Primary

Virtual Field Trip 2
Stress Management and Coping

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School Mental Health Ontario

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Introduction

Every day, educators and students are exposed to big and small challenges that can contribute to feelings of stress. This year educators and students have risen to the challenge in innovative and creative ways, connecting and building meaningful relationships with students and families. As the impact of the pandemic continues to evolve, providing opportunities for explicit skill development will continue to be an essential part of bolstering positive student mental health. As an educator, it is equally important to prioritize your own well-being.

School Mental Health Ontario, in partnership with *Ophea*, is offering a series of lessons to support the development of stress management and healthy coping skills. The activities in these lessons provide an opportunity for skill development and modelling for both students and educators.

Each lesson will provide:

- A **minds on activity** for both educators and students.
- An **action** – through a video, classes will participate in a **'virtual field trip'** that provides opportunities for students and educators to learn, practice and develop skills to cope with and manage stress.
- A **consolidation** activity for follow up after the virtual field trip.

In this series of six lessons we will:

- Explore the connection between mental and physical health.
- Discuss the benefits of physical activity for stress management.
- Practice stress management coping skills.

Grades 1 – 3

Lesson Plan

This is the second lesson in a series of six lessons to support the development of **stress management** and **healthy coping skills**.

By demonstrating a range of stress management strategies, students will have more options and ideas for staying mentally well during difficult times. It is important to note that different strategies work for different individuals. Sharing a range of strategies over time will allow students the opportunity to try them out and determine what works for them.

OVERALL EXPECTATIONS:

Strand D, Healthy Living

This chart provides a brief summary of the mental health literacy topic learning, that this lesson will address, for **grades 1 – 3**.

Mental Health Literacy topic	D1 Understanding Health Concepts	D2 Making Healthy Choices	D3 Making Connections for Healthy Living
Grade 1	D1.5 Mental health and overall health		D3.3 Thoughts, emotions, actions
Grade 2	D1.6 Body and brain – responses and feelings	D2.5 Knowing when to seek help	
Grade 3	D1.6 Brain stress response system		D3.4 External factors that contribute to stressful feelings

Strand A, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills

The chart below provides an “at-a-glance” summary of SEL skills. SEL has been shown to support student emotional wellness, when offered in the context of a caring, inclusive, equity-minded classroom setting. When student identity is affirmed, and skills are introduced in a developmentally-appropriate and sequenced manner, students can select and adopt social-emotional strategies that build on their strengths. The highlighted skills will be the focus of this lesson series. Learning related to SEL skills are woven throughout the health and physical education curriculum for all grades.

Students will learn skills to:	So they can:
• **identify and manage emotions**	• express their feelings and understand the feelings of others
• **recognize sources of stress and cope with challenges**	• develop personal resilience
• maintain positive motivation and perseverance	• foster a sense of optimism and hope
• build relationships and communicate effectively	• support healthy relationships and respect diversity
• develop self-awareness and sense of identity	• develop a sense of identity and belonging
• think critically and creatively	• make informed decisions and solve problems

For a more detailed overview please see Appendix A of the 2019 HPE Curriculum.

LEARNING GOALS:

EDUCATOR	CLASS
As educators, we are learning to build the confidence and competence to: • explore the connection between our mental and physical health. • discuss the benefits of physical activity for stress management. • practice and model stress management coping skills.	As students, we are learning to build confidence and competence to: • explore the connection between the health of our minds and our bodies. • talk about the benefits of physical activity for stress management. • practice muscle relaxation strategies as a possible tool to help us cope with stress.

SUCCESS CRITERIA:

Co-develop success criteria with your students using the following questions:

- How will we know we are achieving our learning goals?
- What will it look like/sound like?

Re-visit the success criteria you created from the first virtual field trip. What opportunities are there to extend the learning?

For example:

- I can recognize that stress is a part of life and that it can be managed.
- I can learn ways to respond to stressful challenges.
- I can practice, observe, and apply strategies to help manage my stress

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Approaches to all instruction, including Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills, must be mediated through respectful conversations about students' lived realities, inequity, bias, discrimination and harassment. Starting with self-reflection about yourself, the classroom and the situations individual students in your class may be coping with is key. It is important to remember that our students face a range of challenges that are relative to their personal, social, and cultural lived experience. They also have existing ways of coping. Be sure to consider sources of stress and examine and address structures that reinforce inequitable conditions that add stress to you, your students and entire communities. Through instruction and modelling, we can help students practise new and bolster existing coping strategies.

- This virtual field trip lesson is intended to be embedded as part of your school day. Our collective learning takes place on many different traditional Indigenous territories all across Ontario. We are grateful to be able to work and learn locally on these lands. As a school in Ontario we understand morning routines, including a land acknowledgement specific to your location, will have taken place prior to this field trip.

- The focus on emotions may be difficult for some students. Be prepared to connect students to additional supports if needed. Refer to the ONE-CALL Desk Reference for more information, and take time to consider your school and board circle of support and service pathways. Know what to do, and who to connect with, if a student seems like they might be struggling with their mental health.

- An effort has been made to include different options for each of the activities. Please feel free to offer further modifications and accommodations based on the individual student need(s) in your classroom. Also, note that all videos have subtitles. You can choose to have captions by clicking the small 'CC' button at the bottom right of the video screen.

MINDS ON

The Minds On activities are to be completed BEFORE the virtual field trip.

EDUCATOR

Reflect on the following questions:

- How does your body feel when you are experiencing stress?
- What are coping strategies that you find work the best for you to manage these feelings?

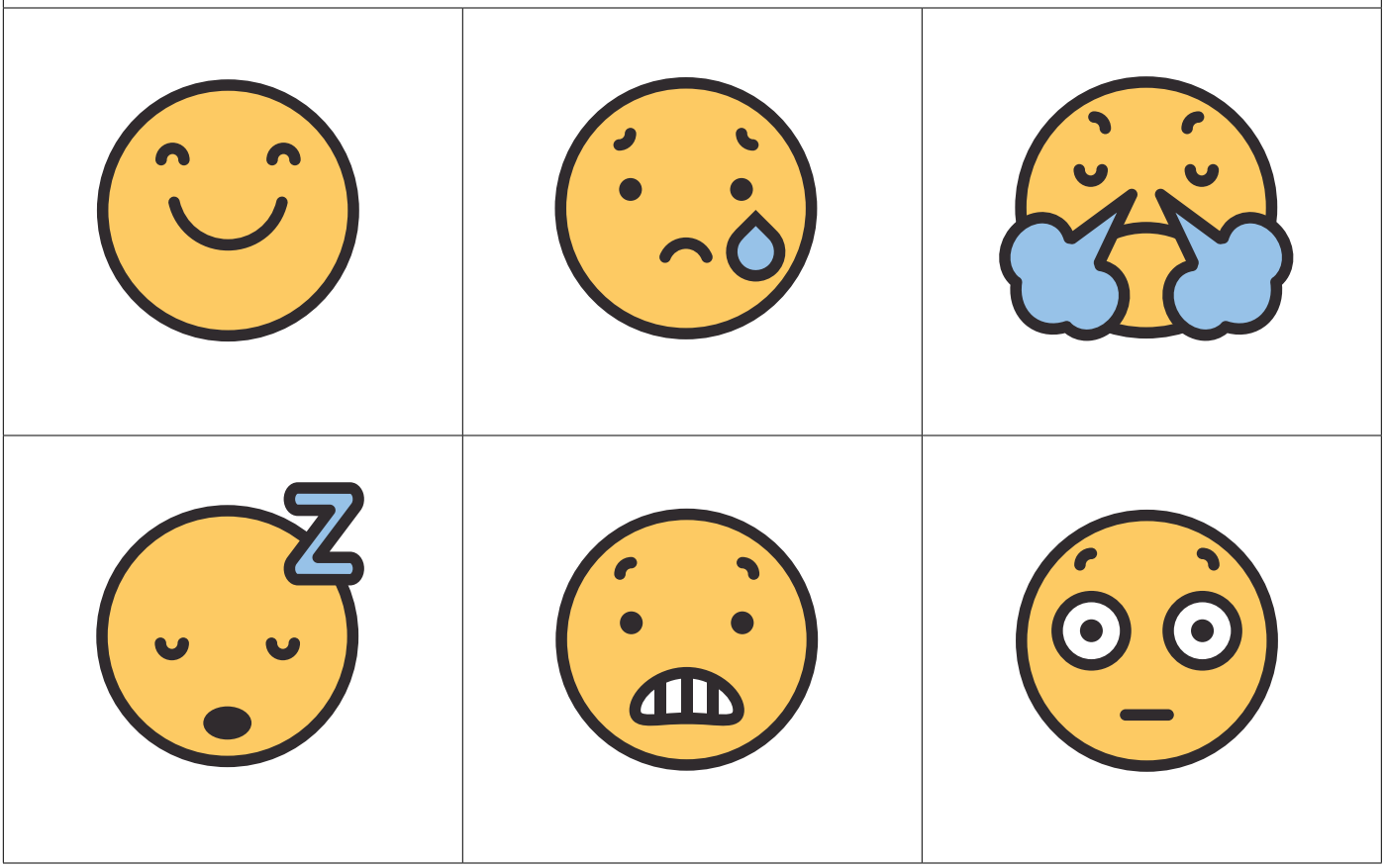
CLASS

This Minds On activity has three parts – a check-in, a physical activity, and then a second check-in.

1. CHECK-IN

Have students do a check-in using the emojis on the next page or another tool you already use with students. The Everyday Mental Health Practices – Check In card provides more information about using check-ins as a daily practice.

Ask students: "Which emoji shows the way you are feeling today?"



Click to download

CLASS (continued)

2. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Invite students to participate in one of the following physical activities from the *Ophea Resource – One A Day for Active Play*: Wiggly Bodies, Move Like the Animals.

3. CHECK-IN

Have students do a second check-in.

- How are you feeling now? Which emoji shows the way you feel?
- Do you notice any difference in the way you are feeling? If yes, describe and why do you think your mood has changed?
- Are you feeling ready to learn? If not, what can you do to prepare yourself before we start the virtual field trip? Would you like to try one of the breathing strategies we learned in the first trip?

ACTION TASK: VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP VIDEO

This session focuses on muscle relaxation and how these exercises can help us manage stress. Feeling anxious affects our bodies and minds. Muscle relaxation exercises can help us decompress and feel better in our bodies, which in turn help us feel better in our brains. In the video, the educator and mental health professional will lead a variety of muscle relaxation exercises for you and your students to participate in together.

Here are links to the activity cards we will be demonstrating in this video:

- Let Go and Stretch
- Stretch in your Chair
- Tense and relax

Links to view virtual field trip: Click here to view on **YouTube** Click here to view on **Vimeo**

CONSOLIDATION

These activities and resources are designed to provide opportunities for consolidation of learning for both the educator and the students. Also provided is a letter for parents/caregivers that shares information and possible opportunities for follow-up learning.

EDUCATOR

Self-Care Plan – Consider using the information found in the following link to set priorities and build yourself a self-care toolkit. There is list of items to assist you with checking in on your current self-care practices. Select 1-2 priorities from each category (physical, social, mental, emotional, spiritual) that you would like to practise.

Understanding the Importance of Self Care – from jack.org

CLASS

Choose from the following activities:

- ☐ **Check-In**
  Do another check-in with your students using the emojis. Did participating in the virtual field trip change their feelings? Did it change the way their bodies are feeling?

- ☐ **Compare and Discuss**
  Do one of the breathing strategies shared in the first Virtual Field Trip session. Have students compare how they felt after the breathing activity and after the muscle relaxation activity. Which one would they like to do again? Which one helped them to feel calm, focused, and alert?

- ☐ **Practice**
  Offer students further opportunities to practise the strategies introduced, or try new strategies:

  - School Mental Health Ontario:
    - Everyday Mental Health Resource
      (contains some of the activities used in the virtual field trip)
    - Tense and Relax Poster

  - Ophea, Brain Blitz:
    - Breathing with Awareness
    - Breathing Good Energy In
    - Happy Place Meditation

PARENT/CAREGIVER

Today our class participated in a virtual field trip to learn more about coping with stress, recognizing that stress is a part of life, and that there are strategies to help us cope. If you would like to continue the learning from today, here are a few prompts to ask your child.

- Why do you think it is important to understand and know how to manage your emotions?
- Which muscle relaxation strategy/strategies from today felt most helpful for you?
- Do you find moving your body or being physically active a helpful way to cope with feelings? Why or why not? Are there activities that you would find helpful to do together?

For more activities to try at home, check out this set of activity cards from *School Mental Health Ontario*: https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EDMH-ParentActivities-FINAL-EN.pdf.

You can also access *Ophea's* Resources to Support Parents and Caregivers with Health and Physical Education at Home and visit Ophea Open Class for recorded instructional videos and lessons with guiding reflection questions related to social-emotional learning to support learners at home.

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