



Seeds to grow **MENTAL HEALTH**

Working with Our Emotions

FOR EDUCATORS VOLUME 3

EMOTIONS & SKILLS

In our [second newsletter](#), we introduced the first skill (STOPP) to help deal with our emotions or behaviours during an emotional emergency.

An emotional emergency is when something tough happens in your life, and your thoughts cause your body to react to what you are feeling. Your emotions or behaviours might get out of control and you may not react the way you normally would.

THE STOPP SKILL IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILL AND SHOULD ALWAYS BE USED FIRST.



The STOPP skill puts space between our emotions and our actions. This gives us time to decide how we want to respond to a situation instead of reacting based off of our emotions.



This newsletter will highlight three new skills that can be used to support us like a lifejacket during rough emotional waters. The first skill is similar to STOPP, as it is a skill that can help reduce stress. It can be used to shift our focus when our emotions or “FIZZ” is high. The second skill will help us think differently about a situation and change our emotional response. The third skill provides us with a sense of direction and helps to guide us through life.

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In our next newsletter, we will introduce additional skills that help us to manage and balance our emotions as well as improve our communication skills.

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RIGHT NOW

54321

RIGHT NOW IS A SKILL WHICH USES 54321 TO LOOK OUTSIDE OF OURSELVES TO REDUCE STRESS.

When our emotions are running high, or we are feeling "THE FIZZ", we may need to use a skill that will help us to improve this moment quickly. Using the RIGHT NOW skill helps to shift the focus away from our uncomfortable thoughts or feelings by using our senses to look outside ourselves.

When you're feeling THE FIZZ, try the **RIGHT NOW** skill by doing this:

5 Things I can see right now, or imagine I can see right now.

4 Things I can hear right now, or imagine I can hear right now.

3 Things I can touch right now, or imagine I can touch right now.

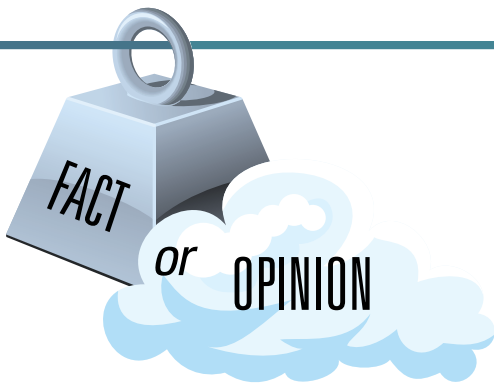
2 Things I can smell right now, or imagine I can smell right now.

1 Take 1 slow, deep breath (in through your nose and out through your mouth). Then, focus on your breathing.



Get creative and use what works for you! Focus on imagining things you really enjoy. Try looking around or imagining things with different colours (i.e., 5 red things, 4 yellow things, etc.). Some people like to think of sports teams (i.e., 5 hockey teams, 4 football teams, etc.). Always remember to end with taking that 1 slow, deep breath.

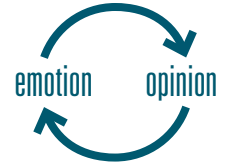
Practice using this skill, so that it comes naturally to you when your "FIZZ" is high. Change doesn't happen right away; you have to work on it!



THE FACT OR OPINION SKILL helps us to think differently and change our emotional response.

At times of stress, we are affected by powerful opinions and emotions. Our strong emotions reinforce our opinions. Our opinions then increase our emotions, which can lead to a powerful response. This powerful reaction can cause us to have negative results. Opinions can lead to emotions and emotions can lead to opinions.

If we are having a powerful emotional response to a situation, it can be helpful to ask ourselves “Is this a FACT or an OPINION?”



What is a Fact?	What is an Opinion?
Evidence-based (evidence supports the truth). Facts can be proven.	Based on personal beliefs or judgement.
No arguments (can't really argue it).	It can be argued or debated.
Driven by rational thought (head).	Driven by emotion (heart). Can express how someone thinks/feels.
Would stand up in a court of law.	It can change.

For example, if a friend walked past us without saying hello, we might think, “they are ignoring me, wow they are being rude, why are they mad at me”. Thinking this way may make you react in a way that is not positive. The only fact here is that your friend walked past you...everything else was an opinion. When we realize that many of our thoughts are opinions rather than facts, we may not get so upset by them and instead we can make informed and calm decisions about what are the best actions to take.

If it is a FACT
We can make choices about what we can or cannot do.

If it is an OPINION
We can recognize that our opinion is based on emotion. We can remove the emotion (opinion) and look at the facts – what we do *know* about the situation.

If we ask ourselves “is that fact or opinion” – we can remove most of the emotion (opinions) and go back to the facts. This can result in us being less stressed, more in control, and able to make better decisions.

When you find yourself getting emotional or feeling “THE FIZZ”, remember to ask yourself, am I reacting to a **FACT or an OPINION?**

VALUES



Values are the things that really matter to us. They are the ideas and beliefs that we hold as special, and they help guide us through life. Goals can be used to make plans that help us live up to our values.

Our values are like our internal compass. When we choose to do something that conflicts with our values, our internal compass will tell us something is wrong by increasing our “FIZZ” and making us feel uncomfortable. We may start to feel the physical symptoms of our stressful emotions. This could be an increase in our heart rate, sweating, or a nervous feeling in our stomach.

It can be difficult for students to identify their values, especially those in the younger grades. By helping students identify their “Values”, they will have the knowledge to lead them in the right direction during stressful times in their life.

See page 6 for an activity to help students identify their values.

Skills and activities for the classroom: School Mental Health Ontario



School
Mental Health
Ontario

Classroom and school activities increase students' awareness and opportunities to practice the Right Now, Fact or Opinion, and Values skills.

Similar activities to the skills that can be used in the classroom and can be found at the [School Mental Health Ontario](#). Below are some examples of activities to incorporate into your classroom:

RIGHT NOW ACTIVITIES

CREATE A CLASSROOM AND/OR SCHOOL BULLETIN BOARD INCORPORATING SOME SKILLS

SIMILAR TO RIGHT NOW:

<u>Alphabet Game</u>	This technique helps students to refocus their thoughts by using each letter in the alphabet.
<u>Observe Your Surroundings</u>	Students can look around their environment and ask: What do you see, what do you hear, what do you smell?
<u>Smell A Scent</u>	This technique focuses on smell, students are asked to notice some of the smells in the air, or find something that has a scent.
<u>Pause and Reflect</u>	Helps students feel more control by staying present in the moment.
<u>Two-Minute Mindfulness</u>	Helps students become more present in their daily interactions with others.
<u>Or check out some other ideas</u>	Grounding exercises help us to manage our emotions. These examples offer students a chance to gain control over an emotional moment.

FACT OR OPINION

<u>Stop and Think</u>	Students learn to be aware of their actions by monitoring their reactions.
<u>Inspiration From All</u>	Provides an opportunity for students to note what makes something inspiring and how that differs between people.
<u>Thought Changing Strategies (Ophea)</u>	Lessons to support the development of stress management and healthy coping skills. Each lesson has three parts: a minds-on activity, a pre-recorded virtual field trip session that introduces thought-changing strategies, and a consolidation activity. Lessons are broken down into Primary, Junior, Intermediate, and Secondary.

VALUES

<u>Show and Share</u>	To help students identify important aspects of themselves, to practice sharing pieces of their identity with classmates and to understand the value of uniqueness and diversity.
<u>The I in image</u>	To provide students with an opportunity to express and explain a personal choice and perspective, to hear and learn about others' views.
<u>Adjectives About Me</u>	To help students learn about themselves and that they matter by describing their positive traits with help from their peers.

Student Activity

After having a class discussion about what “Values” are, have students choose 5 values from a premade list that are important to them. For the older grades, the students may be able to come up with the values on their own. After students have completed their values list, have them list 5 goals that will help them live up to their value.

For example: if a value is being kind to the earth, the goal could be to go to the local park once a month and pick up garbage.

VALUES STUDENTS MIGHT HAVE CAN FALL UNDER THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

- **Relationships (family, romantic, friends, school, work)**
- **Achievement and Education**
- **Work and Career**
- **Enjoyment and Leisure**
- **Spirituality and Faith**
- **Helping Others and Making a difference (community, volunteer work, giving)**
- **Creativity and Arts (music, painting, designing, etc.)**
- **Connection with Nature**
- **Self-development and Care (Exercise, Healthy Eating, Life skills)**

VALUES	GOALS
1. Being kind to the earth	1. Pick up garbage monthly at the park
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Make a classroom values chart - together with your students

List the values and goals of the classroom, post the chart and refer to it throughout the year when the students need reminding.

