



Everyday  
Anxiety  
Strategies for  
Educators

# - EASE Overview - School District #61



Ministry of  
Children and Family  
Development



# With gratitude

We acknowledge the  
Ləkʷəŋən People, known  
today as the Songhees and  
Esquimalt Nations, on  
whose territory we live,  
work, and play.



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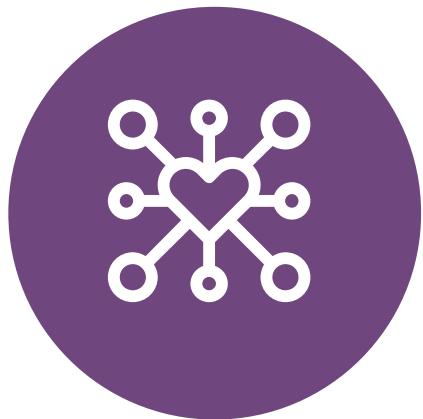
# Everyday Anxiety Strategies for Educators (EASE)



Online professional development anxiety literacy courses (K-7 and 8-12)



Resources (lesson plans, activities and resources)



EASE At Home



'Everyday' (mild to moderate) anxiety





## EASE Promo Video

<https://healthymindsbc.gov.bc.ca/ease/>



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# EASE K-7

## Learning about Worries Grades K-3

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Time: 30-40 minutes

What is this?	Suggested Materials
A lesson to provide students with accurate information about anxiety and how it can affect them.	<i>Wemberly Worried</i> by Kevin Henkes or a related book of choice
Lesson Outcome	When to use this
Students will create a "worry character" to help them recognize that anxiety is a feeling that is safe, temporary, and manageable.	Introduce this activity before implementing other EASE strategies to build foundational knowledge about anxiety.
Instructions	
<p><b>Step 1:</b> Encourage students to share some things they have done that worried them at first, but ended up being OK or even fun. Some examples may include: going to a sleep over, taking swimming lessons, or riding a bicycle for the first time. Read a book such as <i>Wemberly Worried</i> and encourage students to make connections between their personal experiences and some aspect of the story. Ask them to show a quiet "connection signal" as you read, like a raised hand or a finger on the end of their nose.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Remind students that ALL feelings are okay, including worry and anxiety. Anxiety is normal and everyone experiences it, even celebrities and superheroes! Anxiety can be helpful because it keeps us alert, like when we need to look both ways before crossing a busy road. It can motivate us to do things like practicing an instrument or learning new spelling words. Anxiety can cause our bodies to feel uncomfortable, but it is safe and does not last forever. If too much anxiety gets in the way of doing fun or important things, like going to school or the doctor, adults can help make a plan to tame it.</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> Describe how we all feel worries differently, and that thinking of them as characters outside of us can help them feel more manageable. Recall the story you read and ask students what they think the character's worry would look like if it lived outside of her, and what she might say to it. Ask them to imagine a worry of their own (including its colour, shape, and size), and give it a name like Mr. Worry or Ms. Talks a Lot. Provide them with a variety of art materials to bring their character to life (paints, pastels, crayons, fabric, or collage materials).</p>	

### Learning Extensions

Read the book *Big Feelings Come and Go* to illustrate how anxiety may trigger the "fight-flight-freeze" response. For example, we might have a big feeling and get ready to "fight" by yelling at others, "flee" by staying away from things that make us anxious, or "freeze" by being quiet and hoping we don't get noticed. Sometimes this also feels like we can't think clearly. There are lots of ways bodies and minds react to feeling anxious and lots of ways to help calm them down - as the book and other EASE lessons will show.

*Big Feelings Come and Go* is a resource created by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc. and New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults & Families.

### Core Competencies

#### Communication

- Connect and engage with others
- Acquire, interpret and present information

#### Thinking

- Critical Thinking
  - Analyze and critique
  - Generating ideas

#### Personal & Social

- Positive Personal & Cultural Identity
  - Personal strengths and abilities
- Personal Awareness & Responsibility
  - Self-determination
  - Self-regulation
  - Well-being

### E Curricular Competencies

#### Grades K-1

- Identify and describe practices that promote mental well-being
- Identify and describe feelings and worries

#### Grades 2-3

- Identify and apply strategies that promote mental well-being
- Identify and describe feelings and worries, and strategies for dealing with them

### Extra Resources

#### Video:

*Willie, Kid Scientist*

### Further Reading

#### Books:

Chansky, T. (2014). *Freeing your child from anxiety, revised and updated edition: Practical strategies to overcome fears, worries, and phobias and be prepared for life - From toddlers to teens*. New York: Harmony

Cohen, L. J. (2013). *The opposite of worry: A parenting approach to childhood anxiety*. New York: Random House



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# EASE 8-12

## Student Resources

EDUCATOR RESOURCE

### MENTAL HEALTH and SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be used for a variety of helpful and positive reasons, including staying connected, activism and self-expression. However, some of the pitfalls of social media can have negative implications for students' levels of anxiety and their overall mental health.

Here are two ideas for lessons on **mental health stigma** and **positive mental health**. You can discuss mental health more broadly, or you can narrow the focus to anxiety (and stress).

### Lesson 1: Social media and mental health stigma

#### Learning objective

To increase awareness and critical thinking about how anxiety and mental health problems portrayed (and/or stigmatized) in social media and pop culture

- As a starting point, ask students to share different mental health problems they are "stigma" in the context of mental illness. Students can share a word or two that they hear these two terms.

Mental illness can be defined as a medical condition (like heart disease or diabetes) that affects thinking, emotions and behaviours, and that is associated with distress or impairment. Mental illness can affect anyone and is usually treatable.

**Stigma** (real or perceived) mental health challenges/illness) is "a cluster of negative attitudes and behaviours that lead to fear, reject, avoid and discriminate against people who have a mental health problem. Stigma is not just a matter of using the wrong word or action. Stigma is a barrier that discourages individuals and their families from getting help. Stigma is a barrier that discourages individuals and their families from getting help. Stigma is a barrier that discourages individuals and their families from getting help.

- Find and examine popular portrayals of anxiety or other mental health problems in these portrayals. Discuss how stigma may impact the experience of people with mental health problems. Ask questions, like *How can stigma be hurtful? Why is it important to be aware of messages about mental health problems?*

## Educator Resources

### THE SCIENCE OF ANXIETY (PPT)

Physical and Health Education 8/9

Core Curricular Competencies	
<b>PS Personal &amp; Social</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal Awareness &amp; Responsibility</li> </ul>	
<b>PHE (8/9) - Big Ideas</b> <p>Healthy choices influence our physical, emotional, and mental well-being.</p>	
Curricular Competency	Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and apply strategies to pursue personal healthy-living goals (8/9)</li> <li>Describe and assess strategies for managing problems related to mental well-being (8)</li> <li>Analyze strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others (9)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential short-term and long-term consequences of health decisions</li> <li>Signs and symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression</li> </ul>

Physical and Health Education 10

Core Curricular Competencies	
<b>PS Personal &amp; Social</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal Awareness &amp; Responsibility</li> </ul>	
<b>PHE (10) - Big Ideas</b> <p>Healthy choices influence, and are influenced by, our physical, emotional, and mental well-being.</p>	
Curricular Competency	Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and apply strategies to pursue personal healthy-living goals</li> <li>Evaluate and explain strategies for promoting mental well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential short-term and long-term consequences of health decisions</li> <li>Signs and symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression</li> </ul>

## Additional Resources

### STRATEGIES for DIALING DOWN TEST ANXIETY

Before a test or exam, do you regularly:

- Feel like you can't focus, and your brain goes blank?
- Feel dizzy and have a racing heart, shaky hands or difficulty breathing?
- Find yourself thinking things like "I'm going to totally bomb this"?
- Suddenly remember the answers after you hand in your test?

If this sounds familiar, you could have test anxiety. Of course, it's totally normal to feel some nerves before a test, but too much anxiety can start interfering with your performance. The good news is there are things you can do to help:

**Expect to feel some anxiety** - It's a sign that your body is making adrenaline to prepare you. Adrenaline gets your blood pumping and puts you on alert, but it's not dangerous. Some anxiety helps you by getting you to prepare and focus on the test.

**Relax your body** - Stress hormones create physical changes in your body, so you may have tense muscles, nausea or shallow breathing, or feel shaky or jittery. Focusing on these physical changes can increase feelings of anxiety. Taking a minute to settle your body, both before and during the test, can help. Here are some things to try:

- Practise some calm breathing strategies (e.g., square breathing).
- Tense and relax your muscles, starting with your feet and moving up your body, both before and your shoulders and loosen your jaw).
- Pay attention to your feet on the solid ground and the weight of your body in your chair.

**Give yourself a pep talk** - Instead of freaking yourself out by imagining the worst, tell yourself more helpful things:

*Test is just a way to show my learning about this topic. It feels like a big deal right now, but it's just one test of my life.*

*I've done hard things like this before; I can handle it. I'll do this. Focus on one question at a time. Breathe.*

**TIP:** For some guided relaxation strategies and a test anxiety visualization, download the free **Mindshift CBT** app (Anxiety Canada) or search online for videos or audio recordings on calm breathing or progressive muscle relaxation.

# EASE at Home

## Resources for parents and caregivers

EASE at Home 8-12

### ENCOURAGING your TEEN to FACE FEARS

The teen years can be daunting as teens' awareness of what could go wrong grows. Fears change from monsters under the bed to being alone forever or not being good enough. Common fears during these years include:

- Fear of failure (not meeting expectations, not doing as well as their peers, disappointing others)
- Fear of the unknown and change (moving, finding a new friend group, adulthood)
- Fear of embarrassment or rejection (doing the 'wrong' thing, being excluded, alone, or laughed at)

We all need a certain amount of fear. It keeps us safe and makes us feel uncomfortable when we're thinking of taking a risk (like cheating on a test or driving really fast). But exaggerated fear responses and "false alarms" can cause a lot of unnecessary suffering.

If fear is affecting a teen's choices and activities, or is putting too much pressure on them, the fear is unhelpful and needs to be addressed. Helping your teen learn to take small and brave steps will set them up not only for calmer teen years but for a more fulfilling life.

#### What's going on?

- Fear is a built-in human characteristic. We're born with a fight, flight, freeze response that never goes away. In the right dose, fear helps us stay safe.
- Anxiety arises when we start to imagine and focus on what could go wrong.
- When fear takes hold, the parts of our brain that make us think logically shut down. This makes it hard to talk to others or solve problems.
- One of the easiest ways to make ourselves feel better is to avoid what we are afraid of. This works in the short term, but in the long term it makes things harder, as our worries continue to grow.

#### How you can help

**Empathize.** When you make an effort to listen and take your teen's fears seriously, they feel less alone. Share some of your own fears from your teen years, while staying curious about their experience. Showing that you understand their feelings is not the same as agreeing with them. You could say, "I understand why you would see it that way, and I wonder if there is another way to look at it."

**Remind them of past successes.** Talk about other times when your teen was initially afraid to do something but still managed to do it. Help them remember how most or all of their feared predictions didn't come true, and that they handled the situation.

RELAXATION SKILLS: CALM BREATHING

### EASE at Home (Grades 4-7)

Strategies to help children cope with anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond

Sometimes it's hard for adults to know what to say or do to ease a child's worries, especially during times of change and uncertainty. As the most important big people in their world, parents and caregivers can help children feel safer and soften the sharp edges of whatever is happening to make their worries grow.

#### Relaxation Skills: Calm Breathing

##### What Is It?

Children are usually not aware that worries and other difficult emotions can "show up" in their bodies as physical discomfort, such as headaches and muscle tension. Regularly practising fun relaxation exercises can help bodies and minds feel loose and calm and dial down stress and worries when they do arise.

##### How?

Practising slow, deep breathing is one of the most effective ways to feel relaxed, centred, and focused. Encourage children to breathe in slowly through the nose, allowing the belly to rise, hold for a few seconds, then slowly exhale through the mouth, causing the belly to fall. Repeat the cycle 5-10 times to start and build up to a few minutes for a more powerful calming effect. Add some fun by trying the following:



Imagine blowing up a balloon in your belly on the in-breath, then slowly letting it deflate on the out-breath.

Pretend to smell a flower while breathing in, then blow gently to cool down a hot drink while breathing out.



Use an app with guided breathing instructions, like the [Breathr App](#) from Kelty Mental Health or [Mindshift](#) from Anxiety Canada.

Follow along with a video like this [Calm Breathe Bubble](#).



**Hint:** Calm breathing is best practised regularly and when your child is already calm so they can remember how to do it when they feel upset. Learn to identify your child's triggers so that you can do some calm breathing together before things get out of hand. It's always easier to deal with strong emotions before they get too overwhelming.



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EASE (Everyday Anxiety Strategies for Educators) is a collection of classroo

# EASE Evolution

2018

EASE is developed

2019

EASE K-7 provincial launch

2020

EASE K-7 online

EASE at Home K-7

2021

AISE m à 7 (French)

EASE 8-12 online

2022

EASE at Home K-7 translation (7 languages)

AISE 8 à 12 (French)

EASE at Home 8-12

2023

EASE at Home 8-12 translation (7 languages)

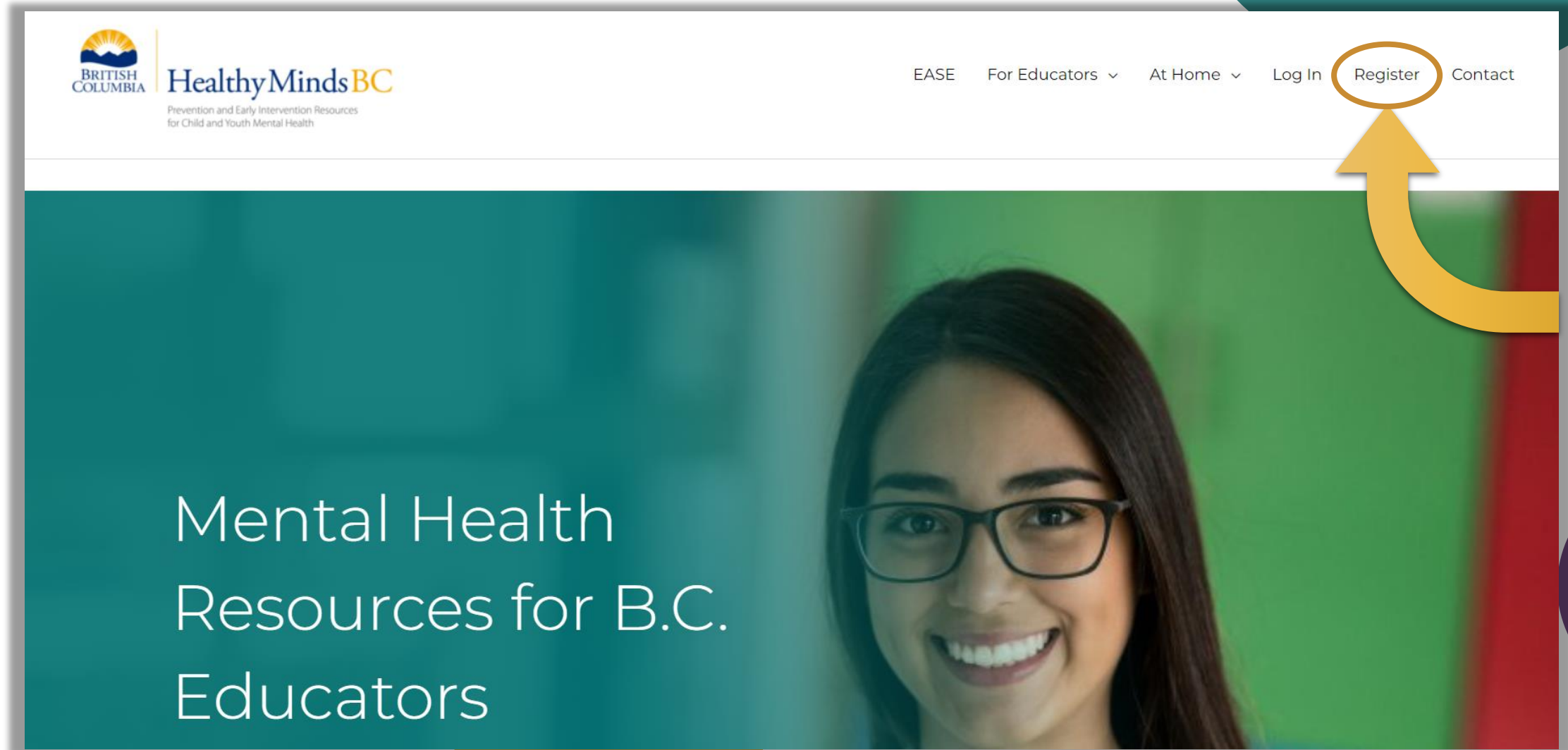
EASE for Early Years (EASEY)



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# HealthyMindsBC website



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# Discussion!

# Questions?

# Thank you!!!

[Email: mcf.EverydayAnxietyStrategiesForEducators@gov.bc.ca](mailto:mcf.EverydayAnxietyStrategiesForEducators@gov.bc.ca)

[Website: HealthyMindsBC.gov.bc.ca](http://HealthyMindsBC.gov.bc.ca)



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