

## MODULE 6. PROMOTING TEACHERS' MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING DURING PUBLIC EMERGENCIES

### UNIT 2. Most common psychological problems associated with public emergency crisis

**Activity 1. Read the following example and try to identify what kind of mental health problem the person has. Then think what you would do in their place.**

Mary has been a primary teacher for 10 years. For the last 4 months she has been feeling sadness, irritability and trouble sleeping every day. She also feels like a failure both as a teacher and as a parent. She says that she has a hard time concentrating to prepare her classes and even during classes she has trouble paying attention. All this has led her to not want to be with people (nor friends nor family), but to be at home and she has even stopped doing crafts and reading, something she really liked.

**Activity 2. Read the following example and try to identify what kind of mental health problem the person has. Then think what you would do in their place.**

Peter has been a secondary school teacher for 20 years. The demands at the school where he works are increasing. During the last two months he says that it has become more difficult for him to get out of bed to go to work. When he is at school, he has the feeling that the problems (with students, colleagues, parents) are more and more difficult to solve. There are days when he comes home feeling overwhelmed and unable to handle the situation. He even feels that his attitude towards students and classmates is changing, he feels less approachable and friendly, less proactive. This is an attitude he did not have before, since he loved the contact with his students and his work. He has also noticed that he is unable to disconnect from work, even on weekends, and this is affecting his sleep. She has also been having headaches and neck pain.

### UNIT 4. Managing mental health problems

**Activity 1. How to perform the Diaphragmatic breathing in steps:**

1. Lie on your back on a flat surface or in bed, with your knees bent and your head supported. You can use a pillow under your knees to support your legs.
2. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.
3. Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out, causing your hand to rise. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.

4. Tighten your stomach muscles, so that your stomach moves in, causing your hand to lower as you exhale through pursed lips. The hand on your upper chest should remain as still as possible.

### Activity 2: How to perform progressive muscle relaxation in easy and few steps:

- 1) While inhaling, contract one muscle group (for example your upper thighs) for 5 seconds to 10 seconds, then exhale and suddenly release the tension in that muscle group.
- 2) Give yourself 10 seconds to 20 seconds to relax, and then move on to the next muscle group (for example your buttocks).
- 3) While releasing the tension, try to focus on the changes you feel when the muscle group is relaxed. Imagery may be helpful in conjunction with the release of tension, such as imagining that stressful feelings are flowing out of your body as you relax each muscle group.
- 4) Gradually work your way up the body contracting and relaxing muscle groups.

### Activity 3: How to do positive imaging: Visualisation of a Landscape

1. Imagine that you are walking through a very green grassy meadow between high snow-capped mountains.
2. Look at the mountains around you, they are very high, and you see how the white of the snow contrasts with the deep blue of the sky. It is midday and above you the sun is shining brightly and radiantly. Look at the green of the grass, the white of the snow on the mountains and the blue of the sky.
3. The temperature there is very pleasant, it is neither hot nor cold and there is a nice warm breeze that brushes gently against the skin of your face.
4. As you walk, you notice, since you are barefoot, the soft touch of the grass under the soles of your feet. You can feel the touch of the somewhat damp and cool grass.
5. You go very slowly, taking in everything you see and feel around you.
6. You have a great sense of tranquillity and peace.
7. You hear the birds singing and see them flying around you.
8. Now look at the plants, herbs and flowers around you. There are small brightly coloured flowers, white, yellow, orange, blue... come and smell them. Cut a flower and hold it to your nose. Smell its aroma while concentrating on the colour of its petals.
9. Keep walking very slowly, without any hurry, enjoying the walk.
10. Look at the streams of water flowing down from the mountains forming small streams, where the water jumps, runs, forming small waterfalls and quiet pools. Concentrate until you hear the murmur of the water...

11. Now you are going to approach a stream and you are going to bend down and put your two joined hands in the water to pick it up and drink. Feel the coolness of the water in your hands. Bring them to your mouth and drink. Feel the fresh, pure, clean, crystal clear water entering your body. This water revitalises your whole organism and you feel full of health and well-being.
12. Continue your walk and notice a small mint plant, approach it and cut some leaves. Chew on them and notice the strong mint flavour on your palate. Concentrate until you notice it clearly.
13. Finally, you are going to look for a place where you can lie down comfortably. Lie down and rest, close your eyes and perceive the noises, the smells, the temperature... and rest deeply, very deeply...

#### Activity 4: Mindfulness: Raisin Exercise

One of the best known and most used exercises to understand and start practising mindfulness. This exercise is divided into 2 parts: in the first part, the task is to eat a raisin on a regular basis. In the second part, the instructions are to follow the following steps:

1. Hold the raisin in your hand or fingers and look at it as if you were seeing a sultana for the first time.
2. See and carefully observe all the details of the raisin: the colour, the folds, etcetera.
3. Touch and listen. Explore the texture of the raisin, move it, squeeze it and listen to the sound.
4. Smell.
5. Place the raisin in the mouth and explore the sensation of having the raisin on the tongue.
6. Chewing: biting into the raisin and perceiving the texture and flavours of the raisin in the mouth.
7. Swallowing.
8. Note the after-effects.
9. The sultana exercise ends with reflection on the experience of eating the raisin on a regular basis and eating it with mindfulness, awareness or mindfulness practice.

#### Activity 5: Adapting to change: How to manage personal change?

1. Identification of the current situation or problem
2. Acceptance phase (Working from the reality we have)
3. Search for solutions: Creativity Stage
4. Action steps

## 5. New balance

### Activity 6: How to build resilience?

1. Establish relationships with others.
2. Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable obstacles.
3. Accept change as part of life.
4. Develop realistic goals and walk in that direction.
5. Seek opportunities for self-discovery.
6. Take decisive action. Do not ignore problems.
7. Work on a positive view of oneself.
8. Put things in perspective.
9. Optimistic vision, do not lose hope.
10. Take care of oneself.

## UNIT 5. Promoting teachers' mental health and well-being during public emergencies

### Activity 1: How to increase your emotional vocabulary and awareness?

1. Know the variety of emotions that exist and that all of them are valid. To do this, when trying to identify how you feel, look for different words to describe what is happening to you.
2. Understand and accept the emotions of others without judging them, being empathetic.
3. Try not to avoid feeling certain emotions.
4. Reflect on what you are feeling to get to the source of the emotion and understand what you are feeling.
5. Express what you are feeling, either by talking to someone or writing it down.

### Activity 2: How to learn to be assertive

- ✓ Start with easy situations (for instance, in a restaurant change the dish you asked for).
- ✓ Say “no”. At the beginning it will be uncomfortable, but with practice it will become easier.
- ✓ Be simple and direct.
- ✓ Do not ask for apology when expressing a need.
- ✓ Use an appropriate body language and voice.