

## 9th grade - Workshop 1 – Introduction

Why is it important to address healthy relationships and violence prevention?  
My teen seems to be very anxious, is that normal?  
My child is too tough on themselves, how can I help?  
How can I support my child in managing anxiety and stress?

### Why is it important to address healthy relationships and violence prevention?

We all experience different types of interpersonal relationships in our lifetime. During adolescence, young people continue to discover interpersonal relationships outside the family: their friendships intensify, and their family relationships evolve when they discover their independence. It can be the beginning of professional relationships with volunteering experiences or their first job. Some also set out to discover romantic or intimate relationships. As a parent or an adult that is close to a young adolescent, this transition can be a difficult step. Adolescents tend to distance themselves from their parents or family, and they do not share their feelings and information about their relationships as much as they did before.

Building new relationships is not easy. Young people base themselves on role models around them, whether in their families, through their peers or in the media. Adolescents, in the process of building their own identity, find themselves having to navigate these new human relationships with a variety of factors and sometimes confusing relationship messages.



Some youth have their first romantic, intimate or sexual relationships during adolescence. According to the [BC Adolescent Health Survey](#) assessing the health of young adolescents in British Columbia, conducted in 2018, 43% of youth have been in a romantic relationship at one point in the preceding year. These experiences are often positive, but abuse and (psychological, physical and sexual) violence between partners occur more often than thought. In this study, 8% of youth in a relationship report being a victim of physical violence in their relationship. It is important to provide youth with the knowledge and tools to identify the characteristics of a healthy relationship, as well as to recognize and prevent abusive and violent behaviors. All of this, even if they are not at that stage yet.

#### More stats from the BC Adolescent Health Survey

- 28% of males, and 50% of females, were verbally sexually harassed.
- 13% of males, and 31% of females, were physically sexually harassed.
- 5% of male and 17% of females have been sexually abused (including being sexually abused or forced into sexual activities, or being the younger of an illegal age pairing of partners).

## My teen seems to be very anxious, is that normal?

Stress is a normal physiological reaction in our body. Faced with danger, the body secretes adrenaline and stress hormones, allowing us to mobilize our resources in order to deal with it. However, this protective reaction, normally just an occasional occurrence, has become more and more present in our societies; it turns into anxiety, that is, permanent stress.

### Statistics on anxiety in adolescence

According to the [BC Adolescent Health Survey](#) conducted in 2018, assessing the health of young adolescents in British Columbia, 86% of students surveyed reported experiencing some form of stress or anxiety in the past month. The study also shows that anxiety and depression are on the rise among young people, with 18% reporting living with an anxiety disorder, compared to 8% in 2013, and 15% reporting experiencing depression, compared to 10% in 2013.

### Why are they stressed?

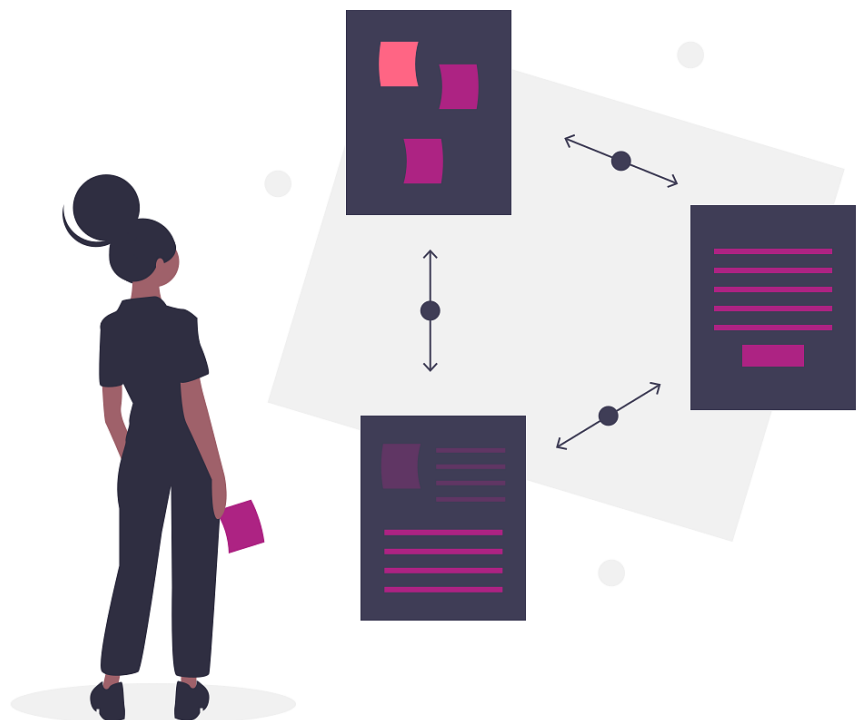
The most common stressors in adolescence are **school** (pressure to succeed, not being able to integrate socially), **family** (conflicts with parents/guardians, conflicts between parents, conflicts with siblings), **relationships with friends** (pressure to blend in, fear

of isolation), **romantic relationships** (pressure to please, abuse from a partner), etc. Themes surrounding interpersonal relationships, performance pressures (intellectual, sports, or social) and the unhealthy or abusive nature of relations can greatly impact youth's mental well-being.

## My child is too tough on themselves, how can I help?

Perfectionism is closely linked to a high stress level. The self-esteem of young perfectionists is often dependent on their accomplishments, which makes them nervous about whether their efforts are adequate. Therefore, it's important to encourage them to engage in positive self-talk. You can encourage them to:

- stick to the facts
- congratulate themselves on every success, no matter how small
- show compassion for themselves
- congratulate themselves on having many fine attributes
- get into the habit of accepting congratulations and kind words
- avoid words such as "should," "should have," "need to," and "have to"
- set a goal that is achievable and that will help them feel good



## How can I support my child in managing anxiety and stress?

### When you discuss this subject with your child:

- Listen and try not to rush into a solution. Empathize with their feelings of stress and the perceived causes, and refrain from banalizing.
- Normalize the feelings of stress by explaining that:
  - Stress is part of life and can, for example, motivate us to improve ourselves and accomplish what we need to do during the day.
  - Periods of high stress in the short term are not always unhealthy.



- Pay attention to acute stress or panic attacks: they can be caused by something else, such as an anxiety disorder. (If you are worried about this, talk to a professional.)

### Questions you can ask to better understand the impacts on you child:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents no stress and 10 represents maximum stress, how stressed are you right now?
- How do you feel the stress physically? (Note symptoms such as sleep disturbance, headaches, stomach aches, and muscle tension.)
- How long have you been feeling this stress? How often does it appear?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents no control and 10 represents total control, how much do you feel in control of your stress?
- How much does stress affect your daily life?
- How do you try to cope with stress? (Listen and be mindful of signs of negative coping strategies such as avoiding tasks, alcohol consumption, isolation, etc.)

**Important!** If you're concerned about your child's health, ask a professional for help, or call the help lines mentioned in the Resources section.

### Immediate stress management techniques:

- Mindful breathing (e.g., breathe in and breathe out 10 times);
- Focus on their environment (Identify 5 things they can see, 4 things they can touch, 3 things they can feel, 2 things they can hear, 1 thing they can taste);
- Focus on what they physically feel (e.g., feet on the ground, hands on the table, etc.);
- Play with an anti-stress ball.

## Long-term stress prevention/management techniques:

- Try to recognize aspects of life that they may or may not control;
- Set up time management and active planning, including finding time to take care of themselves;
- Eat healthily (if possible);
- Exercise regularly;
- Spend time in nature;
- Practice an artistic activity (writing in a journal, drawing, taking pictures, or playing music);
- Participate in cultural activities;
- Put in place healthy sleep habits;
- Avoid consuming too much caffeine;
- Limit screen time, especially before going to bed;
- Spend time with friends and family.



## Resources

Don't hesitate to contact your school staff: the school counsellor, the teacher, or the school principal. Your family doctor can also help you, as can the following resources:

- **Kids Help Phone** : to confide in somebody, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Anonymous and bilingual. Toll-free number: 1-800-668-6868. [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca)
- **Phobies-Zéro**, (in French), support and assistance group for people with anxiety, panic disorders, phobias, and agoraphobia: 514-276-3105 or toll-free 1-866-922-0002.

## Books in English

- \* The mindful teen: Powerful skills to help you handle stress one moment at a time, by Dzung Vo, Instant Help Book, 2015. [Available at BC Children's and Women's Hospital library](#)
- \* The stress reduction workbook for teens, by Gina M. Biegel, Instant Help Book, 2009. [Available at BC Children's and Women's Hospital library](#)

## Books in French

- \* Les troubles anxieux expliqués aux parents, par Chantal Baron, Collection du CHU Sainte-Justine pour les parents, 2001.
- \* Alex : Surmonter l'anxiété à l'adolescence, par Nathalie Parent, Éditions Midi trente, 2014 (pour les 12 ans et plus). [Disponible à la bibliothèque BC Children's and Women's Hospital](#)