

A GUIDE TO PROMOTE THE DYNAMIC SOCIALIZATION OF ADOLESCENTS

Based on an idea by: Jasmin Roy



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OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE PANDEMIC SITUATION

Once COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, the province of Quebec went into general lockdown until May 2020. The Quebec population has been subjected to restrictive health measures and further lockdowns to reduce the spread of the virus, which has required many adjustments (e.g., mask wearing, frequent hand washing, physical distancing). Since this new situation in the spring of 2020 was unpredictable, it may have generated a feeling of loss of control. There were many factors that caused stress in individuals, a stress which still persists (Dickerson and Kemeny, 2004). A great deal of fear and anxiety has arisen in this context, whether concerning our own health, that of our loved ones, our personal future or that of society in general.

The repercussions of the pandemic may even be greater among at-risk populations. Adolescents are one of these at-risk populations, due to the developmental period they are going through, among other factors (Guessoum et al., 2020; Marques de Miranda et al., 2020). The period of adolescence is crucial in a human's life, as it leads to major physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. The pandemic has had a drastic impact on teenagers: they have not been able to continue their schooling in person, participate in extracurricular activities (sports, music, theatre, etc.) or see their friends. Although health and social restrictions are necessary during a pandemic, it is important to acknowledge that some of these restrictions directly conflict with the basic needs for optimal development during adolescence, such as building an identity outside the family through social relationships and participating in activities outside the family unit.

Since teenagers' daily lives have been greatly disrupted by the pandemic, many of their reference points have subsequently disappeared. These disruptions have been and may still be a major source of stress and distress for them. Furthermore, stress may significantly contribute to the development of various physical and mental health problems. Adolescents are particularly sensitive to the effects of stress, due to the developmental period in which they find themselves (Lupien, McEwen, Gunnar and Heim, 2009; Lupien et al., 2013). Consequently, the current circumstances of the pandemic are exacerbating pre-existing problems and giving rise to new difficulties. These unique circumstances are compounded by challenges that typically exist during adolescence. For these reasons, it is essential that Quebec adolescents receive appropriate support in order to deal with these risks, which may have significant long-term repercussions. The current situation is an unprecedented ordeal that requires our full attention, support and assistance in order to help our teenagers develop the resources and skills to "bounce back" from the pandemic.

2. IMPACT ON YOUTH

2.1 Psychological distress

A 2020 study reports that during the pandemic, more than one fifth of teenagers' mental health was affected (Zhang et al., 2020). In particular, symptoms of post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression were frequently reported by adolescents during the pandemic (Guessoum et al., 2020; Marques de Miranda et al., 2020). Many of these teens expressed feelings of sadness, isolation, loneliness, crying and feelings of loss that reflect their distress or even despair.

Over the years, adolescent distress has evolved, and this is still true in the context of a pandemic. In 2010-2011, 20% of Quebec youth had a high level of distress (Traoré et al., 2018). In 2016-2017, this proportion rose to 29%, while in the summer of 2020, a few months after the beginning of the pandemic, the proportion of youth with a high level of distress was even higher (Traoré et al., 2018; Laurier and Pascuzzo, 2021). An increase in distress was also noted in the winter of 2021 compared to the previous summer. In particular, depressive and anxiety symptoms were the highest and even increased among adolescents between the summer of 2020 and the winter of 2021 (Laurier, Pascuzzo, Beaulieu and Labonté, 2021). This suggests that the increase may be due to the extension of health and social measures. When the symptoms of boys and girls are compared, girls usually have more severe symptoms, both before and during the pandemic. (Laurier, Pascuzzo and Paré-Beauchemin, 2021; Traoré et al., 2018). However, all boys and girls exhibit high levels of distress and need support.

During the pandemic, teens may also have been exposed to death for the first time by reports in the media or personal loss among those around them (Guessoum et al., 2020). Similarly, it seems that the more teenagers are informed about the pandemic (e.g., nature and spread of the disease), the more they have symptoms of anxiety and depression (Zhou et al., 2020). These teens are better informed about the pandemic and its associated dangers, but they do not yet have the cognitive and emotional maturity to cope with it, which increases their risk of experiencing anxiety and depressive symptoms.

2.2 Loss of bearings

Another impact the pandemic has had on teenagers is that it has imposed a significant "developmental pause" on them. To help reduce the spread of the virus and protect society from COVID-19, the health and social restrictions have forced teens to put aside what they enjoy, what motivates them, what defines them and what contributes to their well-being. Teens have been required to limit, reduce and even completely stop various core and essential activities for more than a year. They have had to endure many hardships: not spending time with their friends, not going to places where they mature outside the family environment (e.g., schools, youth centres, cultural centres) and not participating in sports or cultural activities, etc. However, this is contrary to what is desired and expected during adolescence, when, for healthy development, they need to establish greater autonomy from their parents, develop close relationships with a larger social network (i.e., peers and other significant adults), discover their interests, skills and talents by trying out various activities and hobbies, in order to better guide their decisions about their future.

2.3 Changes and interpersonal problems

2.3.1 Family relationships

In addition to psychological distress and loss of bearings, the health and social measures needed to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic have greatly affected family relationships. Due to social distancing and lockdowns, people have had no choice but to isolate themselves with their close family and pets. During this global crisis, family has become a more important refuge than ever. In particular, studies show that adolescents who have a strong and positive attachment with their parents have fewer symptoms of distress, depression, anxiety and irritability and that this link is associated with greater psychological well-being among youth (Laurier, Pascuzzo and Beaulieu, 2021). In addition, during periods of stress, positive interactions between parents and their teens may help them cope better (Moreira et al., 2020; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2017).

The pandemic has also brought its share of difficulties for parents, making this situation particularly stressful for them. Parents not only had to manage and cope with the challenges, losses and additional professional and economic pressures, but they were also forced to take on a greater role in the education of their teens, since schooling had to be done remotely from home. Furthermore, they have had to deal with changes at work (e.g., teleworking) and the redistribution of tasks and responsibilities at home. As challenges increase while resources diminish, parents may become much less emotionally and cognitively available to properly support their teens, potentially affecting their relationships with them. This is cause for concern, since parents are crucial sources of support and comfort for their children, even during adolescence, and particularly in high stress situations (Zeifman and Hazan, 2008). An additional effort is constantly needed to maintain the emotional connection and bond with extended family members and the management of “pandemic fatigue” that may set in. While these challenges are mounting up for parents, their own support network has been drastically reduced. It is therefore not surprising that during the pandemic, a large proportion of parents reported experiencing distress (Pascuzzo, Laurier and Bédard, 2021). Faced with the challenges and hardships caused by the pandemic, it is important to acknowledge the impact that COVID-19 has had on family environments, parents' well-being and parent-adolescent relationships.



2.3.2 Relationships with peers

Although the quality of parent-adolescent relationships is essential for the well-being of youth, adolescence is a developmental period in which contact with peers and the development of close relationships outside the family environment are vital. Friends are an important source of comfort, emotional support and encouragement, helping teens to manage, cope with and positively overcome various developmental challenges during this period (Allen, 2008; Zeifman and Hazan, 2008). Adolescents who have strong attachments with friends report fewer symptoms of distress, depression, anxiety and irritability (Laurier, Pascuzzo and Beaulieu, 2021; Lee and Hankin, 2009; Wilkinson, 2010).

To comply with health and social measures during the pandemic, direct contact of adolescents with their friends has been limited or non-existent. This has increased the distress of some. As a result, adolescents perceive social contacts to be less human, since they are not in person, causing them to feel abandoned, alone and unable to anticipate when the situation will return to normal or improve (Laurier, Pascuzzo and Beaulieu, 2021). Some even report feeling like they are missing out on their teenage years (*I feel like I'm missing out on my "youth." Since I was young, I've heard that when I'm about 18, it'll be the best years of my life... That's not the case right now...* [18-year-old girl, winter 2021; Laurier, Pascuzzo and Paré-Beauchemin 2021]). When teens delve deeper into how they feel about not being able to see their friends or lovers, their responses are very revealing about their state and fall under the following themes: less social life; loneliness; breakups; mental health problems; depression symptoms; sadness; anger; worries; boredom; and desire to disobey rules. Moreover, some studies have suggested that prolonged periods of diminished social contact increase the risk of adverse mental health impacts on youth (e.g., more symptoms of post-traumatic stress, confusion and anger; Beam and Kim, 2020; Brooks et al., 2020; Fernández et al., 2020).

While lockdowns and social distancing have been necessary in order to reduce the pandemic's impact, this imposed "developmental pause" needs to end as soon as it is safe and possible to do so. We should remember the sacrifices that teenagers have had to make in order to help "fight the war" against COVID-19. We need to acknowledge their contribution and invest resources to help them bounce back from the hardships and disappointments they have experienced. We can do this by supporting them and providing various opportunities to re-establish their social relationships with their peers, thereby more actively resuming optimal development. Over the long term, our future society depends on our ability to help Quebec adolescents achieve their full potential.

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS AND REGULATION

Emotional awareness and regulation facilitate the emotional functioning of people. Emotional awareness is the ability to perceive, describe and differentiate our emotions and those of others (Lane and Schwartz, 1987). This may include, for example, paying attention to, interpreting, analyzing and assessing emotions as positive or negative (Boden and Thompson, 2015; Garnefski et al., 2007; Rieffe and De Rooij, 2012; Rieffe et al., 2008). Emotion regulation, on the other hand, is the process that influences emotions and when and how they are felt and expressed (e.g., intensity; Gross, 1998, 2002; Thompson et al., 2008).

Adolescence is a developmental period characterized by significant physical and psychological changes. Adolescents frequently experience new and intense emotions while their emotion regulation skills are not fully developed (Ahmed et al., 2015; de Veld et al., 2012; Eastabrook et al., 2014; Gilbert, 2012; Lane and Schwartz, 1987; Rieffe and De Rooij, 2012; Rieffe et al., 2008; Spear, 2009). At the same time, teenagers are seeking greater independence, which translates into a need to manage their emotions with a greater degree of autonomy. Nevertheless, support from their significant others (parents, teachers, peers) is vital in order to help adolescents develop and fine-tune their emotion regulation strategies (Pascuzzo et al., 2015).

Unlike children, adolescents are better able to feel different emotions at the same time (i.e., mixed emotions) and use cognitive and behavioural strategies to manage them, such as reinterpreting emotions and thoughts and problem solving (see appendix) (Lane and Schwartz, 1987; Riediger and Klipker, 2014; Thompson and Goodman, 2010). However, some key cognitive processes for managing emotions are still developing during this period of life (e.g., inhibitory control, decision-making, adopting new perspectives; Blakemore and Robbins, 2012; Dumontheil, 2014; Somerville and Casey, 2010). Thus, adolescents may need to experiment with the effectiveness of these strategies before adopting them (Hofmann et al., 2012).

It is important to address emotional awareness and regulation, since difficulties with recognizing emotions and dysfunctional emotion regulation habits may play a key role in the development of various mental health problems (e.g., depressive and anxiety symptoms; Sendzik et al., 2017; Schäfer et al., 2017). Conversely, good emotional awareness and regulation skills may be associated with fewer depressive and anxiety symptoms, as well as several other benefits (e.g., academic success and better social functioning; Gross, 2013; McLaughlin et al., 2011).

Since most mental health disorders emerge during adolescence (Paus et al., 2008), this period is an optimal window of opportunity to teach autonomous and effective emotional awareness and regulation skills. Since adolescence is a period when adolescents increasingly develop their autonomy and independence from their parents, the school environment can play a key role in helping these youth recognize and regulate their emotions.

Schäfer et al. (2017) provide an excellent presentation of maladaptive and adaptive strategies in their article's introduction. The following is a summary:

Various strategies for regulating emotions can be divided into two main categories: maladaptive strategies (i.e., associated with various long-term problems, e.g., more depressive and anxiety symptoms); and adaptive strategies (i.e., associated with various long-term benefits, e.g., fewer depressive and anxiety symptoms).

MALADAPTIVE STRATEGIES

AVOIDANCE: Avoidance consists in avoiding experiences felt and experienced internally (e.g., emotions) and avoiding various objects, people, situations, etc. In the short term, avoidance may reduce negative emotions, however, in the long term, avoidance has negative impacts that exceed the short-term benefits, since negative emotions such as anxiety tend to persist. Avoidance may prevent children from getting used to negative emotions, as habituation gradually leads to a decrease in these emotions. Avoidance prevents children from seeing that their negative emotions can decrease and be replaced by positive emotions, which also prevents them from experiencing a feeling of self-efficacy regarding the regulation of their emotions.

SUPPRESSION OF EMOTIONS: The suppression of emotions refers to (1) the suppression of emotions and thoughts felt and experienced internally or (2) suppressing the expression of our emotions. This strategy may have the opposite of the desired effect, since it maintains or even increases the intensity of the suppressed negative emotions. It is assumed that children aged 10 and over have a sufficient understanding of this strategy and are able to use it intentionally, for example, smiling when they receive a gift that disappoints them.

RUMINATION: Unlike avoiding or suppressing emotions, which usually aim to decrease the emotional experience, rumination involves repeatedly focusing on emotional experiences and their causes and consequences. Rumination is even linked to other maladaptive emotion regulation habits, for example, substance abuse and food problems.

ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES

REINTERPRETATION/REASSESSMENT: Reinterpretation/reassessment consists in changing our thoughts and beliefs about the meaning of an event, situation, context, etc. Instructions can be given to adolescents to help them reinterpret/reassess events and thus decrease negative emotions and rumination.

PROBLEM SOLVING: Problem solving consists of reflection, thoughts and behaviours aimed at changing adverse circumstances that cause unwanted emotions. This strategy has two components: (1) the belief that we have the skills required to solve the problem and (2) that we actually have the skills required to solve the problem. Some cognitive and behavioural skills needed to do effective problem solving include, for example, knowing how situations may influence our emotions and how to change these situations.

ACCEPTANCE: Accepting our emotions means allowing them to be freely experienced without trying to resist their presence in any way. Accepting emotions is an appropriate way to manage them, since when we accept them, dysfunctional reactions are less likely, for example, judging or suppressing our negative emotions. Using this acceptance strategy also allows adolescents to experience that negative emotions are tolerable and transient/temporary, which can help them better manage these emotions. However, a lower level of acceptance makes emotional avoidance habits more likely.



PRESENTATION

OF EMOTIONAL AWARENESS AND REGULATION

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

CONTENT:

SHEET A – What is an emotion? + Some tips

SHEET B – Primary and secondary emotions + emotional range and transition (teacher's sheet and student's sheet)

SHEET C – Recognizing Emotions

SHEET D – Emotion Regulation

SHEET E – Emotions are Vital for Interpersonal Relationships

GOAL:

To help students review the range of emotions, identify, recognize, assess and appropriately express them, and reflect on various situations in which they occur. In teams, they will consider strategies to regulate their emotions.

GUIDELINES:

These tools may be used in various subjects. We have specifically focused on **French, Ethics and Religious Culture, Physical Education** (health component) and the **Arts** (Drama, Dance, Visual Arts and Music). However, they may be used with students in other contexts in order to develop socialization and emotional awareness.

Tailor the resources to the subject in which the activity takes place and make a connection with the **Quebec Education Program, Progression of Learning** and **Frameworks for the Evaluation of Learning** depending on the levels.

NOTES:

It is easier to demonstrate emotions in drama, depict them in dance or illustrate them in plastic and visual arts. Similarly, in music, students could be asked to represent, using a musical instrument, the sound or musicality of each of the emotions, or compose a song and music about emotions.

In the context of sports in Physical Education, emotion regulation is important during teamwork and competition.

In Mathematics, we can discuss the number or mathematical formula that best represents anger, sadness, etc. We can even associate each emotion with numbers and rank their intensity on a scale of 1 to 10, or from 1 to 100, or use increasingly complex formulas to describe each emotion.

In French, we can use activities to assess oral skills, but also to encourage students to write texts based on these topics.

DEFINITION

An **emotion** is information. It is often perceived as positive or negative, pleasant or unpleasant.

The French word "émotion" (emotion) comes from the following Latin words:

- exmovere, which means "to stir up";
- motio, which means "action of moving."

Emotion is therefore the movement of life itself! It sets the body in motion, like a physiological reflex.

Emotion is also an emotional state of great intensity that usually occurs briefly. By linking the affective aspect to the physiological aspect, an emotion is a psychophysiological response, that is, it engages the body (physical sensations) and mind (memory). Emotion is a response to sensory stimulation or a change in the environment.

Our five senses are therefore involved in the emotional reaction process: we see, hear, feel, touch and taste, which causes a chain of internal reactions that affect us positively or negatively, pleasantly or unpleasantly. In short, it is an adaptive response to a stimulus in the environment.

This adaptive response to the environment "is specific to each individual. In fact, it occurs in a situation that is significant to the individual, and the importance given to it by each individual and the resulting emotional response may vary."

"An emotion is therefore information that our body gives us through the triggering of physiological responses. Emotions are universal and are found in all cultures. They are the same for everyone!

These responses are considered pleasant or unpleasant by us or those around us.

What differentiates us is the speed with which we manage these emotions."

This definition is adapted from the following two websites:

<https://ecole-et-bienetre.com/definition-emotion/>

<http://lalettreatable.org/spip.php?article149>

SOME TIPS

There is no point in shrugging off or trying to ignore emotions; they come to life in spite of us. We should therefore accept, express and listen to them in order to better understand who we are (from an identity perspective) and what our needs are.

In general, it would be greatly beneficial if we stop considering emotions as positive or negative. It is normal to feel them; it makes us human. We call them positive or negative, since it is easier to perceive them that way. Experiences that arouse such emotions elicit these qualifying adjectives.

Also, in this sense, the actions we take in connection with our emotions may have harmful consequences, both on ourselves and on others.

It is therefore important to:

- be familiar with emotions (**see Sheet B**);
- understand how they arise (**see Sheet C**);
- and properly regulate them in order to appropriately and peacefully respond without harming anyone (**see Sheet D**).

In conclusion, the emotions can affect the quality of our relationships with the people around us (**see Sheet E**).



NOTES FOR THE FACILITATOR'S UNDERSTANDING:

The asterisks in the tables refer to the legend that follows the first two tables. To read the corresponding note, refer to the number of asterisks.

Also, when the range of emotions is concerned, different professionals may not consider the same order for certain categories of emotions. Approach the topic based on your values, understanding of the emotions and tools that you use in your environment.

PRIMARY EMOTIONS						
Joy (content or happy*)	Sadness	Anger (or mad**)	Disgust	Fear	Surprise (good or bad***)	Confidence

SECONDARY EMOTIONS	COMPOSITION OF SECONDARY EMOTIONS*****
Calm	Joy + Confidence
Hateful	Disgust + Anger
Excitement	Joy + Surprise
Nervousness (stress or anxiety****)	Fear + Surprise
Shame	Fear + Disgust Fear + Anger
Guilt	Sadness + Disgust Disgust + Fear
Disappointment	Sadness + Surprise
Pride	Joy + Surprise
Jealousy	Sadness + Anger
Discomfort	Fear + Joy Fear + Disgust Fear + Surprise Fear + (lack of) confidence

See table legend on next page

TABLE LEGEND – To stimulate class discussion during the activity

* The words in parentheses are synonyms, but we may refer to a certain range of emotions: being “content” is experienced more calmly compared to being “happy,” but both are experienced more calmly than “joy.”

** Describe being angry and mad in terms of the range of emotions (see part 2 for references).

*** Describe a good surprise versus an unpleasant surprise. This may greatly change an emotional feeling and experience.

**** The words in parentheses are synonyms, but we may refer to a certain range of emotions: being nervous is the first step, stress is experienced more intensely, whereas anxiety involves more intense psychophysiological responses.

***** The facilitator or teacher does not have to go into this much detail about the emotions. If you want to further explore emotions, this is an interesting topic for in-class discussion with students. In some cases, more than one basic emotional equation is possible.



OBJECTIVE:

Get students to discuss **emotional range** (e.g., first feeling an emotion with a low intensity, and then feeling that emotion with increasing intensity, or changing from a small emotion to a big emotion in just a few minutes or seconds).

Get students to discuss **emotional transition**, that is, changing from one emotion to another from a different register. Draw inspiration from the suggested emotions in order to provide examples, share your experiences and act as a role model.



PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EMOTIONS

SHEET B

(Student) Part A

Read about primary emotions. Then do the same with secondary emotions. Secondary emotions are made up of two primary emotions (sometimes more). Can you guess which primary emotions are combined for each of the secondary emotions? There may be more than one response for certain emotions.

PRIMARY EMOTIONS						
Joy (content or happy)	Sadness	Anger (or mad)	Disgust	Fear	Surprise (good or bad)	Confidence

SECONDARY EMOTIONS	COMPOSITION OF SECONDARY EMOTIONS
Calm	
Hateful	
Excitement	
Nervousness (stress or anxiety)	
Shame	
Guilt	
Disappointment	
Pride	
Jealousy	
Discomfort	

Each situation experienced arouses an emotion in us. Depending on the situation, the adaptive response is more or less intense. That's why, for example, some things make us smile, while others make us burst out laughing. Between these two emotions, we can notice a range, when we change from smiling to laughing. For the following chains of emotions, try to explain the best way to differentiate each emotion in the chain. Be creative!

Describe the range for each of the following word groups.

A. Content, happy, joy

B. Mad, angry

C. Nervousness, stress, anxiety

Sometimes we abruptly change from one emotion to another even if they are not necessarily from the same family. Can you think of a situation in which you changed...

A. From laughing to crying?

B. From being angry to laughing?

Could you give other examples of emotional transitions? Think about situations you've experienced. Once again, be creative!

Since emotions are generally universal and found in all cultures, we can easily recognize them when people express them. Body movements, gestures, facial expressions and feelings may be very similar. With your team, complete the following mission.

Choose one of the following emotions¹ (or emotion groups) and complete the following steps:

content / happy / joyful?

... sad?

... disappointed?

... angry / mad?

... stressed / anxious?

... disgusted?

... calm?

... shameful?

... jealous?

... proud?

... excited?

... surprised?

... scared?

... embarrassed?

A. Find three different GIFs that illustrate ways to express this emotion with the BODY.

B. Find two different GIFs that illustrate ways to express this emotion with the FACE.

C. Present your GIFs to the rest of the group and explain how the emotion is experienced by mentioning:

- 1- body movements and gestures;
- 2- facial expressions and
- 3- internal and external physical sensations.

1 - The facilitator can assign one emotion per team, for example.

WHAT IS EMOTION REGULATION?

Emotion regulation is an individual's ability to manage the emotional and physiological effects of an emotion in an appropriate and peaceful manner. An appropriate and peaceful manner means that there will be no negative impacts on yourself and others.

For example, we can draw, write a letter, discuss the situation with someone who can listen to and understand us, spend time alone, listen to music, etc. For some, it may mean doing physical activities to release the emotion, whether it is joy or anger.

We also often hear the term "emotional self-regulation," which means that the individual is able to manage their own emotions without help.

A. In teams, complete the list of strategies to manage emotions.²

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---------|
| • Kneading a stress ball | • Talking to someone I trust | • _____ |
| • Drawing | • Taking a walk | • _____ |
| • Listening to music | • Lying on your back and breathing | • _____ |
| • Singing | • Breathing | • _____ |
| • Being listened to | • Repeating a mantra | • _____ |
| • Drinking water | • Taking a time out | • _____ |
| • Being alone | • Doing physical activity
(focus on one particular activity that suits us) | • _____ |

B. Discuss with your team members the emotions you find easiest to manage.**C. Discuss with your team members the emotions you find most difficult to manage.****D. Discuss strategies that you agree to use in order to regulate your emotions and discuss what strategies others are already using.**

NOTES FOR THE FACILITATOR: In everyday life, a good approach is to model the strategies with the students during your activities with them. During this classroom activity, you can be a role model by pointing out to students which strategies work for you and which ones don't work as well. You can stimulate discussion about various strategies and the fact that not all strategies work for everyone.

Also, you can take time to go around to speak with each sub-team.

2 - Note: This is a great opportunity to introduce the tools proposed and created by teachers and various school professionals.

WHAT IS EMOTION REGULATION?

Emotion regulation is an individual's ability to manage the emotional and physiological effects of an emotion in an appropriate and peaceful manner. An appropriate and peaceful manner means that there will be no negative impacts on yourself and others.

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B. Discuss with your team members the emotions you find easiest to manage.

C. Discuss with your team members the emotions you find most difficult to manage.

D. Discuss strategies that you agree to use in order to regulate your emotions and discuss what strategies others are already using.

EMOTIONS ARE VITAL FOR INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

SHEET E

When we socialize with our peers and become friends, we create strong bonds; this gives us a feeling of belonging. Every day at school or elsewhere in society, we come in contact with all kinds of people. At school, we often share our space with friends, strangers and acquaintances. We find ourselves doing teamwork with all types of people around us. The quality of our interactions and interpersonal relationships is influenced by our emotions. That's why the knowledge of emotions and their recognition and regulation when experienced are very helpful when socializing.

"Knowing how to express our emotions is the ability to **perceive, become aware of, understand [...], articulate and respect them, and then explore and use them appropriately in our relationship with others** so that they are **understood**. To know how to adjust our **behaviour accordingly**, from an early age, is important to encourage this attitude, which develops awareness of what's happening inside ourselves and **others**."

"In fact, emotional development allows us to **communicate, share and interact with others** in order to **respond appropriately** and **develop secure relationships**. It allows us to understand others better and gradually put ourselves in their shoes (at least to a certain extent), grasp their viewpoint and what they feel: this is **empathy**."³

In addition, being keenly aware of our emotions helps us properly regulate them. When we are able to understand why we react in this or that way and manage (control) our emotions by taking appropriate steps, we realize that there is often a hidden need behind the emotions we feel. We seek to fulfill this need – if possible. For example, a child who has a tantrum, gets angry and cries because his parents refuse to buy him a toy at the store does not fall into a category of a need that can be fulfilled. Emotion regulation and understanding and correct perception of the situation need to be developed.

Similarly, by listening to people around us and their emotions, empathy allows us to better understand and respond to their true needs. For example, consider a baby who cries because he is hungry, a child who starts talking and screams for attention and the right to speak, etc.

3 - Source : <http://lalettreatable.org/spip.php?article149>

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS WITH PEERS

The bonds that adolescents develop with their peers are vital to optimal development and healthy mental health (Pascuzzo et al., 2015). From a teenager's perspective, keeping in touch with friends, despite social distancing, is a way to better cope with the lockdown and pandemic-related social and health measures (Laurier and Pascuzzo, 2021). Since one of the key developmental tasks in adolescence is to develop close relationships with peers, it is essential to encourage the resumption of psychological, social and identity development among youth. To facilitate the resumption of healthy relationship development outside the family, whether friendships or romantic relationships, we should provide opportunities to develop social connections, while supporting young people with this process of returning to others.

Since socialization is one of the school's three main missions, it is an ideal environment to encourage a healthy return to others. To this end, various activities can be organized and carried out at school, for example, activities that emphasize collaboration in order to achieve a common goal (e.g., collaborative challenge, escape games, sports), thereby promoting the cognitive and socio-emotional skills needed for developing social connections. During these activities, adults play an important role and can facilitate socialization. By developing close connections with at least one adult in their environment, young people will be able to refer to them if necessary and this adult will be able to supervise, guide and act as a facilitator for their social relations.

The privileged position of adults also makes it possible to undertake initiatives or projects that could potentially result in the development of new relationships among these youth. In fact, certain factors outside the family contribute to their resilience, including positive relationships with other adults, interactions with prosocial organizations (e.g., community or sports organizations), and attendance at a quality school that fosters a safe and caring climate (Boyd and Bee, 2017).

Social support is thus found to be a protective factor for various mental health problems (e.g., anxiety, depression and stress; Cao et al., 2020; Magson et al., 2021; Roach, 2018).



TALK ABOUT YOURSELF USING AN EMOJI OR GIF

This activity can be done at the beginning of the year, either in person or virtually (only synchronously, since it requires everyone to participate; the subsequent group discussion is most interesting). For in-person learning, all students must be given access to tablets.

The **goal** of this activity is to ask students to introduce themselves using emojis or GIFs that accurately represent themselves. You can establish certain guidelines on what can and cannot be used as a GIF.

As an online activity, this icebreaker can be done using Google Classroom or Zoom.

What can students share about themselves?

Students can share information about their families, pets, hobbies, etc. using emojis with the text function.

Alternative 1

Don't have computer access?

Get students to design their own emojis on a sheet of paper.

Alternative 2

Students are put in teams of two to discuss together. Each person chooses a GIF or emoji illustrating something about the other student, which they will present to the rest of the group at the appropriate time. It might be a good idea to have the other student approve the GIF or emoji choice in order to avoid any conflict or embarrassing situation.



HUMAN BINGO

GOAL: Get students to socialize in order to find out who among the group has completed the items found on the bingo grid. Everyone must be identified somewhere!

Procedure instructions:

Each student receives the grid on the following page and reads the statements. Upon the teacher's signal, the entire group will have 15 minutes to write the name of a different student for each of the items. The goal is to complete the sheet in 15 minutes and shout "BINGO"! Give them only 10 minutes to meet others and tell them that they must try to fill in as many boxes as possible.

The grid can be adapted (see blank grid below) according to the students in the classroom and the knowledge that the teacher has about them. The teacher can also participate and students can write down their name on the grid. The teacher can also prepare a grid based on a specific theme.

Once the activity has been completed, do a recap in the large group.

- A.** Ask who has been identified for each of the questions in order to observe trends and the number of people who have been able to put their names on it.
- B.** Ask the rest of the group to raise their hands if it is possible to write their name in the box.
- C.** Give a few students the chance to make some comments. This makes it possible to find out, for example, which musical instrument they play, the countries they've visited, the content found on web platforms of influencers, etc.



HUMAN BINGO

I've travelled to a country in Europe	I skateboard	I've acted in a play before	I've been on TV before	I've travelled to a country other than Canada	I'm skilled at mathematical formulas
I often play video games	I'm a big Netflix fan	I read a lot of books	I eat Nutella with a spoon	I dream of riding a motorcycle	I have more than one pet at home
I have a YouTube channel	I went to a zoo other than the Granby Zoo	I'm on a sports team	I've dressed up as a flower before	I'm an influencer on the web and more than 1,000 people follow me	I've been boating before
I use my cell phone too often	I'm good at remembering all the dates in history	I've done trampoline before	I dream of doing a triathlon	I play a musical instrument	I have at least one cat or dog
I've caught a very large fish before	I've won a medal before	I'm skilled at drawing	I'm good at science and scientific experiments	I've done a dance show before	I often eat ice cream

BINGO HUMAIN (blank grid to be completed)

PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

Extracurricular activities that teens have had to put aside during the pandemic are more than just entertainment. These activities are ways to develop relationships, share common goals with peers, and work with inspiring adults, who can act as role models. Organized leisure activities are ideal contexts for their development. They include sports (individual or team), arts and culture (e.g., music, dance, theatre, painting), youth clubs (e.g., scouts, student life, volunteering), etc.

These activities have various benefits that contribute to developmental tasks of adolescence (Denault and Poulin, 2012). For example, these activities allow them to develop their autonomy by giving them opportunities to make individual choices and negotiate a degree of independence from their families. In addition, participation in a variety of extracurricular activities contributes to identity formation through a process of exploring various social identities, while facilitating access to groups of friends who have similar interests. Commitment to and involvement in activities also allows children to reinforce their knowledge, skills and interpersonal relationships. In addition, participation in extracurricular activities allows them to realize that mastering skills and developing quality relationships requires time, practice, perseverance and patience! Youth who participate in organized leisure activities generally have better academic performance, higher academic ambitions, fewer internalized and externalized problems, and become more actively engaged citizens as adults. This is particularly true for at-risk youth (e.g., academically and/or psychosocially), who seem to derive even greater benefit from these activities (Denault and Poulin, 2012).

In addition to these benefits, it is recognized that physical activity reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as stress, psychological problems and isolation (Grasdalsmoen et al., 2020; Laurier et al., 2021; Stubbs et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2014; Wipfli et al., 2008). Considering the high level of distress experienced by youth during the pandemic (Laurier et al., 2021), physical activity is a key protective factor that promotes their adjustment. Moreover, the World Health Organization (2020) recommends physical activity to prevent depression at all ages and beyond the context of the pandemic. In young adults, regularly participating in physical or sports activities is an effective strategy to lower distress levels during COVID-19 (Shanahan et al., 2020). However, among children and adolescents, physical and sports activities have significantly decreased during the pandemic. Many parents even report that their time spent with family has become more sedentary during this period (Moore et al., 2020). During COVID-19, it is therefore recommended that adolescents participate in physical activities.

Although physical activity and sports practised at home or outdoors while complying with health and social measures is possible and can be easily accessible to adolescents (e.g., street hockey, jogging, tennis, etc.), the school is still a fundamental environment with regard to the availability, accessibility and diversity of activities in which teenagers can participate (e.g., access to equipment and premises such as the gym and swimming pool). The school environment's role is even more important for certain youth who come from underprivileged backgrounds or unsafe neighbourhoods. At school, teenagers also often have access to responsible adults, who ensure that these activities take place in positive and optimal conditions. Adults thus play a primary and essential role, since those who support adolescents during their leisure activities and who believe in the benefits of these activities significantly contribute to the participation of these youth in these activities by acting as role models (Denault and Poulin, 2012). For these reasons, in order to encourage the resumption of adolescents' psychosocial development, we recommend that the school environment actively promote extracurricular activities and social and artistic initiatives. The development of interests, personal talents, sports skills and/or those aimed at developing the future plans of youth should be promoted within schools and in the community.



It is therefore essential that public and private educational institutions offer all students extracurricular activities at school after school hours and in the local community.

1. Are you familiar with the extracurricular activities offered at your school?
2. Can you name at least three activities offered?
3. Which ones are you interested in?
4. In your opinion, what interesting activities could be added?

JASMIN ROY SOPHIE DESMARAIS FOUNDATION • A GUIDE TO PROMOTE THE DYNAMIC SOCIALIZATION OF ADOLESCENTS

The life path of adolescents consists of many series of events and experiences. Particularly difficult and sometimes unusual incidents may change their path by affecting their ability to adapt. However, these particularly difficult and unusual incidents may also give rise to changes or even significant and positive transformations. If dealt with in the proper way, the pandemic adaptation challenges and demands may become opportunities to develop and grow. For example, these positive changes and transformations may affect personal identity (e.g., optimism about life's possibilities, self-confidence), relationships with others and priorities in life (e.g., meaning of life, spirituality), which are all fundamental issues during adolescence (Blackie et al., 2016; Tedeschi and Calhoun, 2004). This ability to develop and mature following difficult incidents is related to positive coping (i.e., the ability to adapt positively to difficult circumstances) and resilience (i.e., the ability to “bounce back” or recover from stress), which have been identified as protective factors from anxiety and depression during the pandemic (Zhang et al., 2020). Through their ability to perceive challenges as opportunities to grow, adolescents may no longer consider themselves to be “victims” but see themselves as “survivors” of the event (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 2004). During the pandemic, youth may then feel that they have benefited from this period of turmoil and have emerged better and stronger or even victorious over this situation.

To transform the unprecedented situation of the COVID-19 pandemic into something good, inner reflection must be undertaken in order to re-examine pre-existing beliefs and thoughts about the new reality that is emerging and make sense of the pre-pandemic situation. Searching for a sense of coherence makes it possible to better understand and give meaning to the stressful events (Arya and Davidson, 2015; Lindström and Eriksson, 2010; Cam and Demirkol, 2019). The goal is not to return to our personal state before the difficult event, but rather to use this event as a lever for growth to enhance who we are and who we have become. For example, instead of classifying the event as entirely and only negative, we can strive to learn various life lessons from the incident or enhance our knowledge about ourselves and our relationships with others. Searching for meaning promotes a sense of coherence, which is associated with less anxiety, depression and hopelessness, while being associated with better mental health (Eriksson and Lindström, 2006; Gagnéux et al., 2020; Lindström and Eriksson, 2010; Remes, 2018).

However, cultivating a sense of coherence may be more difficult for teenagers, since their identity is in full development while their identity process has been further strained during the pandemic. It is therefore essential to foster in these emerging adults a desire to “mature during the pandemic.” To achieve this, we should listen to and assist them with their creativity and provide structure and resources to help them in this regard. For example, despite the many repercussions that the pandemic has had on youth, some of them now have greater social awareness, new interests and awareness of talents and greater personal resources (Laurier and Pascuzzo, 2021). Together, we can strive to ensure that the pandemic does not undermine Quebec youth, but instead allows them to emerge with greater knowledge of themselves, their resources and strengths and, in so doing, that they become caring adults in our future society.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY ON THE ABILITY TO ADAPT TO CHANGE

TOOL 4

All kinds of events are triggers for human beings to bring about changes in their lives. These changes are sometimes minor, sometimes major, but they help everyone build meaning and identity. Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has led us to make many changes and adjustments in all areas of our lives. However, there are many situations and events that force us to reflect on our identity, question things and make changes. If we think about it, we realize that the events that force us to change are not only negative in nature. Of course, we can consider the hardships and setbacks over the course of our lives, but also the events, such as graduating from elementary to secondary school, then from high school to college, obtaining a license to drive a moped or a car, being accepted on a sports team, in an orchestra, etc.

The following exercise encourages students to ask themselves questions so that they become aware of what has changed in their lives after an event. The questions may be used in all circumstances of life, whether the impact of the events has been positive or negative. Anyone who is able to facilitate activities in the school environment can facilitate the activity.

Option 1:

To encourage students to do some introspection, meet with them individually and discuss some issues. In a preventive approach focused on the students' well-being, this option can be done by significant professionals during occasional follow-up in order to identify the most vulnerable students in terms of mental health.

Option 2:

Ask the entire class questions; students who feel like it can answer them. This could be done, for example, in Ethics and Religious Culture or in French.

Option 3:

In French, we could ask students to compose a text individually on this theme by drawing inspiration from the various questions proposed.

Option 4:

Students could be asked to reflect on various issues in sub-teams in order to consider similarities and differences in their ways of living and adapting during the pandemic. We then discuss all the questions in a large group, encouraging students to notice similarities and differences compared to the entire class.

Option 5:

In Ethics and Religious Culture, have a debate on the theme "The Pandemic Changed Me," with students in favour and against. They have to find strong arguments to support their views.

<p>What did this event allow you to learn about yourself?</p> <p>What has changed for you and the way you see your life?</p>	<p>Inventory of responses</p> <p>(If we wish to identify and discuss them in large groups to see the similarities and differences)</p>
<p>Think about how the pandemic has had an impact:</p>	
Regarding the person you are?	
Regarding your ability to adapt?	
Regarding your emotional skills?	
Regarding your relationships with others?	
Regarding your ability to be resilient?	
Regarding your ability to let go?	
Regarding your way of seeing family life?	
Regarding your way of life?	
Regarding your perception of money and your relationship to money?	
Regarding how you work?	
Regarding your involvement in activities?	
<p>Also think of:</p>	
What did you miss the most?	
What did you miss the least?	
How will you resume what you missed the least?	
Or how did you do it?	
How did you react to resuming activities you missed the most?	



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*Ce projet a été approuvé par le comité éthique de l'Université de Sherbrooke

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