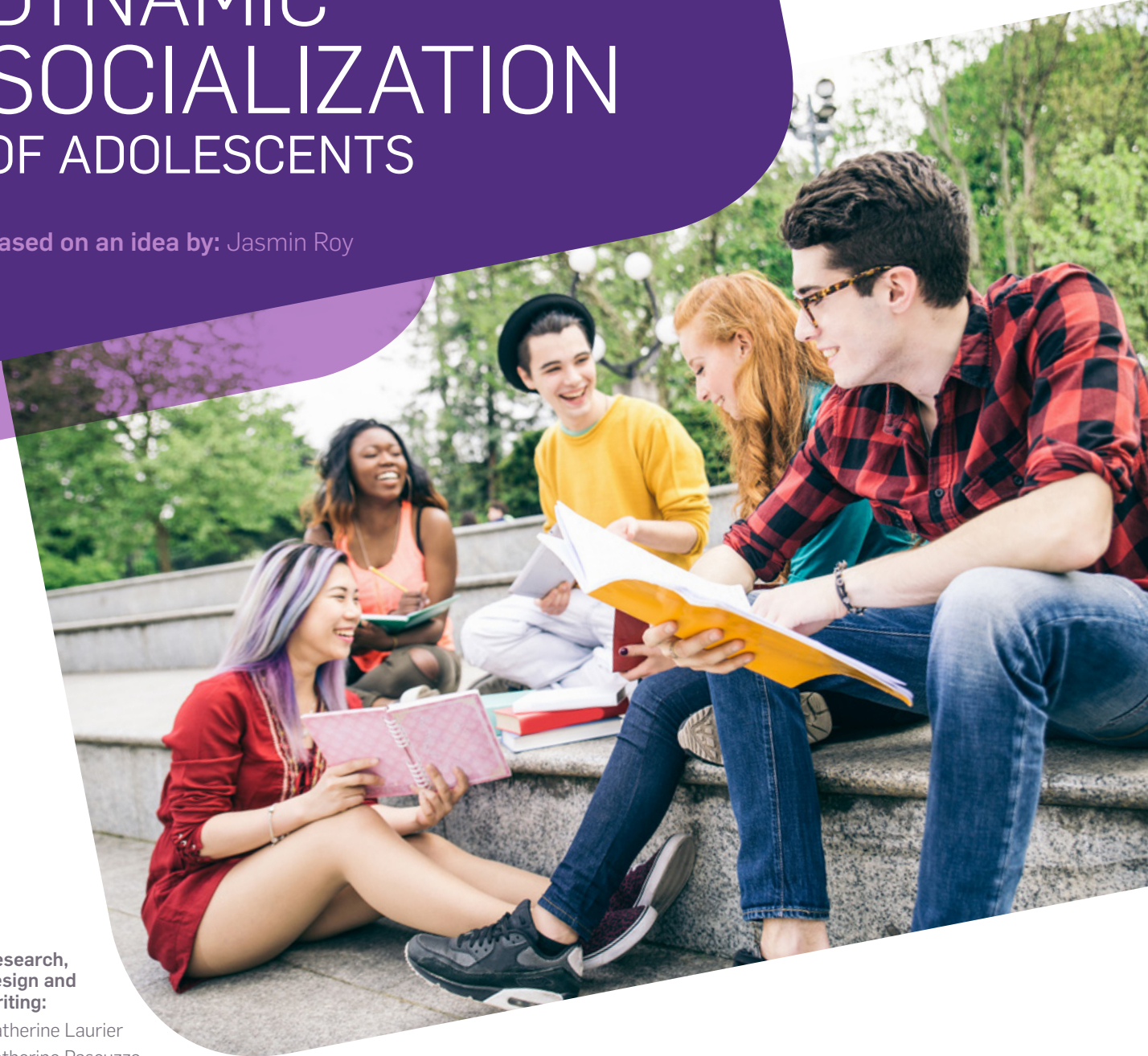


A GUIDE TO PROMOTE THE DYNAMIC SOCIALIZATION OF ADOLESCENTS

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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.