



healthy transitions

Promoting Resilience and Mental Health in Young Adolescents



Session 3:

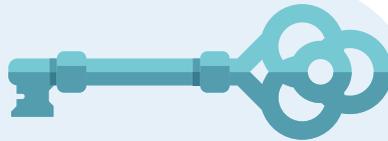
Getting Help When Feeling Overwhelmed

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Lets Get Prepared!

1. Copy:
 - Emotions Activity (one per student).
 - *Who Are My Newfoundland Dogs?* handout (one per student)
2. Copy and cut paper hearts (at least one per student, have extras on hand).
3. Assemble markers, tape, flip chart paper (if using).

Key Messages for the Session



- We all have emotions and feelings. They change throughout the day depending on the different situations we come across. It is normal for people to feel differently when faced with the same situation.
- Everyone experiences emotional pain (heart aches).
- We need to get help for emotional pain, just as we would get help for a physical illness or an injury. We don't go to the doctor for all illnesses (for example, a simple cold), but we do tell others that we're not well, and get help (we may stay home from school, or our families may give us medicine, juice, tissues etc.). We need to do this for heart aches as well – tell others that we're feeling badly. Sometimes that's all we need to help us feel better.
- There are things we can do to prevent heart aches from becoming more serious problems (e.g. positive self talk, positive coping and getting help when needed). Sometimes the emotional pain is overwhelming and then it is REALLY important to get help.
- We all need to have people in our lives to turn to (our Newfoundland dogs!). We can also be a support for others.



Session Outline

- 5 minutes: Emotions Discussion
- 5 minutes: Emotions Activity
- 20 minutes: Heart Aches
- 15 minutes: Personal Newfoundland Dogs
- 5 minutes: Helping Hands

- 5 minutes*: Learn to Chill (if not done in session 2)



5 minutes

Emotions Discussion

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Recognize that we can all experience different feelings/emotions every day.
2. Understand the difference between positive and negative emotions and how to deal with strong emotions.
3. Understand that it is important not to be ashamed of having feelings; everyone has them - good and bad.
4. Realize that what counts is what we do about our feelings.

Structure: Large group activity

Method:

Facilitate a brief discussion about naming our emotions/feelings by asking students the following questions:

What are emotions and why do we have them?

- When we are feeling a strong emotion, it is because chemicals are released into our brains; these can make us feel happy, sad, angry etc.
- Nobody can help having feelings - they are a part of everyone
- We feel different things all day as long as different things happen to us.

How many good/positive feelings/emotions can you name?

- Happy, excited, calm, relaxed, silly, loved, friendly, grateful

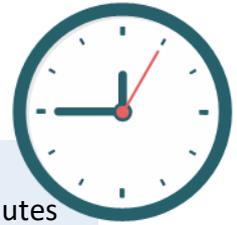
How many bad/negative feelings/emotions can you name?

- Angry, frustrated, annoyed, nervous, anxious, scared, lonely, confused, sad, worried, jealous

What are some things we can do to help us handle our strong emotions?

- No matter how you feel - good or bad - it's healthy to put your feelings into words ("I feel sad" or "I am frustrated").
- Identify your emotion and understand possible reasons for feeling that way.
- Think about how you can manage those feelings in a positive way (e.g. taking some deep breaths, talking to someone, exercising)

Remind students that often we can change how we feel by changing our thoughts - remind students about the Thoughts - Feelings - Actions triangle from session 1.



Emotions Activity

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Understand that different people will have different feelings, emotions and responses to the same situation.
2. Understand that it is important not to be ashamed of having feelings; everyone has them - good and bad.

Structure: Large group activity

Method:

1. As a group, name and review the different emotions (emojis).
2. Read each statement to the group and ask students how they think they would feel in each situation, and why. Students can use the feelings listed on the activity sheet or come up with their own.

Statements for students:

- Your pet has been missing since last night.
 - You win third place at a track and field race.
 - You find out that someone has been going through your personal stuff in your room.
 - You have to prepare for an oral presentation.
 - Your grandparent unexpectedly picks you up from school.
 - Someone made fun of your clothing.
 - Your parents have signed you up for a week at sleepaway summer camp.
 - Your parents take away your tv, computer, video game and/or phone privileges.
 - You have an argument with your best friend.
 - Someone you don't know is knocking at your door.
3. Conclude by reminding students that:
 - Emotions come and go - most of us feel many different emotions throughout the day.
 - All emotions (positive and negative) are normal and can be mild or strong depending on the situation and on the person.
 - Emotions can be different from person to person experiencing the same situation. For example, some might be excited to speak in front of the class while others might be nervous or worried.
 - There are no good or bad emotions, but there are good and bad ways of expressing or acting on emotions.
 - With practice we can get better at knowing what we are feeling and why and how to express our emotions in an acceptable way - this is called Emotional Awareness.

Emotions Activity

					
Afraid Nervous Anxious Scared Worried Frightened Terrified Uncertain Overwhelmed	Happy Excited Amused Content Proud Optimistic Loved Relaxed Confident	Angry Bothered Annoyed Frustrated Agitated Grouchy Irritated Resentful Impatient Jealous	Sad Depressed Hopeless Lonely Disappointed Ashamed Guilty Homesick Embarrassed	Disgusted Dislike Unpleasant Offensive Gross Revoltng Nauseating Squeamish	Surprised Amazed Shocked Startled Confused Speechless Unaware Caught off guard

Fill in the blanks. How would you feel in each situation?

1. Your pet has been missing since last night. _____
2. You win third place at a track and field race. _____
3. You find out that someone has been going through your personal stuff in your room. _____
4. You have to prepare for an oral presentation. _____
5. Your grandparent picks you up from school and you were not expecting them to. _____
6. Someone made fun of your clothing. _____
7. Your parents have signed you up for a week at sleepaway summer camp. _____
8. Your parents take away your tv, computer, video game and/or phone privileges. _____
9. You have an argument with your best friend. _____
10. Someone you don't know is knocking at your front door. _____

Heart Aches

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Recognize personal, physical responses to strong feelings.
2. Identify characteristics of emotional pain.
3. Compare common reactions to physical pain and emotional pain (or heart aches).
4. Appreciate the value of social support.
5. Accept that it is healthy and positive to discuss emotional pain, and to get help when needed.

Structure: Large group discussion

Method:

1. Ask students, **“How do we know when we’re stressed or upset?” (How do we feel inside?)** Assist students to identify physical “symptoms” related to a stressful or upsetting situation. Students may share situations when they experience these “symptoms” if they wish. For example:
 - Sweaty palms
 - Heart beating wildly
 - Shaky voice
 - Lump in throat
 - Tense muscles
 - “Butterflies” in stomach
 - Shaking hands
 - Dry mouth
 - Red blotches on skin
 - Headache
 - Clenching teeth

Reinforce that strong emotions can have a real impact on our bodies. The first thing we can do is to do an “internal check” of our bodies. If we notice that we are experiencing some of the sensations described above, then it’s time to do something to help ourselves relax and calm down (e.g., Coping strategies, relaxation exercises).

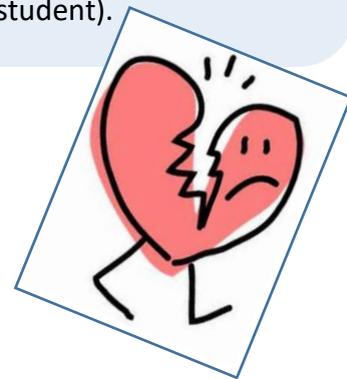
2. Ask for a volunteer who would like to draw on the board or flip chart. Ask the student to draw 2 people, large enough for the group to see (very simple figures will do). The facilitator can also do the drawing, if there are no volunteers.



20 minutes

Materials:

- Flip chart paper
- Markers
- Tape
- Paper heart cut outs (one per student).



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3. Ask the group to give you some examples of causes of physical pain. These examples could be related to illnesses or injuries that students themselves have experienced. Ask your volunteer artist to draw these sources of pain and the effects of the pain on one of the figures (e.g. broken legs, cuts, bruises, headaches, diseases, etc.).
4. Ask the students:
 - How long would it take for you to tell someone you were in sick or in pain and needed help?
 - Would you be embarrassed to tell someone?
 - Where would you go for help?
5. Distribute blank paper hearts to students. Ask students to write (in one sentence or less) an example of something that may cause a 'heart ache' (emotional pain) in a person their age. **Stress it doesn't have to be a personal experience.** Explain that a heart-ache occurs when we are really hurting inside, it's not just about romance. Students can write more than one example on their paper. Explain to students that their teacher will be collecting their hearts after they have completed them.
 - Tell students that if they want to speak to the nurse or their teacher about their heart ache after the session, they can write their name on their piece of paper.
 - Remind students that if they share something that shows that they are at risk to themselves or an adult will need to follow up with them.

Examples of causes of heartaches include:

- Major change in your family (divorce, a death, serious illness, trouble with a brother or sister)
 - A parent has a problem and it's affecting you
 - Someone has done something to hurt you
 - Big changes like a new school, new city or a new country!
 - Problems with friends, or trouble getting along with people
 - Worry about school work
 - Concerns about body image
 - Trouble handling feelings (feeling worried or sad all the time, unable to control anger)
 - Making a mistake, and not knowing how to sort it out
 - Feeling guilty and sad about things going on in the world (wars, poverty, disasters)
 - Regrets
6. The teacher collects the hearts and reviews them before each one is read out loud. The facilitator can summarize each of the examples given in 1 or 2 words and write them around the second figure.

7. Ask students:

- How long would it take for you to tell someone you were hurting or struggling and needed help?
- Would you be embarrassed to tell someone about a heart ache? Why?
- Where would you go for help?

Note the differences in responses for physical pain and emotional pain (heart ache). Suggest that things would be much easier for us if we thought about our heart aches the way we think about physical pain or illness (e.g. not being embarrassed to talk about it, getting help, etc.)

8. Use the following questions to facilitate a discussion on heart aches. Be sure to highlight:

- Why could it be helpful to talk with others and get help when we're having emotional pain (or a heart-ache)?
- How we may be able to prevent some heart aches, or prevent them from getting worse or turning into serious problems

Why could it be helpful to talk with others and get help when we're struggling?

- Feels better to talk it out; you may feel less worried and anxious.
- It could prevent things from getting worse.
- It might help to solve the problem.
- Feels good to know someone understands you and supports you.
- Sometimes the problem is too big to handle alone, and you're having a hard time coping.

How can we prevent heart aches from turning into serious problems?

We all have heart aches, and emotional pain. It's part of being human. Some things that can help us through rough times are:

- Positive self talk (changing the way we think about things)
- Accepting our feelings, then using positive coping (doing things that 'restore' emotional balance, help us to feel better, and may help solve a problem)
- Relaxation exercises
- Sharing our feelings with others and getting help if needed
- Helping and supporting each other through hard times
- Communication skills (Session 4)

Note: Some mental health problems are caused by chemical imbalances in the brain (even so – all of the above will help someone with a mental health problem).

9. Remind students that we need to get help and support for our heartaches, just as we would for a physical illness or injury. It's important to help friends to do this too.

10. Leave the hearts with the teacher at the end of the session. The teacher can discard as they see fit or follow-up with a student if requested or deemed necessary.

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Copy and cut one heart per student



Personal Newfoundland Dogs

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Understand the metaphor of the Newfoundland dog, as someone in our lives who can help us when we need it.
2. Identify personal strategies and people in their lives that can help when things get rough.

Structure: Large group activity

Method:

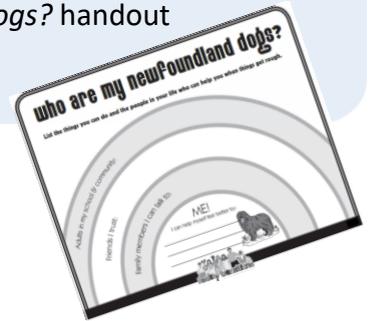
1. Ask students if they know what Newfoundland dogs are and why they are used. Remind them that Newfoundland dogs are often used to rescue people struggling in the water. At some point in each of our lives, we'll need some help from others when we're struggling.
2. Distribute the "Who Are My Newfoundland Dogs?" handout. Explain to students that when things are rough, there are things we can do, and people we can turn to for help. Ask students to think about:
 - Things they can do to help themselves handle the situation and feel better
 - People in their lives who can help
3. Ask students to record their answers in the appropriate areas on the handout (within the lines provided or around the 'rings'). Remind them about specific community/school resources (e.g. school guidance counsellor/social worker, teachers, friend's parent, coach, Community Health Centre, Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868, etc.).
4. As students complete their handouts, prompt them to consider some of the personal strategies discussed in the program; such as
 - Positive self talk
 - Relaxation exercises
 - Positive coping
 - Communication (session 4)



15 minutes

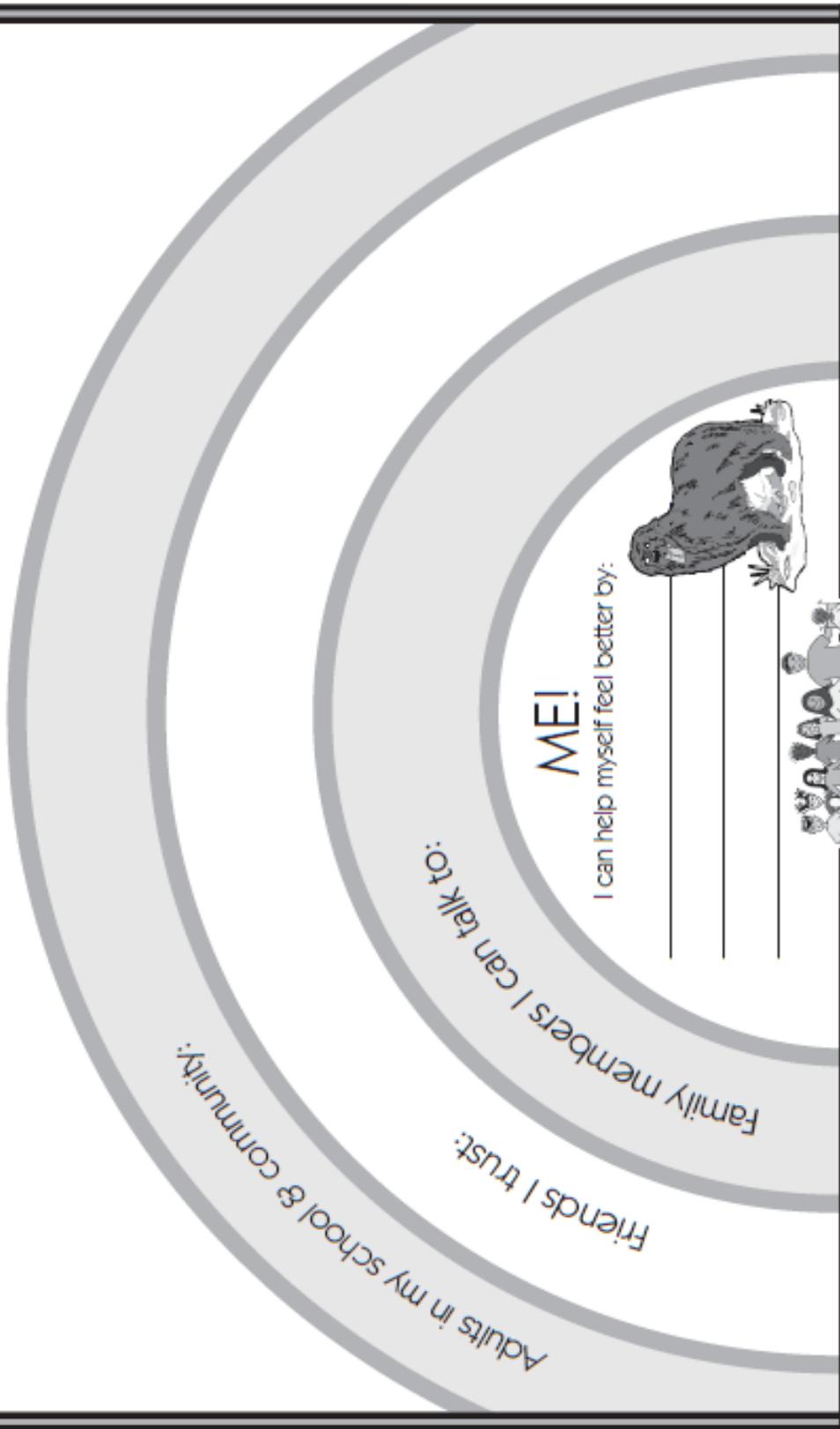
Materials:

- Markers
- *Who are My Newfoundland Dogs?* handout



who are my newfoundland dogs?

List the things you can do and the people in your life who can help you when things get rough.



ME!

I can help myself feel better by:



Family members I can talk to:

Friends I trust:

Adults in my school & community:



5 minutes

Helping Hands Activity

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Recognize that at some point in our lives, we will need some help from others when we are struggling.
2. Appreciate that when things are rough, there are things we can do and people we can turn to for help and support

Structure: Large group activity

Method:

1. Ask students to name a personal strategy that can help us when we are struggling; or to identify a strategy/ person who can help us when we are struggling. Scrunch up a piece of paper to make a paper ball. The student comes to the front of the class to hold the ball of paper with one finger (paper ball falls).
2. Ask another student to name a person or strategy who can help us when we are struggling. The second student comes to the front of the class and both students attempt to hold paper ball with one finger each (paper ball falls again).
3. Continue asking students to come to the front of the class until there are enough fingers to hold the ball of paper (usually you need 4 to 5 students).
4. If students do not mention key people within their school and resources in their community, please complete the activity by identifying them.

Key Messages



1. Sometimes we need more than one person to help us depending on how badly we are struggling.
2. Personal coping strategies are important. However, it is also important to ask for help.