



Rolling with Life's Challenges

Some parts of life can be really stressful, like taking tests or starting a new school or trying to meet new friends. It can be tempting for young people (and adults) to deal with stress in ways that feel good in the moment though they may cause more stress later on. For example, chowing down on a bag of candy might bring a youth temporary relief and pleasure but discomfort later. Likewise, blowing money in a mall might give a youth a lift for an afternoon but leave them with no money for stuff they really want or need. Sometimes young people gamble, drink alcohol or use other drugs to relieve stress and have fun but it's not always so fun facing the consequences, especially if these strategies become the pattern for dealing with stress. Chronic problems can quickly emerge and snowball out of control.

As Physical and Health Education teachers know, there are healthier ways for young people to relieve stress, including physical activity. By drawing attention to the way physical movement can change your mood—by relieving tension in the body and releasing feel-good chemicals in the brain—teachers can help students learn about and experience alternatives to the riskier ways of dealing with life's challenges.

For more on how physical activity can help alleviate stress check out:

<http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2013/exercise.aspx>

Instructional strategies

1. Invite students to share some strategies for relieving stress. If not noted (although that's unlikely), share how physical activity is a proven stress-buster. Use the conversation as a jump off point (pun included!) for some physical activity that small groups of students can rotate through (i.e., stress-reducing activity stations). Here are just a few ideas to consider:
 - Bouncy time – if you have mini-trampolines or Bosu balls, pull them out for some bouncing fun. Rhythmic activities have a great de-stressing effect – and jumping can get that heart pumping!
 - Hoop it up – hula hoops can be loads of fun, spun around the waist or arms or used in other ways (check out this [resource](#) for more ideas). Students can use their time at this station to do something that gets them active with a hoop or two!
 - Stretch and de-stress – lay mats down for students to relax on and do some stretching. Consider printing/posting these great [stress relieving stretches](#). Even better if you can make this one a quiet corner and perhaps have some calming music playing.
 - Hopscotch – check out this [site for great ideas](#) – and who knew hopscotch has been played for 1000s of years!? Looking to keep it simple? An agility ladder can work.
 - Tug of war – life can feel like we're getting pulled in plenty of directions. Playing this game, even with just a small group, can help people get energized and work out some tension.
 - Walk and talk (or not) - sometimes just chilling out on a walk can be a great stress reliever.
2. Challenge small groups of students to come up with an idea (or two) for an activity break that could be used in PE classes, at home or whenever and wherever! Ask them to come prepared for a future class, ready to share their activity with the full class. The key requirement is that they are moving their bodies – otherwise, the sky's the limit.

3. Looking to foster more conversation about stress and how to manage it? Show this [TED talk](#) by health psychologist, Kelly McGonigal, in which she presents stress as a positive. Invite students to comment on the video and explore what it might mean for them. The following questions might help.
 - What are some situations when stress can be helpful? How might it help?
 - McGonigal talks about “making you better at stress.” How might that look for you?
 - What are some common reasons people get stressed out?
 - How could we reduce stress in the first place?
 - How do you cope with or manage stress? How do people in other cultures manage stress? Give examples.
 - Some people use gambling and drinking alcohol or using other drugs as a way to relax or cope with stress. How can that reduce stress? Can it also contribute to stress? Explain.
 - What are some potential harms/risks related to various approaches to coping with stress? Are some coping strategies more risky than others? Discuss your answer.
4. **Want to take it to the next level?** In thinking about how physical activity can be a tool to help people de-stress, perhaps your students have some ideas for introducing other active opportunities to the greater school community (yoga or dance on “mindful Mondays” anyone?) The McCreary Centre Society offers [Youth Action Grants](#) of up to \$500 that might just provide the impetus for some pretty cool activities!

Other Resources

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre: BC’s information source for children, youth and families dealing with mental health and substance use issues. The website includes [information and resources on stress](#), including an interactive Healthy Thinking Activity and an interactive Problem Solving resource, as well as mindfulness audio and video resources.

The Psychology Foundation of Canada: has a range of programs and resources including [Stress Lessons: From Stressed Out to Chilled Out](#) (a resource for grades 7-9).

Drug literacy

Big ideas

- Drugs can be tremendously helpful and also very harmful
- We can learn how to control our drug use by reflecting on the different ways people have thought about drugs, exploring stories from various cultures and listening to each other

Competencies

- Develop personal and social strategies to manage the risks, benefits and harms related to drugs

Gambling literacy

Big ideas

- Gambling can be a fun recreational activity but can also lead to significant harm
- We can learn how to control gambling by examining the different ways people have thought about it, engaging in critical self-reflection and listening to each other

Competencies

- Explore and appreciate the diverse cognitive, social, emotional and physical factors that impact gambling behaviour
- Develop personal and social skills to reflect on and manage personal behaviour and choices related to gambling

For a complete look at the drug and gambling literacy competencies, as defined by the Centre for Addictions Research of BC, see: <http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/carbc/assets/docs/iminds/hs-pp-drug-curriculum.pdf>; www.uvic.ca/research/centres/carbc/assets/docs/iminds/hs-gambling-curriculum.pdf



Links to Curriculum

First Peoples' Principles of Learning addressed

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)

Physical and Health Education 6/7

Big ideas

- Healthy choices influence our physical, emotional and mental well-being

Competencies

- Describe how students' participation in physical activities at school, at home, and in the community can influence their health and fitness
- Identify, apply, and reflect on strategies used to pursue personal healthy-living goals
- Explore strategies for promoting the health and well-being of the school and community
- Describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others
- Describe and assess strategies for managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use, for others

Physical and Health Education 8/9

Big ideas

- Lifelong participation in physical activity has many benefits and is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle
- Healthy choices influence our physical, emotional and mental well-being
- Healthy relationships can help us lead rewarding and fulfilling lives

Competencies

- Identify and apply strategies to pursue personal healthy-living goals
- Describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others
- Describe and assess strategies for managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use, for others