LESSON #1 – RECOGNIZING STRESSORS FOR YOUTH

SCRIPTURE

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

“The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual…. Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity.” (CCC 362, 364)

"Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity." (CCC 382)

VIRTUES

Prudence: Prudence (good sense) uses right judgment to guide action. A prudent person considers the advice of others, and is guided by the Gospel and Church teaching. Prudence binds us more closely with God and neighbour. (CCC 1806)

Fortitude: Fortitude (courage) “strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life.” It enables one to conquer fear and face trials and persecutions. (CCC 1808)

CATHOLIC THEMES

Stewardship: Stewardship is about caring for the gifts God has entrusted to us. We are called to be good stewards of our talents, our bodies, our souls, our communities and of God’s creation. Persons “who practice stewardship recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom and the source of all they have and are and will be. They know themselves to be recipients and caretakers of God’s many gifts. They are grateful for what they have received and eager to cultivate their gifts out of love for God and one another.”

Diligence: The diligent person perseveres and completes their tasks despite obstacles, boredom, or hardships.

MATERIALS

- Chart paper/Bristol board/markers or PowerPoint or Smart board for Guidelines for Health Class creation
- Synectics Pictures (1.0 V)
- Holistic Health (1.1 V/H)
- Common Stressors for Youth - Round 1 (1.2 V)
- Common Stressors for Youth - Round 1 Reference (1.2 REF)
• Common Stressors for Youth - Round 2 (1.3 V)
• Common Stressors for Youth - Round 2 Reference (1.3 REF)
• Smart Board/Internet connection

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT RESOURCES**

• For mental health information: [www.mindyourmind.ca](http://www.mindyourmind.ca)
• For definitions related to gender/sexual orientation, etc. Rainbow Health Ontario [http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/glossary/](http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/glossary/)

**Catholic Perspective:**

As Catholics, we take a holistic approach to health that takes into consideration the mind, body and soul. The human person is simultaneously corporeal and spiritual, the body and soul united. "This unity is so profound that, thanks to the spiritual principle which is the soul, the body which is material, becomes a living human body and participates in the dignity of the image of God." (Comp. 69) Thus, since we are physical/spiritual creatures created in the image of God, and these aspects cannot be separated, any discussion of health must include spiritual health.

In this lesson students identify common stressors faced by youth. Unfortunately, Religion or faith can add stress to our youth, especially if it is used in unhealthy ways or is not taught from the perspective of life-giving love. Youth can feel unworthy of God’s love or forgiveness; they may feel the need to hide their faith or religious practices (prayer, church attendance, participating in the sacraments) from their peers; or their understanding of their faith may be unduly influenced by society’s misconceptions of faith. It is important for teachers and students to recognize and address such stressors. More importantly, it must be emphasized that Catholics have many spiritual practices for coping with stress: prayer, meditation, scripture, and the Sacraments. Not only can these be discussed in a health class, but more importantly they should be normative practices in the school.

**TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES**

**INTRODUCTION (2 MINUTES)**

• Welcome the students to health class. Explain to students that in this health unit, students will have an opportunity to think about what it means to be healthy, and to consider the types of factors that impact our health both positively and
negatively. Students will also practise various health-related skills that they can use in their everyday lives.

**Creating Guidelines for Health Class Discussions (5 min)**

- Explain to students that since there are often times in health classes when sensitive issues may be discussed, and because we want everyone in the class to feel comfortable to openly discuss their thoughts and ideas, it is important to develop a class set of guidelines that could be used for all health classes.

- Together with the class, create a list of Guidelines for Health Class that everyone feels comfortable following. These may be created and recorded on chart paper, or Bristol board and could remain hanging up in the class or you may want to create them on a PowerPoint slide or the Smart board.

- Some sample guidelines include:
  - Respect (i.e. No laughing at questions, listening when others speak, etc.)
  - No name rule (i.e. Don’t use real names of people when giving examples.)
  - Participate (i.e. Try to contribute to all class activities and discussions.)
  - Right to pass (i.e. During exit statements, if someone is uncomfortable with the topic, they may pass on that particular topic.)
  - Golden Rule ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Matthew 20:40

- Remind students about supports/pathways to help, particularly with respect to sensitive issues that may arise in the lessons. Provide students with suggestions for who they can talk to or how to access help if a topic makes them upset.

- Sum up the discussion with the Golden Rule: “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 7:12)

**Activity #1 – My Health (25 min)**

**Strategy: Synectics**

- Display the **Synectics Pictures** (1.0 V) provided (or create your own that would best relate to your class) around the room. Ask students to think to themselves about how they feel their health is right now. Ask that they think about different aspects of their health when considering this. Explain to students that while they are thinking about their health, you would like them to look around the room at the various pictures hanging up. Explain to them that in a few seconds, you are going to ask them to go and stand by the picture that best relates to their health.

- After about twenty seconds, ask students to stand by one of the pictures. Tell students not to worry about where their friends are standing. They should stand by the picture that best represents their own health.

- Once all students are standing at a picture, ask them to number off from one. Ask that within their groups, they take turns stating: “This picture best represents my health because________.”
Once all students have had a chance to share within their groups, ask for someone from each group to report back to the larger group about some of the ideas that were shared within their groups.

Display the visual, Holistic Health (1.1 V/H) and provide students with a copy of the diagram. Explain to students that much of what they discussed relates to this image of Holistic Health. Explain that in order to be healthy, a person needs to take into account all of the various areas of health as they are all interconnected. These include:

- Physical (exercise, healthy eating, getting enough sleep, safe sexual health practices, etc.);
- Emotional (showing empathy for others, using self-regulation methods for coping, etc.);
- Social (healthy relationships with friends, families, etc. and positive sense of self including identity formation - gender identity, social group identity, spiritual identity, etc.)
- Spiritual/cultural (understanding of own values, beliefs, morals, religious and/or cultural practices, etc.)

After reviewing the model for Holistic Health, summarize by explaining that it is a good idea to keep this model in mind when working through each of the health units this year as they will be able to connect the various aspects of health to many of the topics that will be discussed in health class. This will help create an understanding of how all of the areas of health are interconnected and the idea that health is not just something physical. (Students may need to understand how spiritual health is related. This would be a good time to explore the scripture passage and quote from the Catechism at the beginning of the lesson. The human person is simultaneously corporeal and spiritual, the body and soul united. “This unity is so profound that, thanks to the spiritual principle which is the soul, the body which is material, becomes a living human body and participates in the dignity of the image of God.” (Comp. 69) Thus, since we are physical/spiritual creatures created in the image of God, and these aspects cannot be separated, any discussion of health must include spiritual health.)

**Activity #2 – Recognizing Stressors for Youth (30 min)**

**Strategy: Jigsaw**

- Explain to students that the focus of this activity is to consider the different types of stressors there are that impact people their age.
- Divide students into groups of four. Students should sit together in their groups, preferably in a circle formation.
- Ask students to number off from one to four within each group. If there are some groups with five, ask that two students in those groups take on the same number.
- Display the visual, Common Stressors for Youth – Round I (1.2 V). Ask students to refer to the visual and tell them that their topic is the number on the screen that
matches their number in the group. For example, if they are number one in the group, their topic will be Family.

- Tell students that once they see their topic, they should think to themselves about all of the reasons someone might experience stress related to that topic. After about thirty seconds, ask that students take turns in their groups sharing what they think would cause stress for someone as it relates to that topic.

- Allow groups enough time to share. Once they have all shared, briefly discuss each of the four topics using **Common Stressors for Youth – Round 1 Reference (1.2 REF)**.

- Repeat the process by displaying **Common Stressors for Youth – Round 2 (1.3 V)**. (Note: for this group of topics, you may need to provide students with a definition for gender identity/gender expression/sexual orientation before students begin. Definitions may be found at [www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/glossary](http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/glossary) or in the glossary of the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum document.) Ask students to think for thirty seconds about their topic on the screen. After students have had time to think about their topics, ask them to share their ideas within the group about all of the ways their topic could be a potential stressor for some youth.

- After a few minutes, ask students to share ideas within the larger group about each of the four topics. Use the **Common Stressors for Youth – Round 2 Reference (1.3 REF)** while leading the discussion.

**Activity #3 – Stress as a Part of Life (5 min)**

**Strategy: Group Sharing**

- Ask students to reflect on all of the different stressors and the reasons behind why they cause stress to youth. Ask students to discuss in their groups whether they think it is “normal” or expected that these types of events, etc. should cause stress for youth or not and why or why not.

- After groups have had time to discuss ideas, ask for volunteers to share what was discussed in the groups. (Some possible discussion ideas: yes it is normal because these are all difficult situations to deal with.)

- Ask students if there are times when stress can actually be helpful? Tell groups to discuss this.

- After groups have had time to discuss how stress may be helpful, ask volunteers to share ideas. (Some possible discussion ideas: sometimes when you feel stressed it’s because you are in a situation that you know is not right, so it helps you realize it’s not good for you, sometimes you feel stress right before a test or before an athletic event or musical performance but this helps you focus more and it shows how important it is to you, or helps motivate you.)

- Explain to students that these all are very difficult situations and that it is in fact normal to feel stress from these types of situations, however, what is important is how we all deal with the stress. Explain that many people have
dealt with similar stressors and they worked through the difficulties and often learned something along the way. It is important, though, for each person to figure out how to manage stress, where to get help when needed and to decide what types of coping strategies work for them because at every stage in life, there are always stressors. The stressors just change in nature over time.

- Our faith provides unique ways to deal with stress: prayer, meditation, scripture, and the Sacraments. Not only can these be discussed in a health class, but more importantly they should be a normative practices in the school. When these practices become woven into the fabric of our lives, they provide us with the tools and strategies to face stress.

**Exit Statement (3 min)**

- Ask students to think about something positive they would do to help themselves when they are feeling stressed. Give students about twenty seconds to think to themselves and then ask for each person to give one statement before they leave. (Possible responses: physical activity, getting enough sleep, eating healthy, going for a run, yoga, talking to someone, listening to music, reading a book, lifting weights, meditating, colouring a mandala, practising deep breathing, prioritizing what needs to be done, making time to take a break and do something fun, prayer, meditation, scripture, and the Sacraments etc.)

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**NOTE:** Consider creating a “Question of the Day” to start each class, beginning in Lesson #2. This question could relate to current events in society as they relate to the topics being discussed on that particular day in health class. The format of the question/answer could be done in a circle to start the class or by having students stand in a circle as a warm up for each class. The idea would be similar to the exit statement in that students would have an opportunity to think about the topic and would have a chance to share their thoughts.

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**Closing Prayer:**

**Prayer for Good Health**

Lord, today I offer You my mind  
May I seek the mind of Christ in all things  
Freed from anxiety and fear  
Filled with wholeness and wellness

Today I offer You my spirit  
Your Spirit dwells deeply within me  
My Spirit is alive in You  
Freed from depressive thoughts and critical thinking

Today I offer You my body  
May it be a temple dedicated to You O Lord
A place for You to live and reign

Lord I offer you my whole being
I present my mind, spirit and body to You
Come and take me as a living sacrifice
This day and everyday
May I ever glorify and worship You

Amen. (Adapted from a short Prayer for Good Health from www.lords-prayer-words.com)
SYNECTICS PICTURES
HOLISTIC HEALTH

- Values
- Beliefs
- Morals
- Religious or cultural practices

- Healthy eating
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Hygiene
- Safe sexual health practices

- Healthy relationships with peers, families, partners, etc.
- Using appropriate relationship skills for conflict
- Identity formation

- Self-regulation
- Empathy for others
- Resilience

Spiritual/Cultural
Physical
Social
Emotional
1.2 V

COMMON STRESSORS FOR YOUTH – ROUND 1

1. Family
2. Friends
3. Technology
4. School
1.2 REF

**COMMON STRESSORS FOR YOUTH – ROUND 1 REFERENCE**

1. **Family**
   - divorce
   - siblings
   - substance use
   - money
   - curfews/rules
   - values/beliefs
   - illness
   - pets

2. **Friends**
   - making friends
   - keeping friends
   - feeling like you belong
   - dealing with friends who are mean
   - worrying about what friends think
   - pressure from friends

3. **Technology**
   - anonymous sites
   - pictures being sent
   - interacting with people online that you don't know face to face
   - texts waking you up in the night
   - people spreading rumours
   - watching Netflix/gaming until late at night - not enough sleep
   - misunderstandings that cause conflicts with friends

4. **School**
   - marks
   - assignments
   - presentations
   - trying out for leadership positions
   - teachers
   - peers at school
COMMON STRESSORS FOR YOUTH – ROUND 2

1. Dating Relationships
2. Poverty
3. Religion or Culture
4. Gender Identity / Gender Expression / Sexual Orientation
COMMON STRESSORS FOR YOUTH – ROUND 2 REFERENCE

1. Dating Relationships
- pressure to spend a lot of time together
- pressure to be in a dating relationship
- risk of friends getting upset - lack of time for them
- sexual health decision making
- parental pressure/rules related to dating relationships
- stress when a relationship ends

2. Poverty
- lack of food
- worry about where you live
- potential arguments in the house about money
- not able to participate in activities at school
- ashamed of family
- potential mental health concerns within the family
- worry about being able to reach own educational goals
- clothing

3. Religion or Culture
- people making fun of religious cultural practices
- pressure from community to accept cultural norms and beliefs or the opposing ideologies between faith and mainstream societies
- expectations from the community
- Confusion, fear, guilt, misconceptions

4. Gender Identity/Gender Expression/Sexual Orientation
- worry about people finding out
- worry about how to come out to friends/family
- harassment
- afraid to be yourself
- questioning about how you feel