

On the Right Track

Guide to Mental Fitness and Resilience





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Table of contents



Acknowledgements.....	1
Introduction	3
New Brunswick's wellness strategy.	4
Research	5
Why use this guide?	6
Objectives of this guide.....	6
Part 1: Theory and research	7
Mental fitness.....	7
Resilience	7
Self-determination.....	8
Self-determination theory	8
Three psychological needs (SDT).....	9
Portraits of students whose needs are met.....	10
Self-esteem and stress management	11
Motivation	12
Part 2: From theory to practice	14
Applying SDT in the classroom	14
Integrated strategies	16
Occasional and planned strategies	18
Conclusion.....	19
Appendix	22
Bibliography	28
Resources	31



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Introduction



This guide is an initiative of the Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport, in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

The mission of the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities, through the provincial Live well, be well strategy, is to motivate and empower individuals, families, schools, communities, and workplaces to increase their awareness of, participation in, and commitment to wellness (New Brunswick's Wellness Strategy 2009–2013). The wellness of New Brunswickers is influenced by interactions between social and economic factors, the physical environment, and individual behaviours. Collectively, these represent the determinants of health.

What is wellness?



Wellness is a universal phenomenon that is important to the quality of life of all human beings. It is also an ongoing process to enhance the many dimensions of wellness that enable people to reach and maintain their full potential and contribute to their communities.

There are **seven dimensions of wellness**. Closely interconnected, they contribute to a person's overall sense of well-being.

Emotional dimension: The ability to understand ourselves and cope with the challenges life can bring.

Mental/intellectual dimension: The ability to open our minds to new ideas and experiences that can be applied to personal decisions, interpersonal relations, and community betterment.

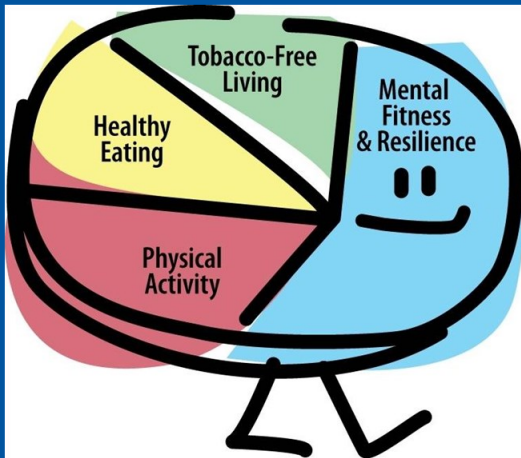
Physical dimension: The ability to maintain a healthy quality of life that allows us to get through our daily activities without undue fatigue or physical stress.

Social dimension: The ability to relate to and connect with other people.

Spiritual dimension: The ability to live in peace and harmony.

Occupational dimension: The ability to get personal fulfillment from our jobs or careers while still maintaining balance in our lives.

Environmental dimension: The ability to recognize our own responsibility for the environment (the quality of the air, the water, and the land) that surrounds us.



A picture is worth a thousand words...

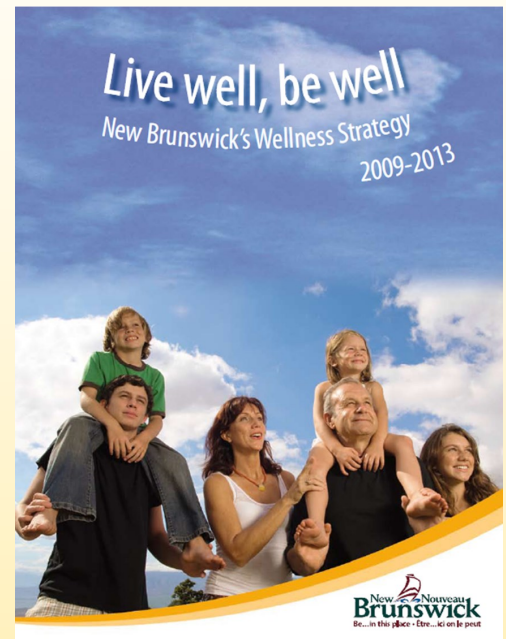
This image shows the key role that mental fitness plays in our ability to make positive changes in our lives. Mental fitness leads to healthy eating, increased physical activity, and tobacco-free living.

New Brunswick's Wellness Strategy

The new and improved Wellness Strategy focuses on wellness pillars related to healthy lifestyles: healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco-free living. Fundamental to positive behaviour change in all the wellness pillars, Mental Fitness and Resilience addresses needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

One of the objectives of the Wellness Strategy is to improve the mental fitness and resilience of New Brunswickers.

Improved mental fitness and resilience prepares us for positive lifestyle changes around healthy eating, increased physical activity, and tobacco-free living. In contrast, when the three basic needs (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) are not met, individuals are at higher risk for experiencing difficulties related to their emotional, social, and physical growth.



What does the research indicate?

As part of the provincial Wellness Strategy, the New Brunswick Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities asked the Health and Education Research Group, or HERG (University of New Brunswick and the Université de Moncton), to follow a study on the wellness of students in New Brunswick schools. The purpose of this project is to promote healthy lifestyles among students. The findings of this research showed that with improved mental fitness:

- There was greater student participation in competitive and non-competitive physical activities.
- Body Mass Index (BMI) scores were lower, whereas scores were higher when the level of mental fitness was low. However, this decrease levels off as mental fitness increases to high levels.
- Probability of smoking was greatly reduced in both males and females.
- Students showed more positive emotions (happy, energetic, active).
- Students adopted pro-social behaviours (sharing and helping others) as opposed to oppositional behaviours (bullying, disruptiveness).

Mental fitness is closely related to physical health. Research shows that the link between subjective feelings of happiness and good health holds, even after controlling for chronic disease, smoking, drinking habits, and weight excess (Goodwin et al., 2000). Being active provides a sense of belonging and mutual support when participating with others. Being physically active and eating healthy foods are ways to stay mentally fit.

Evidence has shown that promoting physical and psychological wellness to children and youth helps to improve the well-being of the whole population over the long term. This also means engaging those who influence children and youth, hence the importance of working with school communities.

Low levels of mental fitness are linked with a higher probability of smoking among youth. As mental fitness increases, the level of susceptibility falls.

New Brunswick Student Wellness Survey, 2006-2007

“I find the guide *On the Right Track* very useful. It gives me lots of ideas for integrating the concepts of mental fitness and resilience.”

Why use this guide?

On the Right Track is an initiative of the Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport, in partnership with the Francophone sector of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and School District 3.

The goal is to promote mental fitness and resilience in the schools by offering workshops and a mental fitness and resilience guide to all school staff.

This initiative is producing a paradigm shift from an intervention and prevention mode to a development and promotion mode.

Objectives of the guide

The objectives of the guide *On the Right Track* are:

- To make school staff aware of and accountable for their responsibilities with respect to mental fitness and resilience;
- To establish linkages between the FPS curriculum, mental fitness, and resilience;
- To provide a resource on mental fitness and resilience to complement all curricula;
- To propose strategies that meet students' psychological needs in accordance with the self-determination theory.



PART 1

Theory and research

Mental fitness

Mental fitness refers to a state of psychosocial well-being that goes beyond the absence of disease or sickness. It means having a positive sense of how we feel, think, and act, which improves our ability to enjoy life. It contributes to our innate ability to self-determine.

"It is a person's style of thinking that determines mental fitness, more than genetics, intelligence, or any other single factor."
(Shatté, A., 2002)

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to efficiently respond to life's challenges, and effectively restore and sustain a state of balance. It is the "ability to persevere and adapt when things go awry." (Reivich, K and A. Shatté, 2002).

Thirty years of research tells us that resilient people are healthier, live longer, are more successful in their studies and their careers, are happier in their relationships, and are less prone to depression (Reivich, K. and A. Shatté, 2002).

Improved mental fitness and resilience creates readiness for positive lifestyle changes around healthy eating, increased physical activity, and tobacco-free living. Schools, communities, homes, and workplaces need to better understand mental fitness and resilience concepts in order to integrate them into their philosophies and initiatives.

Mental fitness increases...

- positive emotions
- pro-social attitudes and behaviour
- physical activity
- the desire to live tobacco-free
- the desire to make positive lifestyle changes
- motivation at school

Some effects of increased resilience...

- Less violence
- Less drug use
- Fewer high-risk sexual relationships
- Better interpersonal relationships
- Better grades at school
- Increased engagement in school and community activities
- Increased humanitarian awareness
- Sense of well-being and inner peace

What is self-determination?

Meeting psychological needs facilitates self-determination in individuals, which leads them to adopt attitudes and behaviours that contribute to their wellness and the wellness of others.

Self-determination is the idea that individuals have the ability to reflect upon, formulate, and act on personal decisions that contribute to emotional and physical growth.

Self-determination theory

In accordance with self-determination theory (SDT), the mental fitness of an individual is facilitated by a social environment that helps meet the three basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness and autonomy. Meeting these three needs makes individuals more autonomous in their behaviour and therefore contributes to their wellness and overall health.

Several scientific papers reveal that meeting these needs is associated with resilience and the emotional well-being of children or youth, as well as their ability to participate in decisions and actions for a healthy lifestyle. Supporting individuals, organizations, and communities to feel connected, independent, and capable enables them to make healthier choices and take more responsibility for their personal wellness and the wellness of others. (Source: Deci, E. and R. Ryan, 1985 and 1991; Ryan, R., 1995; Ryan, R. and E. Deci, 2000)

In contrast, when these needs are not met, individuals are at higher risk for experiencing difficulties related to their emotional, social, and physical growth. [Source: Health and Education Research Group (HERG)]



THE THREE BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

COMPETENCE

Competence refers to the need to recognize and use personal talents and knowledge in achieving personal goals. Fulfilment of this need provides individuals with a sense of achievement and accomplishment.

AUTONOMY

Autonomy refers to the need to make choices and decisions. When this need is satisfied, freedom of choice translates to respect for oneself and for others.

RELATEDNESS

Relatedness refers to the need for connections and relationships with family, peers, and people who are important to us. Interactions with others provide individuals with support and encouragement.

Students who feel a sense of relatedness to their school and who consider their teachers as allies are less likely to engage in unhealthy or high-risk behaviours.

Student Wellness Survey for students in grades 6-12

2009-2010 factsheet

What does a mentally fit student look like?

Portrait of competence

- I am able to use my strengths and talents constructively
- I have the feeling that I have accomplished something
- I feel efficient and capable
- I like challenges; they do not frighten me
- I am motivated and interested
- I persevere
- I make an effort when faced with a new task
- I am committed
- I feel like I am worth something
- I am optimistic
- I am proud of myself
- I believe in myself
- I have high self-esteem

Portrait of autonomy

- I am curious and interested in learning
- I agree to make an effort at work
- I put the necessary time into my learning
- I am motivated
- I feel free to make decisions
- I make choices that are important to me
- I accept responsibility for, and the consequences of, my choices
- I feel free to do, or not to do, certain things
- I can find solutions to certain problems
- I am responsible for my behaviour
- I respect myself
- I am respectful of others

Portrait of relatedness

- I like going to school; I feel good there
- I have my place at school and in class
- I have friends in my class
- I am committed and involved
- I like interacting with others
- I take part in a variety of curricular and extracurricular activities (sports, art, etc.)
- I am enthusiastic
- I feel encouraged and supported by others
- I feel that I am liked and accepted
- I respect others
- I am respected
- I am generous with others, and I pay attention to them
- I help others
- I am authentic in my relationships with others

What is the link between mental fitness and self-esteem?

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, self-esteem and the ability to handle stress are two mental health factors for youth (CIHI, 2008). In particular, new analyses show that youth aged 12 to 15 with high levels of self-esteem and good stress management skills are less likely to develop aggressive behaviours.

An article recently published in *Education Canada* corroborates with new research and studies on mental fitness. The following is an excerpt from the article, published in French:

[Translation]

[...] stress management is a competency recognized by the World Health Organization as an influential factor in the promotion of health and well-being (WHO, 1998). Specifically, it is the ability of a person to maintain a state of mental well-being by adopting appropriate attitudes and behaviours in interactions with himself or herself, with others, and with his or her environment. Such well-being refers to an evolving state premised on learning and evokes the idea of continuous development. Further, according to Seligman (1995), the founding father of positive psychology, in coping with stress, an individual will gain self-confidence and will be better able to deal with future situations. It is from this perspective that stress management with youth is seen as an adjunct to a way of living that can be learned starting in childhood.

Guimond-Plourde, 2010, p. 10–11



And what about motivation?

Feature a different student each week. He or she could talk about things such as his or her interests, hobbies, achievements, family, and neighbourhood throughout the week.

According to Rolland Viau, motivation is an essential condition for success. He also defines it as follows:

[Translation]

“Motivation is a dynamic concept originating in the perceptions a student has of himself or herself and his or her environment, prompting him or her to choose an activity, engage in it and persevere in order to attain a goal.”

R. Viau (1997, p.7)

In the SDT approach (Deci and Ryan, 2000), different types of motivation are identified in relation to an individual's level of self-determination. The following table shows the link between the level of motivation and self-determination.

Behaviour	non self-determined		self-determined			
Locus of Motivation	None	Not-internalised		Internalised		
Type of Motivation	<i>Amotivation</i>	<i>Extrinsic Motivation</i>				<i>Intrinsic Motivation</i>
Type of Regulation	Non-regulation	External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	Intrinsic Regulation

Source: Adapted from Deci and Ryan (2000)

What is intrinsic motivation (IM)?

Intrinsic motivation (IM) is defined as the tendency to engage in activities for the pleasure and satisfaction inherent in doing them (Deci, 1975). A person is intrinsically motivated when he or she undertakes an activity voluntarily and out of interest. According to Deci and Ryan (Deci, 1975; and Ryan, 1985), IM stems from an individual's need to feel competent and self-determined.

What is extrinsic motivation (EM)?

Extrinsic motivation (EM) underlies behaviours that are performed for instrumental reasons. Extrinsically motivated individuals are not necessarily interested in the activity per se. Rather, they engage in it to experience pleasant consequences or to avoid unpleasant ones. (Deci, 1975)

What does the research say about the motivational atmosphere in the classroom?

According to Sarrazin, Tessier and Trouilloud (2006), the most self-determined types of motivation are associated with positive educational consequences (attention, pleasure, persistence in learning, strong performance), while the less self-determined types are associated with negative consequences (quitting early, weak performance).

In the SDT approach, social factors have a major influence over self-determination in that they can facilitate or hinder the expression of the three psychological needs (CAR).

Students show self-determined motivation when they undertake tasks:

- for the pleasure they derive from accomplishing them, for the pleasure of mastering them, or for the pleasure of learning something new. (intrinsic motivation)
- that are in line with their needs and values (integrated extrinsic motivation)
- they feel are important in reaching personal goals (identified extrinsic motivation)

Students show a lack of self-determined motivation when they undertake tasks:

- because they feel obligated to do so, for rewards (points, stars, privileges, etc.), or to avoid punishment (external regulation)
- because of internal pressure, such as feelings of guilt (introjected regulation)
- by resigning themselves to do it and not seeing any link between their actions and their results (amotivation)

PART 2

From theory to practice

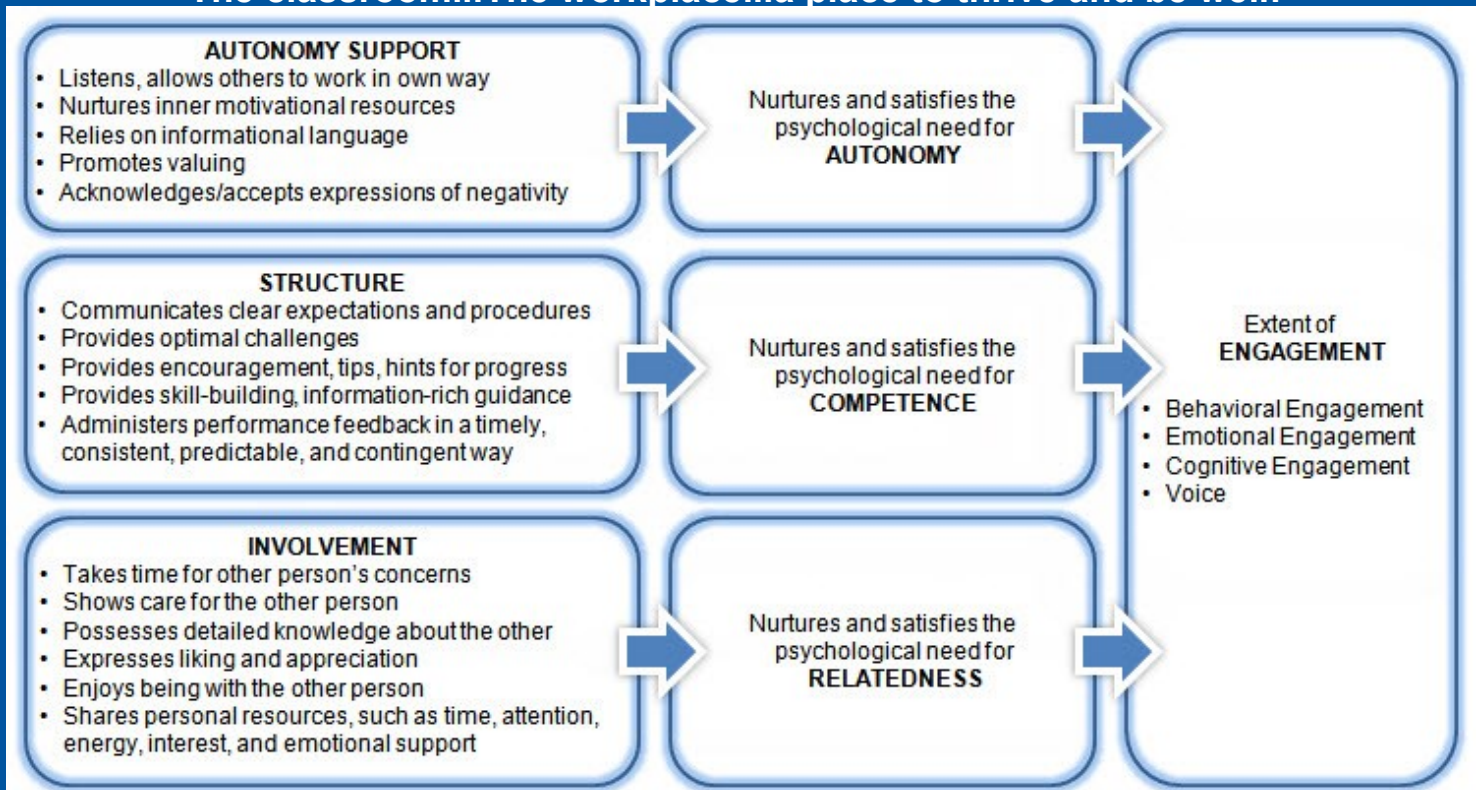
Show the students techniques for solving problems or conflicts so they are aware of their responsibilities in those situations.

How is self-determination theory (SDT) applied in the classroom?

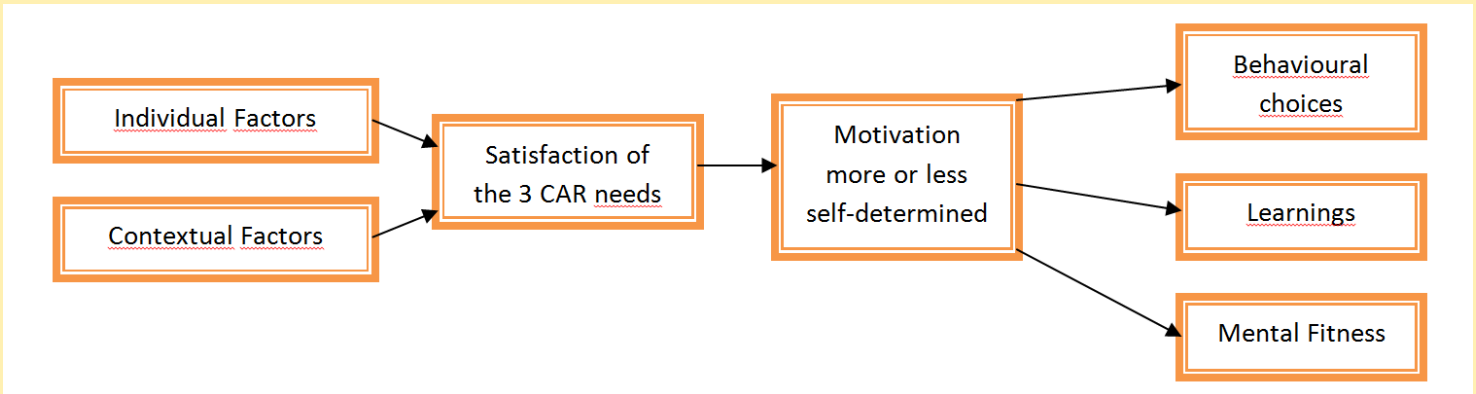
To better understand the impact of the SDT approach on motivation, behaviour and learning, it is essential to recognize the importance of the relationship between the student and his or her social environment.

The links between the SDT approach, the classroom, mental fitness and resilience are explained below:

The classroom...The workplace...a place to thrive and be well!



Looking at the classroom as a social environment, the following table by Nadia Leroy and Gwenaëlle Joët shows the link between SDT causes and effects:



Based on the current level of understanding with respect to the relationship between SDT and mental fitness, it seems that the education professionals have a social responsibility that goes beyond a prescribed curriculum.

William Glasser says that “all students can and want to learn.” The desire to learn and take an interest in our environment is innate in human nature, so why does this motivation seem to be overlooked at school?

Best Practices in School

It is essential to adopt strategies that help meet the three needs (CAR).

COMPETENCE


- Organize activities that are conducive to generating student interest and engagement
- Provide appropriate tools
- Allow time needed for learning
- Make expectations clear
- Promote success
- Give constructive criticism

AUTONOMY

- Start from students' interests
- Take into account student suggestions
- Give the significance and usefulness of, and the reason for, the task assigned
- Give choices
- Suggest rather than dictate
- Minimize pressure related to testing
- Reduce all coercive approaches

RELATEDNESS

- Guide the students in their experiences
- Welcome and take into account students' ideas
- Show empathy for the students
- Respect, accept, and take an interest in each student
- Be present and attentive to students' needs



School is an environment where students have the opportunity to learn and develop their full potential.

How can you introduce the concepts of mental fitness and resilience without adding a new program?

1. By creating an atmosphere in which teaching strategies and behaviour management help to meet the three basic psychological needs while achieving the learning outcomes of the curricula.

Through its direction, its values, its four subject areas, and its learning outcomes, the FPS program matches the vision of wellness and mental fitness set out at the start of this guide.

2. By having the three psychological needs (CAR) as a backdrop each day in school.

This responsibility shared by all school staff has an impact on student motivation at school and allows for knowledge transfer to students.

Integrating strategies into daily activities in the classroom

The boxes on the following pages suggest that the strategies can be divided into two groups. The first category is tied to the general atmosphere in the classroom. These strategies can be integrated into daily classroom activities. The second category is concerned with planned or occasional strategies that are more closely linked to clearly defined times in the teacher's lesson planning.

These suggestions reflect only a very small portion of the information presented in the various works and on the various websites dealing with the topic of motivation and self-determination theory.

COMMUNICATION

- Use the students' first names.
- Give clear instructions.
- Explain why a task is important and to what it is connected.
- Check that students have understood your instructions by having them explain.
- Explain clearly the reasons for the limits set.
- Use appropriate and rich vocabulary.
- Use modelling and guided practice (student and teacher).
- Explain, practise, and adopt effective communication and listening techniques.
- Empower students to express their ideas clearly.
- Get the students to participate in the discussion.
- Listen to and consider students' opinions when making decisions.
- Give words of encouragement.
- Validate your perceptions with the students.
- Identify and express feelings and emotions.
- Demonstrate pro-social attitudes.
- Use humour.
- Use non-verbal language to call students to order.
- Build a rapport with parents.

STRENGTHS/COMPETENCIES

- Acknowledge and take into account students' abilities.
- Assign challenges based on abilities.
- Encourage student involvement in a variety of activities focusing on interests and preferences.
- Empower and encourage students to make decisions.
- Let students find their own solutions to specific problems.
- Emphasize accountability and acceptance of consequences of one's choices.
- Give students the opportunity to identify and use their strengths
- Allow students the opportunity to experience success.
- Allow students to see others experience success (modelling).
- Allow students to receive words of encouragement and affirmation from others.
- Develop stress management skills.
- Promote the development of social skills.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

DIFFERENCES AND DIVERSITY

- Use centres of interest.
- Give choices (topic, book, material, activity, duration of assignment, presentation format, individual or group work, in accordance with students' needs, aptitudes, etc.).
- Vary tasks within a given activity.
- Assign challenges based on students' strengths.
- Take learning styles into account.
- Show respect for different kinds of intelligence.
- Accept differences.
- Emphasize acceptance of differences among students.
- Allow and encourage inclusion – engage withdrawn students.
- Focus on integration and social justice when students are working in groups.

COLLABORATION/COOPERATION

- Involve students in learning scenarios and make them active participants in their learning.
- Post steps/instructions for a project to ensure they are visible and accessible.
- Encourage collaboration/cooperation.
- Suggest activities that foster interaction (cooperative work, projects).
- Pair students according to their needs and interests without regard to the intellectual strengths of individuals.
- Vary groups (heterogeneous groups, groups by affinities, groups by needs, etc.)
- Use a sociogram to group students together.
- Have students use problem-solving and conflict-resolution steps.
- Get parents involved.

Occasional and Planned Strategies

As professionals, teachers must be aware of the importance of taking a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach in the classroom.

(*See strategy details in Appendix C.)

DISCUSSION

- Around the campfire
- Well-known names
- What's up?
- Time for students to have their say
- Starting point
- School council, class meetings
- Time for you
- Word games
- Borrowed characters
- Time for expressing gratitude

INTRAPERSONAL

- CJMS radio
- Quiet corner
- Art
- Graffiti
- Self-regulation
- Becoming autonomous, work methods
- Self-portrait
- Journal
- Learning styles
- Mailbox

EXTRAPERSONAL

- Leadership
- Giving responsibilities
- Contracts
- Who am I?
- Activities involving the entire class
- Problem solving
- Showing gratitude
- Today I'd like to say thanks to ... for ...
- Interschool correspondence
- Doing things just for the sake of it
- I'm the teacher
- Secret friend
- Let's adopt a...
- I'm proud of...
- Group mandala
- Discovery days
- Class portrait
- Talent days
- Bravo!
- Model
- Mailbox

PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

- Slogans, videos, radio programs
- Bingo
- Puzzles
- Prizes and rewards
- Mailbox
- Role playing, sketches, mini-theatre
- Art exhibits
- Graphic organizers
- Personal diary
- Mobiles
- Mandalas

Conclusion

The approach proposed in this document is designed to engage students both actively and interactively by having them experience things that can improve their mental fitness and provide them with a certain resilience. The school being viewed as an environment where the members are inter-related, incorporating the wellness strategy into classroom teaching helps students become aware of their own identity and their interdependent relationships with others in their school and social environment.

The aim of the proposed strategies is to enable students to assimilate knowledge and expand their awareness so they can become responsible citizens who are ready to meet the challenges ahead.

The Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities would like to see this document incorporated into school curricula throughout the province as a tool for fulfilling students' needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

The strategies proposed should allow for the establishment of an environment that helps all students develop and optimize their mental fitness, their resilience, and by extension, their learning.

"[...] the classroom is not an island, [...] and it is difficult to develop and sustain changes in the classroom without dealing with the wider school environment."

Maehr & Midgley, 1991, p.405



My ideas...



APPENDIX

Occasional and planned strategies

Strategies specifically targetting the three psychological needs

- ❑ **Slogans/videos/radio programs** – Have students come up with slogans to promote acceptance and appreciation of differences that can be used in the media, posted in the school, or broadcast on the student radio station, etc.
- ❑ **Bingo** - Choose images relating to the three basic psychological needs. Get the students involved in the preparation (drawings or newspaper clippings).
- ❑ **Prizes or rewards** – Suggest an activity in connection with the needs.
- ❑ **Puzzles** - Cut out a photograph that represents one of the three psychological needs.
- ❑ **Mailbox** - Make a box wherein students can put postcards on which they have written examples— observed among their peers—of behaviours related to the three psychological needs. They may be read and discussed in class once a week, or they may be given discreetly to the students concerned.
- ❑ **Art exhibits** - Exhibit works of art representing one or more of the psychological needs.
- ❑ **Graphic organizers** – Have the students create graphic organizers representing actions that respond to a specific need.
- ❑ **Mobiles** - Have the students make a mobile representing one of the three psychological needs. The mobile could be hung up in the classroom.
- ❑ **Role playing, sketches, theatre** – Have the students represent behaviours or situations helping to meet the psychological needs.

- **Personal diary** - Ask students to keep a personal diary for one week in which they describe situations they have encountered in relation to the three psychological needs. They may also note how they felt about those situations. It is important to review the activity in class. The questions should make the students think about their experiences and identify areas or personal challenges to be worked on.

Encourage the students to answer the following questions:

- What do I see in my table?
- What things crop up often? Why?
- What things don't crop up very often? Why?
- What are my challenges?
- What feelings crop up most often? Pleasant or unpleasant?

Discussion Activities

- **Around the campfire:** Sitting in a circle, sing, visualize, or breathe deeply before starting a discussion or conversation.
- **Well-known names:** Use names of television programs or games to create a structured discussion period.
- **What's up:** Discussion tool created by Marie-Andrée Vanhove (François Muller, teachers' survival manual)
- **Students have their say:** Time is set aside for reflection and dialogue. It's the students' turn to talk while the teacher observes.
- **Starting point for discussions:** Lead a discussion on topics or statements to empower students to give their opinions; topics chosen by students according to their needs or interests (situation they have encountered at school, based on something they have read or seen on television, feelings they have had, a planned debate, etc.). The discussion may also serve as a springboard for a reading or writing exercise.
- **School council/class meetings** to solve a particular problem, to find out what the students think about a given topic, to make a decision, or simply to talk about things that have nothing to do with school.
- **Time for you:** Some time is set aside each week to speak with students individually.
- **Word games** to enrich the students' vocabulary about feelings: excited, sympathetic, frustrated, happy, slighted, sad, tense, etc.
- **Borrowed characters** – Identify and discuss feelings or emotions expressed by television or movie characters. Have the students think about their own feelings and about the different means of expression that they use and could use.
- **Time for gratitude** – Thanks and appreciation for helpful and nice things that people do for one another.
- **Let me explain** - Ask former or older students to explain the rules or instructions to the younger ones, which allows them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

Intrapersonal Activities for Personal Development

- **Student radio:** the “feeling” radio station (how I feel). After an activity, get the students to verbalize and talk about how they felt during the activity. Have a CJMS symbol in the classroom to serve as a reminder of the activity. Vary the length of time this tool is used.
- **Quiet corner:** Have a specific place in the classroom where students can voluntarily go to have a time-out or to think before things fall apart. Have a cushion on hand that students can lie down on or hide their face in, or provide anti-stress balls or a pencil and a few sheets of paper for writing or drawing to help students express their emotions. Mark the area with a big cloud above it and a sun in the background.
- **Art** - Give students the chance to express their feelings and emotions through different forms of art.
- **Graffiti** - Set aside an area on the bulletin board where students can use graffiti to express how they feel.
- **Self-regulation** - Set aside a self-assessment period at the end of the day or week. This will allow the students to assess their behaviour in class, become aware of their academic progress, express appreciation, and set daily or weekly goals for themselves.
- **Develop autonomy** - Help the students to develop work techniques and methods.
- **Prepare lists** to help the students learn the rules to be followed.
- **Demonstration** - Show how to efficiently use reference materials and other resources.
- **Post the steps** for problem solving and decision making so the students can refer to them.
- **Prepare a model or written instructions** for long-term assignments.
- **Set goals** - Help the students to establish medium-term objectives that are simple, tangible, and easily measured (copying a paragraph without making any mistakes, finishing a homework assignment, passing a spelling test, writing sentences, etc.).
- **Estimate time** – Have the students estimate the amount of time they think they will need to complete a task. Compare the estimated time with the required time, and help the students to better estimate the ratio of the expected time to the required time.

- **Identify challenges** - Encourage the students to identify things that are challenging for them, e.g., reading a book, writing a poem, making an oral presentation, creating a piece of art, making friends, learning how to play a new game.
- **Assess level of satisfaction** - At the end of a task, have the students assess their level of satisfaction with what they have accomplished. Discuss with them what they could have done differently: Was your goal realistic? What went well? What didn't go well? What other solutions could you choose? What did you learn from this experience? What would you do differently next time?
- **Do a self-portrait** - Have a large mirror in the classroom that the students can use to look at themselves and in so doing form a mental image of themselves. Afterwards, you can ask them to draw a self-portrait.
- **Keep a diary** - Have the students keep a diary in which they write down their thoughts, progress, successes, concerns, plans, etc.
- **Discover learning styles** - Help the students to become aware of their own learning style (visual, auditory, kinesthetic).

Social Development Activities

- **Leadership** - Give students the opportunity to use their leadership skills and encourage them to accept responsibility and answer for their actions. Each week, choose one student who will have specific responsibilities in the classroom. At the end of the week, that student can give feedback to the rest of the class, talk about his or her interests, and voice his or her opinions.
- **Assign responsibilities** to different students in the class: taking attendance, erasing the blackboard, putting chairs back, hanging posters on the wall, etc.
- **Contracts** - Give students the opportunity to get involved through contracts or pledges (academic or behavioural) to get them to take responsibility for following through.
- **Who am I?** A different student will be featured each week. He or she can talk about his or her interests, hobbies, achievements, family, neighbourhood, etc. during the week.
- **Classroom activities** - Decorate the classroom, organize a party, adopt an animal, clean up the schoolyard, recycle, plan a trip or event, look after plants in the school, etc.
- **Problem solving** - Show the students techniques for problem/conflict resolution so they are aware of their responsibility in such a situation.

- **Showing gratitude** - At the end of the day, hand out cards that say, “I appreciate what you did today. You...” Encourage the students to show their appreciation for a particular student.
- **“Today I’d like to say thanks to ... for...”** - A habit to get into at the end of the day or morning.
- **Interschool correspondence** - Exchange correspondence with students at another school in the district and have a get-together during the year if possible.
- **Learning about doing things for the sake of it** - Take part in non-competitive games, activities and sports from time to time or play for the sheer joy of being together, sharing, and learning.
- **Each student teaches** the others in the class techniques or passes on their knowledge regarding different topics: a new game, an instrument, a recipe, etc.
- **Secret friend** - Randomly give each student the name of another student. Have each student do something nice for his or her secret friend at least once a day, e.g., smiling at him or her, inviting him or her to take part in a game, or complimenting him or her.
- **Let’s adopt a...** - Adopt a class of younger students. Become their mentors, read to them, accompany them during recess, do things together in pairs, or plan a theatre or sports activity for the two groups.
- **I’m proud of...** - Have a space where each student can display his or her best work or homework assignment for that week. Put up a new poster each month.
- **Group mandala**
- **Class portrait** - Choose an image that represents all of the students in the class, e.g., a giant puzzle, a tree with several branches, or a mosaic or stained glass, with each piece representing a student.
- **Talent days** - Allow the students to show off their special talents by organizing shows or exhibits.
- **Bravo!** - On special occasions, have the students acknowledge and give a round of applause to those students who have made progress.
- **Mailbox** - Have the students write to you and talk about things such as their reactions, feelings, concerns, fears, or something that makes them uncomfortable. They can also ask questions.
- **Discovery days** - Give students the opportunity to explore new ideas and skills in connection with new and unfamiliar topics.
- **Role model:** Realize that you are a role model for the students and demonstrate appropriate behaviours, e.g., acceptance, respect, humour, and smiling.

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On the Right Track

Guide to Mental Fitness and Resilience