Excellence for Mental Health, when we think of health promotion we think of helping students cope and also of managing our own stress as adults. This issue of the CEMH postcard is dedicated to stress and coping.

Stress can help protect us!

How does stress work to protect us? When we perceive a threat, our nervous system responds by releasing a flood of hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones rouse the body for emergency action.

Our heart pounds faster, muscles tighten, blood pressure rises, breath quickens and our senses become sharper. When we sense danger – whether it's real or imagined – the body's defenses kick into high gear in a rapid, automatic process known as the "fight-or-flight" reaction, or the **stress response**. For more information, <http://www.simplypsychology.org/stress-biology.html>

Stress is a normal physical response to events that make us feel threatened or upset our balance in some way.

The stress response is the body's way of protecting us. When working properly, it helps us stay focused, energetic, alert, and concentrate to meet task demands. But beyond a certain point, stress may stop being helpful, negatively impacting on our mood and health.

Common Stressors among Children and Teens

- Adjusting to a new classroom schedule
- Meeting new people
- Feeling pressured to do well on a test or exam
- Problems getting along with others or being bullied
- Being hungry or tired
- Feeling uncomfortable performing in front of others
- Having a busy schedule

Signs of Stress among Children and Teens

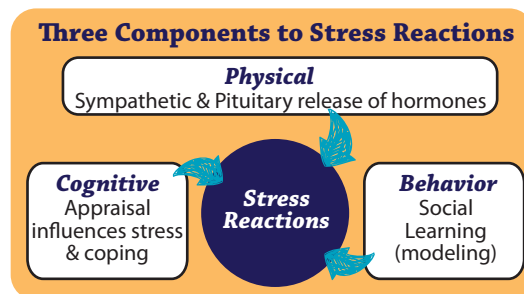
Change in behaviours and physical symptoms:

- Difficulty concentrating, nervousness, tension, irritability, anger, withdrawal etc.
- Headaches and stomach aches, trouble sleeping, feeling tired and/or sick etc.

Regression of behaviours:

- Clinginess, thumb sucking, bedwetting

For more information: http://www.nahec.org/KidsPoll/what_kids_worry_about/KidsPoll_Worries_Teacher_Handout.pdf



Stress and Coping

Good News: Children learn coping skills from modelling what they see and hear from the adults around them.

For classroom resources: <http://www.psychologyfoundation.org/kidshavestresstoo.php>

The Importance of Exercise

Exercise pumps up endorphins and helps our brain combat stress, enabling us to switch over to "feel good" mode. Regular exercise helps improve self-confidence, mild anxiety and depression. Thirty minutes of daily exercise facilitates better sleep, a powerful tool in stress management.

Relaxation in the Classroom

Classical music and controlled deep breathing helps the brain slow down the stress response, producing a calming effect and increasing focus.

- An example of mindfulness breathing: 4-7-8 to practice with your class: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r82UgmWReYs>

This skill requires practice. Help your students adopt a healthy habit!

For more information: www.mindfulnesseducation.org or www.mindfulschools.org

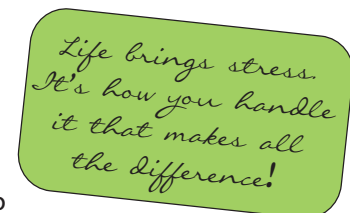


Help Build Resilience in our Students & Buffer against Stress!

Resilience = ability to bounce back from stress & crisis

- Strengthen communication & listening skills
- Build emotional competence & optimistic thinking
- Strengthen support network
- Provide a sense of control and ability to cope
- Increase knowledge, preparation, and predictability

For more information: http://fosteringresilience.com/7cs_professionals.php



Reaching out

If you are worried about a student's well-being and feel they may be experiencing significant amounts of stress with difficulty coping, it is a good idea to consult a helping professional in the school or the local CLSC. Early intervention is key in building stronger coping skills.

If you have found this postcard to be helpful and informative, please share it with colleagues. Dissemination of information about mental health is the first step toward promoting better mental health!

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