



Centre of Excellence for MENTAL HEALTH

To Our colleagues throughout Quebec

From The Lester B. Pearson School Board, SSD



Mental Health and Lifestyle

The benefits of healthy lifestyles in the prevention and treatment of mental health problems has been gaining greater attention. And with good reason! Incorporating lifestyle changes can go a long way in increasing student's physical and emotional well-being.

Promoting healthy lifestyles and positive mental health...several options, one approach!

Encouraging students to adopt healthy lifestyles, promoting positive mental health in the classroom all while creating learning environments that foster student success can be daunting! With so many great programs and resources available, it may be difficult to know how best to choose. Adopting a whole school approach can help schools identify needs and priorities and determine the best course of action for their school community. A whole school approach that promotes healthy lifestyles can thus address various lifestyle factors under one shared vision. For more information on comprehensive school health, click on this link: <http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/index.php/school-health>

Teachers are role models and inspire students every day. Your demonstration of healthy lifestyle choices not only benefits you, but can also positively influence the health-related choices of students.



According to Dr. Roger Walsh (University of California, Irvine College of Medicine, 2011), some of the lifestyle factors that may influence mental health include:

Which lifestyle factors influence mental health?	Exercise	Regular exercise can decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety and can help in the treatment of addictions and eating disorders. According to the Canadian Psychological Association (2012) "Exercise can prevent and manage depression, increase energy, reduce stress and improve mental alertness and stamina."
	Nutrition and diet	A diet that contains predominantly fruits, vegetables and fish (preferably cold water fish with higher levels of Omega-3) while reducing excessive calories has been shown to improve mood and help regulate emotions. To learn more about the role of nutrition in mental health promotion and prevention, click on this link (scroll all the way down to find helpful resources): http://www.dietitians.ca/Dietitians-Views/Health-Care-System/Mental-Health.aspx
	Sleep habits	According to the Douglas Mental Health Institute, reduced sleep has direct consequences on school performance, affecting energy, motivation, concentration, memory and problem solving skills. Interesting links on the benefits of a good night's sleep: http://www.douglas.qc.ca/page/abs-sleep-squad and http://www.canadiansleepsociety.ca/Map/www/pdf/brochure/children_EN.pdf
	Connection with nature	Spending time in nature can help with mood and sleep and increase our sense of well-being. Simply being away from artificial light and noise makes us calmer and more relaxed. To request a free educational guide for grades 4 to 6 from the David Suzuki Foundation, click on this link: http://www.davidsuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/connecting-youth-with-nature/?gclid=COu4uvScx7wCFFDMgod8SAAzg#teachers-tab Looking for exciting ways to encourage students to enjoy nature? Find out how to your school can participate in the David Suzuki Foundation's nature challenge: http://30x30.davidsuzuki.org/
	Relationships	Positive relationships are associated with happiness, quality of life and resilience and are central to positive mental health.
	Recreation & enjoyable activities	Recreation and play makes us more open, enhances well-being, mitigates stress and fosters social skills. Art, poetry and music are all creative venues that promote wellness and self-healing.
	Relaxation & stress management	Relaxation techniques, yoga, mindfulness, breathing techniques and meditation are effective in providing us with self-management skills to help reduce anxiety and stress and increase feelings of well-being. For more on the benefits of mindfulness and yoga for students: http://www.yoga4classrooms.com/supporting-research The Power of Mindfulness: "The meditation practice that helps kids become less anxious, more focused and more in charge". For more on mindfulness in the classroom, click on this link from the Child Mind Institute: http://www.childmind.org/en/posts/articles/2012-4-23-mindfulness-classroom
	Volunteering/giving to others	Giving back to others through community involvement can benefit both the giver and the receiver. Service to others can foster happiness and a sense of personal fulfillment.
	Spiritual/religious involvement	Spiritual and/or religious involvement can have substantial mental health benefits including enhanced psychological and relational well-being as well as reduced rates of stress, anxiety and depression.

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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