HEALTHY TRANSITIONS
Promoting Resilience and Mental Health in Young Adolescents

Grade 6: Session 1

Thoughts, Feelings, Actions
Thoughts, Feelings, Actions

Let’s Get Prepared! Material Required

- *The Incredibles* 2 disc set – you’ll need disc 2 or *Pixar Short Films Collection*. Select *Boundin’* on this disc. If no DVD player available, also available to view online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WyR4AqRweY&t=1s
- *Thoughts, Feelings, Actions: Change One and You Can Change Them All* image (to be projected or drawn on the board).
- *Reacting to Problems: Self Talk Can Change a Lot* worksheet
- Grade 6 Healthy Transitions PowerPoint Presentation

Session Outline

10 minutes: Introduction & Ground Rules
5 minutes: Warm Up Activity - Stand Up/Sit Down
10 minutes: *Boundin’* video and activity
15 minutes: Reacting to Problems: Self-Talk

Key Messages for the Session

- Our thoughts, feelings, and actions influence each other.
- If we change the way we think about things, we can change how we feel and act.
- There are ways of thinking about things and actions we can take that can help us feel better; and help us to handle everyday struggles.
- It’s OK to feel badly when difficult things happen but at some point, we have to move forward. Sometimes trying to change the way we think about the situation will help but sometimes the situation and our feelings are too overwhelming, and we need to get help and support from others.
- The support of others is essential to ‘rebounding’.
There will be two sessions for Grade 6 students. During the two sessions, students will learn about:

• Taking care of our mental health
• Our thoughts, feelings, and actions influence each other
• Reacting to problems
• Communicating with others

Ground Rules

Please use as suggestions only.

It can be helpful to review classroom etiquette or establish ground rules together as a group, prior to this lesson, so that everyone in the group feels comfortable participating. If you like, you can record all the ground rules on a flip chart and post during the sessions.

Some examples:

• Welcome all questions
• Listen attentively
• Create a safer space – an environment of respect and sensitivity
• Keep classroom discussions confidential

Instruct students to refrain from discussing personal situations or stories; however, students are encouraged to speak to the facilitator privately if they would like to discuss a topic further or share very personal feelings or experiences.

Let students know that support on sensitive topics is always available within the school community and through external partnerships. Supports are reviewed at the end of the presentation.
What is Mental Health?

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to the community (World Health Organization). Everyone has mental health. It’s a part of our everyday life. Our mental health affects our well-being, and the way we think, feel and act. It doesn’t mean always being happy, but rather that we are able to face different events in our day and cope with difficult situations and strong feelings. Our mental health plays a part in how we handle stress, make choices and connect with other people. Everyone has mental health and it’s important that we take care of it.

Ask students what they think this session’s title means: “Thoughts, Feelings, Actions”. Explain that our thoughts, feelings, and actions guide us in our daily challenges.
Warm-Up Activity: Stand Up/Sit Down

Time: 5 minutes

Objective:
Students will:
• Feel more comfortable participating in the session.

Structure: Large group activity

Method:
1. Ask students to stand up if the following statements apply to them; and to sit down if the statements do not apply.

Stand up if you...
• Can curl your tongue up?
• Are left-handed?
• Have a social media account (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok...)?
• Have brothers and/or sisters?
• Have done something you didn’t think you could do (and surprised yourself!)?
• Have learned a new skill in the past year?
• Have ever been angry with someone then when you heard their side of the story you weren’t so angry anymore?
• Have ridden a horse?
• Like spicy food?
• Have tried something new even when you were nervous?
• Have ever wanted to do something but were afraid to try?
• Have ever felt one way about something and then your feelings changed?
• Like really hot weather?
• Have grandparents living in Ottawa?
• Have a rodent as a pet (younger brothers or sisters don’t count)?
• Have ever felt many feelings at the same time (good and bad feelings all mixed up together)?
• Have a birthday in the summer?
• Have ever argued with your parents?
• Have ever felt angry with a teacher?

2. Explain to students that some of the questions in the warm-up activity were about thoughts, feelings, and actions. Tell students that the rest of the sessions will give them a chance to think about how our thoughts, feelings, and actions are connected.
Bound/Rebound

Time: 10 minutes

Objective:
Students will:
• Appreciate the interrelatedness of thoughts, feelings, and actions.
• Accept that changing the way we think about things can change the way we feel and act.

Structure: Large group activity (video and discussion)

Materials:
• Disk 2 from *The Incredibles* 2 disc set or *Pixar Short Films Collection*. Select *Boundin’*
• If no DVD player available, also available to view online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WyR4AqRweY&t=1s
• Computer and projector
• *Thoughts, Feelings, Actions: Change One and You Can Change Them All* image

Method:
1. Show *Boundin’* clip.
2. Discuss the interrelated connection between thoughts, feelings, and actions. Facilitator can draw a triangle shape with the headers “Thoughts”, “Feelings”, and “Actions”, as shown on the *Thoughts, Feelings, Actions: Change One and You can Change Them All* page, to illustrate the interrelatedness between them. Alternatively, project the *Thoughts, Feelings, Actions: Change One and You can Change Them All* image on the board.
3. Ask students: What were the little sheep’s thoughts, feelings, and actions...:
   • Before he was sheared?
   • Right after he was sheared?
   • After he met the Jack-o-lope and started bounding?
   • After he was sheared for the second time?
4. Facilitator or a volunteer records the responses on the board under the appropriate heading.

5. Facilitate a group discussion about how the little sheep’s thoughts influenced his feelings and actions.
   - Once he started thinking differently, he felt and acted differently.
   - My friends still like me. Being pink is OK. I can still feel good about myself. I still have my body, good legs and fine feet!
   - Note how an action, ‘bounding’, made him feel really good, and this influenced how he felt and thought.
   - The ‘bounding’ helped him cope with a difficult situation, so he kept doing it.
   - When he was sheared the following year, he knew how to better cope with the situation. He thought positively, used ‘bounding’ and felt much better about the situation the second time around.

6. Facilitate a group discussion about how, like the little sheep, we all go through difficult situations and experience strong emotions. Sometimes, the best action we can take is to talk to someone about it. Talking to someone we trust and asking for help are actions that can help change the way we feel and think when something is bothering us.

7. Ask students to give examples of people they could reach out to if they needed to talk to someone. Examples include:
   - Friend or friend’s parent
   - Family member
   - Teacher
   - Principal
   - Coach
Session 1: Thoughts, Feelings, and Actions
SESSION 1: THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS

HEALTHY TRANSITIONS

! ACTIONS !
Change one and you can change them all.
Reacting to Problems: Self-Talk

Time: 15 minutes

Objective:

Students will:
• Appreciate that we have some control over our feelings and reactions to stress and anxiety.
• Outline/demonstrate a process for changing negative self-talk.

Structure: Individual and large group activity

Materials: Reacting to Problems: Self-talk Can Change a Lot worksheet

Method:
1. Tell students that during this activity, you’ll be coming up with different ways of thinking about upsetting situations (situations where: we feel worried, angry, nervous or upset). Self-talk affects how we feel about things that happen to us. When something goes wrong or a problem happens, the thoughts that pop into your head are called automatic thoughts. Automatic thoughts are often negative thoughts. Someone having negative thoughts might be thinking that people are doing things “on purpose” or are out to get them.

2. Students access the Reacting to Problems: Self Talk Can Change A Lot worksheet so students can follow along individually and record their own thoughts, feelings, and actions.

3. Select an upsetting situation from the following:
   • Your parents won’t let you do something you really want to do.
   • You message a friend three times and they do not reply.
   • The grade on your test is not what you had hoped for.
   • You’re excluded from a group of people that start laughing.
4. Ask students how they might think, feel, and act if that upsetting situation happened to them using negative self-talk. Allow a few minutes for students to reflect individually or in a small group, and record what students come up with on the worksheet.

5. In a large group discussion, ask students to report what they came up with. Students can add to their worksheet as certain thoughts, feelings, and actions resonate with them.

6. Now, using the same scenario, ask students to practice positive self-talk that might lead them to feeling better or OK about the same situation. By practicing positive self-talk, our thoughts will be positive and help us sort out what really happened. We can then react to a problem in a much more positive way. Allow a few minutes for students to reflect individually or in a small group, and record what students come up with on the worksheet.

7. In a large group discussion, ask students to report what they came up with. Students can add to their worksheet as certain thoughts, feelings, and actions resonate with them.

8. You can continue with as many situations as time allows.

Sometimes we are feeling so badly that trying to change our self-talk alone doesn’t help much. This can happen to anyone and in many different situations. If we continue to feel upset by a situation, it is important reach out to others who can help us. Our friends, family, or other trusted adults in our school and community can be there to listen to us and help us cope with our strong feelings. They can also help us get more support and help if needed.
Session 1: Thoughts, Feelings, and Actions

Reacting to problems: self talk can change a lot

Positive self talk situation:

Negative self talk situation:

Thoughts  ➔  Feelings  ➔  Actions

Thoughts  ➔  Feelings  ➔  Actions

Healthy Transitions
Communication

Let’s Get Prepared! Material Required

- One blank sheet of scrap paper per student for the *Drawing Bugs* activity.
- *Communication: How to Talk so Others Will Listen* video: The video can be found in the Grade 6 Healthy Transitions PowerPoint Presentation
- Grade 6 Healthy Transitions PowerPoint Presentation

Session Outline

10 minutes: Warm Up Activity: Drawing bugs
30 minutes: *Communication: How to Talk so Others Will Listen* video and discussion
10 minutes: True/False Activity

Key Messages for the Session

- The way we communicate has an impact on:
  - Whether or not we get what we want
  - Our relationships
  - How others see us and treat us
  - Whether our problems get solved or get worse
  - Our feelings and the feelings of others
- Assertive communication is usually the best way to:
  - Promote good relationships and emotional wellbeing in ourselves and others
  - Get our needs met (although it’s no guarantee)
  - Resolve conflicts
  - Express feelings
- Assertive communication takes practice
- There are situations where passive and aggressive responses may be the best choice
- Being able to listen well is essential to good communication
**Warm Up Activity: Drawing Bugs**

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Objective:**
Students will:
• Appreciate other people’s perspectives on the same situation.

**Structure:** Large group activity

**Materials:** One blank sheet of scrap paper per student for the students to draw on.

**Method:**
1. Tell the students that you’re going to describe a bug, and that you’d like them to draw a bug just like it. Students will not be able to ask questions or look at the original drawing during the activity. Students should not look at each other’s drawings during the activity.
2. Describe the bug for students to draw:
   • The bug is round.
   • The bug has eight legs, grouped in pairs with four legs on the left and four legs on the right. In the pairs, one leg is longer than the other.
   • The bug has two eyes on top of the body.
   • The bug has two squiggly antennae.
   • The bug has two tree leaf shaped wings.
   • The bug has a spot next to each wing.
   • The bug has a triangular stinger on the bottom of the body.
   • The bug has two feelers on each foot - one longer than the other.
   • The bug has a round mouth, placed between the two eyes.
   • The bug laid five square eggs to the left of the stinger.
3. After everyone is finished, ask students to hold up their drawing for the entire group to see.

4. Facilitate a brief discussion with the following questions:
   - How did it feel not being able to clarify the instructions?
   - Why were people so concerned about ‘doing it right?’
   - Why do all the bugs look different? (Everyone has a different interpretation of the description, based on personal life experiences.)
   - What would have helped so that the drawings would look more alike? (Asking questions and clarifying would have helped.)
   - Does this activity demonstrate anything about real life? (There are many different ways of looking at the same situation; clarifying what you’ve heard is important...)

From: Building Dynamic Groups-Ohio State Extension www.ag.ohio-state.edu~bdg/
**Communication: How to Talk so Others Will Listen**

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Objective:**
Students will:
- Describe 3 basic communication styles (aggressive, passive, assertive)
- Consider the consequences of various communication styles.
- Value assertive communication as the preferred way to:
  - Promote good relationships and emotional well-being in ourselves and others
  - Get our needs met (although this is no guarantee)
  - Resolve conflicts
  - Express feelings
- Value listening as an essential part of communication

**Structure:** Large group activity (video and discussion)

**Materials:** *Communication: How to Talk so Others Will Listen* video: The video can be found in the Grade 6 Healthy Transitions PowerPoint Presentation.

**Method:**
1. Ask students to define communication. Highlight the importance of our verbal and non-verbal communication.
   - Communication is an exchange of messages/information between individuals. The messages we share with others can be spoken, written, or demonstrated through our body language. The words we choose, our tone of voice and our body posture can have a great impact on the message we are trying to get across to others.
2. Explain there are many ways to express our needs, wants and feelings.
3. Tell students that you will be discussing three main communication styles – Aggressive, Passive and Assertive.
4. View the Communication: How to Talk so Others Will Listen video. The video will prompt the facilitator to pause the video and discuss the presented communication style with the group. See discussion points below. Allow enough time for students to reflect/answer discussion questions, prior to sharing facilitator feedback. The video also includes the importance of listening well when others are talking.

Discussion points – Passive communication

• What is said, or NOT said when using passive communication?
  • You don’t say what you want, think, or feel.
  • You may try to get your message across without speaking out directly. Sometimes, you don’t say anything at all – even when you have something to say.
  • You might say something is fine, or that nothing is wrong, when that’s not how you really feel.

• What do you think when using passive communication?
  • They should know how I feel about this.
  • They’ll be angry if I say what is really on my mind.
  • My opinion doesn’t matter to them.

• How do you feel when using passive communication?
  • Frustrated
  • Resentful
  • Used
  • Sad/upset

• Describe the tone of voice and body language used with passive communication.
  • Quiet/soft tone voice
  • Avoiding eye contact/looking away
  • Poor posture or slouching
  • Fidgeting
• In most situations, passive communication isn’t effective. You don’t get what you want, and you may get pushed around. Your feelings get hurt and your problems don’t get solved.

• Ask students to reflect on situations where using passive communication might work:
  • To avoid conflict or a risky situation
  • To wait for a better time to have a discussion (maybe the person you need to speak with is in a bad mood, or is dealing with another problem
  • Giving yourself some time to calm down and think about how you want to handle the situation

Resume video

Discussion points – Aggressive communication

• What is said when using aggressive communication?
  • You say what you want, think and feel in an angry and threatening way.
  • “YOU statements” are used, like “You never listen to me!” or “You always take their side!”

• When YOU statements are used, it often makes the other person feel attacked and in response, they will want to defend themselves. The use of YOU statements, will likely start an argument and only make the situation worse.

• What do you think when using aggressive communication?
  • I’m right and they’re wrong!
  • They’re trying to upset me on purpose!
• How do you feel when using aggressive communication?
  • Angry
  • Out of control
  • Maybe guilty afterwards

• Describe the tone of voice and body language used with aggressive communication.
  • Loud, angry or threatening tone of voice
  • Clenching fists or pointing fingers
  • Waving arms or arms tightly crossed
  • Hitting, banging or throwing things around
  • Stomping feet
  • Lowered brows, squinting

• In most situations, aggressive communication isn’t effective. You may get what you want, but you can damage relationships and lose respect from others. People may avoid you or not want to listen to you because they fear the discussion will end up in an argument.

• Aggressive communication can work well when you’re in a risky situation and you need to get out fast. Some examples include:
  • “Leave me alone!”
  • “I said STOP!”

Resume video

Discussion points – Assertive communication

• What is said when using assertive communication?
  • You say what you want, think and feel in an open and direct way.
  • “I statements” are used, like “I think...” or “I feel like...”
• When you use “I statements”, you are expressing your thoughts, feelings or needs. Unlike agressing communication and “YOU statements”, the person you are communicating with can’t argue with what you’re saying because what you are expressing belongs to YOU (your thoughts, your feelings, your needs…).

• What do you think when using assertive communication?
  • About the other person’s point of view, even if it might be different from yours
  • About the best time and place to start the discussion
  • About possible solutions or compromises

• How do you feel when using assertive communication?
  • In control
  • Calm
  • Good about sticking up for yourself in a positive way

• Describe the tone of voice and body language used with assertive communication.
  • Firm but welcoming tone of voice
  • Open body stance, relaxed and standing/sitting straight
  • Facing the person you’re talking to and maintaining eye contact
  • Smiling when appropriate

• Assertive communication is the best to use in almost any situation. It is especially good for working out a problem. By using assertive communication, you increase your chances of being well understood and getting what you want or need. You may not always get what you want, but you’ll maintain good relationships with others.

_resume video_
Discussion points – Listening well:
• Ask students to reflect on how they listen to others. Personal reflection: How can I improve my listening skills?
  • Do not interrupt
  • Summarize what the other person just said to me to make sure I understood correctly
  • Use words of encouragement
  • Send positive non-verbal messages such as facing the person who is speaking
  • Put down my cell phone or other electronic device that could distract me

• Assertive communication takes practice.
• While assertiveness may not always get you what you want (others always have the right to say no); it offers a good chance of success and helps to build or keep positive relationships. Other methods may get people what they want in the short term but can create problems in the future.
• There are times when a passive or a verbally aggressive response may be the best choice. Ask students to identify such situations. (For example, you may choose to be quiet and wait to discuss things later when the other person is in a bad mood; this is passive. An aggressive response would be appropriate if you are in a risky or dangerous situation and you need to get out right away (“Get away from me now!”,” or “Leave me alone!”)
• Being able to listen when others are talking is an important piece to effective communication.
True/False Activity

Time: 10 minutes

Objective:
Students will recall major concepts learned in previous sessions.

Structure: Large group activity

Method:
1. Divide the classroom into two sides - ‘true’ side and ‘false’ side.
2. Explain that you will be reading out statements, and that students will have to decide if the statement is true or false. If they believe the statement is true, they move to the ‘true’ side; and vice versa, if they feel the statement is false.
3. Ask students to explain their choices and provide a brief clarification of the statement after students respond. You can do this by reviewing the info provided after each statement with the group or ask students leading questions to come up with similar conclusions.

Some of the statements below summarize some of the key concepts the group has discussed throughout the sessions. Some of the statements introduce new concepts that haven’t been previously discussed. The facilitator can decide which statements they wish to use for this activity.
Statements:

We have some control over our mental health.
• **True.** Although we can’t always control what happens to us, we have some control over how we react. Sometimes changing the way we think about things can help. At other times, though, our feelings are so overwhelming and painful that we need to talk to others for help and support. This is another really important way we can prevent our struggles from turning into more serious problems.

All stress is bad.
• **False.** Stress is a normal part of everyday life and affects everyone. Stress is what you feel when you are worried or uncomfortable about something. Stress can be anything that threatens us, challenges us, or scares us. Some stress in our lives is necessary to help keep us alert and energized, and to help us get things done. For example, preparing for a test or a hockey game.

Sometimes we need more than one person to help us when we are struggling.
• **True.** At some point in each of our lives, we all need some help from others when we are struggling. People we can talk to include parents or family members, friends that you trust, or adults in your community like teachers and coaches. Sometimes we need professional help from doctors or therapists. The important thing to remember is to reach out for help.

The way we talk and listen has a big impact on our relationships.
• **True.** Listening attentively to others gives the message that we care about them, and that what they say is important to us. Being assertive can help you work out everyday conflicts without damaging relationships. Being assertive also tells others that we will stick up for ourselves, so that we earn respect.
You shouldn’t express your feelings when you are feeling upset.

- **False.** No matter how you feel – good or bad – it’s healthy to put your feelings into words (“I feel sad”, or “I am frustrated”). Identifying your emotions and understanding possible reasons for the feelings can help you manage those feelings in a more positive way (e.g. taking deep breaths, exercising, talking to someone).

Talking to ourselves in a positive way can help us to get through life’s struggles.

- **True.** This does take practice, though. Trying to use more positive self-talk when we’re faced with a tough situation can help us work through the problem. For example, if you fail a test instead of telling yourself that you’re stupid, remind yourself that you just did badly on a test. If you’ve done badly on a test, what can you do? You can study more, ask to re-take the test or get the help you need to understand the material.

Being a good friend can sometimes mean breaking a promise to make sure a friend gets help.

- **True.** Sometimes, a friend might tell you they are feeling badly or struggling with a serious situation. A friend in this situation needs help – too much help for you to be expected to give alone. Secrets like these need to be shared with a trusted adult who can help your friend get the support they need to feel better and get through the difficult situation safely. When friends are struggling, they can’t always see the best way to cope with the situations. You might need to break a promise to help them get the support they need.
Too much screen time doesn’t interfere with a healthy lifestyle.

- **False.** Using tablets, computers and playing video games are examples of screen time. You may use screens for schoolwork and that’s okay. Too much time spent in front of a screen can not only affect your vision but also your ability to be better in school. Spending less time on your screen can improve self-confidence, improve fitness, and allow you to have more fun with friends.

Mental health challenges can occur in anyone, even children.

- **True.** Mental health challenges can occur in anyone, even children. They are not a weakness and are not because of your personality. Children and teenagers can also develop mental health conditions, such as anxiety, depression, or panic disorders. If you or someone you know is having challenges with their mental health, it is very important to ask for help.