STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR YOUNG ADOLESCENT GIRLS:

STRENGTHENING CONNECTION IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

by

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Abstract

For this research project, nine grade 8 girls were asked specific questions during focus group interviews to illuminate their stressors and methods of coping. The results revealed that stress is a significant factor in three main areas of their lives: school (especially the transition to high school), family and peers. The girls utilized mostly active coping strategies. They sought assistance from family, friends or other adults in their environment. A small group format was mentioned as affording an opportunity to practice coping skills. These findings imply that young adolescent girls elicit most of their support through connection with others. Therefore, a stress management group intervention is presented to assist young adolescent girls in managing the transition to secondary school and beyond. The program attempts to help the students learn skills that will increase their ability to cope actively with their stressors. This project concludes with recommendations and practical applications for future endeavors.
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Introduction

Adolescence is a fascinating time when individual, developmental and cultural factors combine to help shape adult life. In our rapidly changing world many pressures intensify this complex period in the human life cycle, and as we move toward the next millennium, young people appear to be increasingly affected by stress. While information regarding adult stress, coping and adaptation is prolific, a similar focus on adolescents has gained prominence only in the last fifteen years (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995a). Even more noticeable is that only recently have adolescent girls started to be studied in the realm of psychology related to stress and adaptation (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993).

Data indicate higher stress in early adolescence, especially for girls, in several different domains (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995a). As examples, early physical matures are likely to suffer greater negative body image and have more eating problems compared to girls who mature on time or later (Rice, Herman & Petersen, 1993). Compas and Wagner (1991) reported that girls appear more sensitive to stress inducing changes in friendship and interpersonal networks than males. Gilligan and her colleagues (1982) found that, as girls reach adolescence, they struggle with their ability to speak out and to voice their opinion. These researchers mention a fundamental paradox which seems to develop in girls' lives: their desire for connection in relationships is paramount and adolescent girls will silence themselves in relationships rather than risk open conflict that could bring about their isolation. Another gender difference in considering stress is the incidence of depression, with young adolescent females experiencing higher levels of depression than their male counterparts (e.g., Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Petersen, Sarigiani & Kennedy, 1991). How can our young adolescent girls be helped to cope with what seems to be an accumulation of stressors as they navigate from preadolescence through early adolescence and beyond? How can this transition process be strengthened to continue to promote healthy development?
Between pre-school and puberty, girls seem to manage life with increasing self-sufficiency. Piper (1994) remarks that girls can be androgynous, with the ability to act adaptively in various situations regardless of gender role constraints. She indicates that research points to androgynous individuals (those free to act without concern about their behavior being labeled as feminine or masculine) are the most well adjusted. However, as girls enter early adolescence, many lose their assertive, optimistic personalities and become more self-critical and depressed. Female adolescents reported more relationship stressors and felt more threatened by these same stressors than males (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995f). In addition, young adolescent females are generally more fatalistic in their problem solving approaches and report more ongoing stress (stress refers to any event where demands from the environment, internal demands or both put pressure on or exceed the adaptive resources of the individual; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) even after coping processes moved to closure (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987).

As adolescence is a time that is important for certain developmental task completions like skills acquisition for adult roles, gaining greater autonomy, becoming physically and sexually mature and realigning social interconnections, it is important that adolescents value their potential sources of strength and competence. The experiences of childhood and adolescence help to mold the emerging adult. Orenstein (1994) cautions our society about girls' development and the potential that a diminished sense of self could mean that, unconsciously, girls take on a second class accommodating status. A responsible and adaptable adult is a strength in our world. The need to encourage a strong sense of self in girls is crucial so they do not enter adulthood in a deficit position. Helping early adolescent girls cope with stressors in their lives can assist in their self-affirmation and fuller participation in all aspects of their lives. Therefore, the purpose of this research project is to explore what young adolescent girls indicate as their stressors; how they are coping; and what they reveal are their needs in managing stress. Drawing
from the results of this data as well as the work of other researchers, a group program for
stress management in early adolescent girls will be proposed.

Current research on adolescent development indicates marked differences to earlier
work (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995c). One of the most significant changes in adolescent theory
and research is the shift from stage-oriented approaches with a focus on turmoil, to the
process-oriented approaches which promote the ability of the adolescent to function well.
Seiffge-Krenke (1995a) emphasized exploring the activities, thoughts and feelings of
adolescents when dealing with naturally occurring stressors. This effort is a direct
reaction to earlier research with a narrow focus on clinical aspects of stress, coping and
relationships in adolescents. Seiffge-Krenke (1995c) has developed a model of
adolescent coping based on the work of John Coleman and Anne Petersen which
incorporates the stress and coping research of Lazarus and others. In Seiffge-Krenke's
(1995c) model of stress, coping and outcome, coping is a key construct which
incorporates a broad range of variables that are associated with coping behavior. Coping
is defined as an "individual's ability to manage internal or external demands that are
appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of an individual " (Lazarus & Folkman,
1984, p. 141). The adolescents' internal resources and quality of relationships (e.g.,
social resources like family and peers) are additional determinants of the coping
response.

As adolescence is a developmental period, the usefulness of this developmental
approach, concentrating on the ways adolescents cope with these stressors (physical,
psychological, emotional and social) and their subsequent adaptation, is relevant.
Especially so is the importance of "relationship" and its significance to a girl's
development. Gilligan (1982) indicates that female adolescents tend more than male
adolescents to depend on others in assessing their abilities. There are several research
findings that could be interpreted as being supportive of the notion that females are more
vulnerable to social stress and rely more heavily on social support networks (e.g., talking
about the problem with the person concerned, talking with others and asking for help) in their coping strategies (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995d). Rice et al. (1993) affirm the idea that a girl's social support network may add to the accumulation of stressors for early adolescent girls. Also, girls seek more social support and generally are more likely than boys to focus on relationships (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1991). This finding concurs with Carol Gilligan's research that for females connectedness and relationships are central to women's psychological development. The maintenance of authentic, resonant relationships, is crucial to a girl's psychological health. It stands to reason that helping young adolescent girls deal with their stressors and sharing an understanding of their concerns, experiences and feelings will benefit them in terms of healthier development and socialization. As well, a social setting such as a group experience could honor the importance of connection.

Adolescent girls and boys may struggle with different types of stress and would thus require different interventions to help them cope. Several stress and coping programs for adolescents have addressed areas such as coping with major life events (e.g., parental divorce), developmental transition like moving from junior high to high school and general coping with stressful circumstances (Compas, Phares & Ledoux, 1989). These same authors indicate that interventions have not addressed possible gender differences in sources of stress and characteristics of coping. These are important factors to consider in developing a stress and coping intervention effort.

This paper will present an overview of the theory of stress, appraisal and coping which has seen considerable change over the years. Using this theoretical framework, a brief review of some of the literature on adolescent stress and coping will be highlighted. A specific section pertaining to adolescent girls will emphasize the gender differences in how young people experience stress and subsequently cope. An obvious need to study gender differences emerges from this literature review and provides the impetus for the following research objectives and resulting stress management program proposal.
Research Questions

1. What do early adolescent girls identify as their stressors?
2. How are they coping with their stressors?
3. What do they perceive as their primary needs in dealing with these stressors?

Focus Group Methodology

A unique way to gather data as proposed by these questions is the focus group interview. In seeking to understand the experience of stress for young adolescent girls, it is important to capture their phenomenology (to understand how they perceive and interpret the world). The focus group interview is one method that produces qualitative data (qualitative research is based on the belief that theory should be grounded in the day-to-day realities of the people being studied) which provides insights into the perceptions and opinions of its participants. Focus groups bring together a targeted sample of informants to discuss a topic of interest. In order to gain a better understanding of early adolescent girls' stressors, methods of coping and needs for stress management, two focus groups will be conducted. A structured interview guide will be developed to ensure that well-thought-out open ended questions are utilized. This data will be analyzed using Krueger's (1994) five factor analysis to determine common themes and ideas emerging from the data. A narrative summary will be used to interpret the results with illustrative quotations from the participants added to capture the girls' experiences. This data will be discussed in relation to the work of other researchers in order to present a stress management program based on the identified needs of young adolescent girls. Recommendations for future research and practical applications within the school setting will be given consideration as well.
Stress, Appraisal and Coping--An Overview of Theory

Stress

Literature abounds with reports, books and articles dealing with the stress and coping field. Professional journals devote many pages to research and theory in these same areas (Monat & Lazarus, 1991). Stress and coping seem relevant to anyone concerned about trying to manage life successfully. In terms of defining stress, there is a lack of agreement on the definition of "stress" among those researchers closest in the field (Monat & Lazarus, 1991). So intricate is the phenomenon of stress that Lazarus (1966), a main investigator in the area, presents the use of "stress as a generic term for the whole area of problems that includes the stimuli producing stress reaction, the reactions themselves, and the various intervening processes" (p. 27). Therefore, the three basic delineations of stress refer to a collective area of study: the physiological or systemic, which is primarily concerned with an individual's biological reactions to an outside stimulus (e.g., Selye, 1976, as cited in Lazarus, 1966); the psychological, where cognitive appraisals lead to the evaluation of stress (e.g., Lazarus, 1966); and sociological stress, where the social system is disrupted (as cited in Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). All three seem to be interrelated, and Lazarus (1966) advocates "stress" as a general label for this complex area of study. For the purposes of this paper, stress will refer "to a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 19).

Stress is an imbalance between the demands placed on an individual and the resources that an individual has to cope with those demands. According to the transactional model, stress is a common and normal component of living (Lazarus & Launier, 1978, as cited in Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This model views the person and the environment in a dynamic, reciprocal relationship (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Reciprocity of cause (antecedent) and consequence is important. What is a cause in one situation can be a
consequence in another. The antecedent can be an aspect of the person or of the
environment. This model recognizes the crucial value of change. The environment, the
person and their relationship are constantly unfolding. Process is a key factor (Lazarus &
Folkman, 1984).

**Appraisal**

Further to this conceptualization of stress is the importance of an individual's
perception. An event in the environment is considered to be a stressor only if an
individual's appraisals of it, and of his/her own resources, suggest threat or disturbance
(Singer & Davidson, 1986). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define appraisal "as the process
of categorizing an encounter, and its various facets, with respect to its significance for
well-being" (p. 31). Appraisal is ongoing for any individual as situations are encountered
and evaluated for their meaning.

These authors also delineate two kinds of appraisal: primary and secondary. Primary
appraisal, which includes harm-loss, threat and challenge, relates the event to its
significance for the person's well-being—the motivational relevance of what is happening.
Harm-loss refers to damage already experienced, threat refers to harm or loss that has not
occurred yet but is anticipated, and challenge incorporates the potential for mastery
which is considered stressful because a person must mobilize to ensure a positive
outcome (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Secondary appraisal refers to what must be done
to manage a situation so that the event is related to available coping resources and
options. This appraisal is a crucial ally to primary appraisal because the perception of
harm, threat or challenge depend also on how much control an individual thinks he or she
can exert over outcomes. In addition, a changed appraisal on the basis of new
information from the environment is called reappraisal.

**Coping**

Just as the concept of stress has evolved over the past several decades, so too has the
concept of coping received widespread study in the last forty years (Lazarus & Folkman,
Coping literature indicates two different traditional theoretical bases: one has its grounding in the studies of animal experimentation and the second is from psychoanalytic ego psychology. The latter view, like the traditional model of stress, sees an individual reacting to threat in the environment. The animal model utilizes the concepts of drive or arousal along with reactions to control aversive conditions in the environment in order to lessen physical and mental stress. Folkman and Lazarus (1984) consider this a simplistic model which lacks the complexity of cognitive-emotional processes that are an integral part of human experience.

Although these traditional approaches to coping have received much attention and study over the years, there is still confusion about coping and how it influences the process of adaptation. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) point to four main limitations of the traditional approaches. First, coping was viewed as a trait or style (an ego structure was considered as stable or one dimensional), as opposed to process-oriented, emphasizing action, context and change. Second, coping in traditional models did not distinguish between automatized adaptive behaviors and conscious effort. Coping involves effort. Third, animal and psychoanalytic ego psychology models equated coping with successful outcome—a confounding of coping with outcome. A coping function refers to the purpose it serves, whereas an outcome is the effect that a coping strategy has on a situation. It is important to define coping independently of outcome, and the study of coping should include successes and failures. Coping must include efforts to manage stress without regard to the outcome. Fourth, the concept of coping should highlight the management of stress, as opposed to the concept of mastery over the environment, as being the ideal. This emphasizes that perhaps some sources of stress in a person's life must be adapted to and lived with; they cannot be solved or overcome completely.

Over the years coping has acquired a variety of conceptual meanings, and terms like mastery, defence and adaptation are used interchangeably (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1991). Given the discussion of the previous paragraph, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define
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coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (p. 141). This definition recognizes cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of the coping process, along with involving change and stability as a function of continuous appraisals and reappraisals in the person-environment relationship.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) make another key distinction concerning the two most prominent functions of coping. Managing or altering the problem where some element in the environment causes the distress is problem-focused coping. Regulating one's emotional response to the problem is emotion-focused coping. Earlier it was stated that coping is determined by cognitive appraisal. In general, emotion-focused forms of coping are more likely to occur when an appraisal that nothing can be done to modify a threatening, harmful or challenging situation in the environment has occurred. Examples of emotion-focused strategies might be a person calming herself/himself down and ignoring a situation. Less adaptive strategies might be yelling at a person or throwing things (Compas, Malcarne & Fondacaro, 1988). Problem-focused forms of coping are more likely when environmental conditions are appraised as amenable to change (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Examples of problem-focused coping strategies might be doing more homework or studying more, as well as talking things over with the other person involved in the problem (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993). Both these coping functions influence each other throughout a stressful encounter.

This model of the coping process developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) was based on research with adult populations. How useful is this model for studying coping processes in adolescents, especially early adolescents? Findings indicate that the Lazarus model has considerable usefulness in looking at younger age groups (e.g., Compas et al. 1988; Seiffge-Krenke, 1993). Research in the last decade has elaborated on the work of Lazarus and others. A brief overview of adolescence as a unique, developmental stage is important at this point.
Adolescent Development

Adolescence is an important part of a continuous human life cycle between childhood and adulthood. It is a time that involves extensive change. For some young people, change is stimulating and leads to growth; for others, changes can be overwhelming and lead to developmental problems (Petersen, Kennedy & Sullivan, 1991; Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984). The definition of adolescence sees this period extending over several years, usually from the ages of 11 or 12 to about 21 years of age (Elliott & Feldman, 1990). It is further subdivided into early (ages 11 to 14), middle (ages 15 to 17) and late (ages 18 to 21) substages. Each phase is marked by specific changes. For example, early adolescence includes individual variation linked to the timing of puberty, where biological changes mark the onset of reproductive change (Adams & Guillota, 1989).

Cognitive and social developmental processes occur in all stages of adolescence as well. There can be so much variability in the rates of adolescent development that this period has a uniqueness for the individual as well as the group. To illustrate this point, as a group, girls mature sooner than boys. Yet, within both groups, some individuals will mature sooner and others much later than average (Elliott & Feldman, 1990).

Especially critical is the developmental transition from childhood to adolescence, often referred to as early adolescence (Hamburg, 1974). Hamburg compared early adolescent transition to entrance into a lottery where the adolescents know almost everything will change and yet they have no idea as to the outcome. The lottery idea may seem exaggerated; however, it does emphasize early adolescence as a focal point for additional support to young people. Evidence affirms that early adolescents perceive greater stress (e.g., Hamburg, 1974; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995f). Programs to assist early adolescents in managing these life transitions are warranted.

The twentieth century, especially the latter half, has generated a varied perspective regarding adolescence. In the first half of the century, G. Stanley Hall identified
adolescence as an important period of life which included the concept of "storm and stress" (Hauser & Bowlds, 1990). Psychological turmoil was intense with mood swings viewed as commonplace. Conflicts with family, friends and authority figures marked crisis points as young people struggled to deal with biological, cognitive and social changes—the storms and stresses that society considered the tasks of adolescence (Hauser & Bowlds, 1990).

Up to mid century, Hall's work had a great influence on the writing about adolescence. Hauser and Bowlds (1990) credit two main insights to the storm-and-stress perspective. The first called research attention to the cumulative physical, social and psychological changes adolescents experienced and how they attempted to manage or cope with the simultaneous demands. A second focus was the abundance of empirical research that took place. For example, Piaget's (1958) work on cognitive development described the development of abstract reasoning during adolescence (as cited in Adams & Gullota, 1989). The cognitive development perspective assumes that cognitions change through an interaction between biological processes and environmental experiences as an individual matures. Further to this, there is a series of major sequential changes that occur in how a person understands the world. A child progresses through various stages of concrete logical operations (usually between 7 and 10 years of age where cognitions are simplistic) to a stage of formal operations where an individual can engage in complex, abstract and relational thought (e.g., to recognize links between current behavior and long-term outcomes) which is generally around the age 12 and beyond (Adams & Gullota, 1989). Erikson's (1968) psychosocial framework was stage-oriented and involved key crises over the life cycle as well as emphasizing identity development.

More important than the quantity of the research in the last 50 years, has been the qualitative changes in adolescent research. Petersen (1988) notes the shift in adolescent development research from stage-oriented approaches (like those of Piaget and Erikson) to process-oriented approaches. The process orientation perceives development as a
fairly continuous and progressive change as opposed to a stage-to-stage movement. Looking at development as a process also recognizes that interactions between the individual and the environment or context are important. Petersen and Ebata (1987) proposed a model of developmental transition in early adolescence which describes how the number and timing of changes in early adolescence affect mental health. Moderators of these effects included parental and peer support in addition to an adolescent's repertoire of coping skills.

With the current research on adolescence have come findings that question the view that adolescence is a time of emotional upheaval. According to Petersen and Ebata (1987), adolescents seem to tackle and manage "an impressive collection of demands, conflicts and opportunities" (as cited in Seiffge-Krenke, 1993, p. 286). Large scale cross-sectional and longitudinal studies conducted during the 1960's and 1970's indicated that, instead of being marked by psychological disruption, development in most areas for adolescents proceeded rather continuously (e.g., Offer & Offer, 1975). Thus, it appears that most adolescents navigate this period without significant difficulties, although continued research is warranted to illuminate many areas of adolescent stress and coping management (e.g., Seiffge-Krenke, 1993; Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984).

Adolescent Stress and Coping

Seiffge-Krenke (1995c) notes that the conceptual paradigm guiding adolescent stress research has shifted from a largely clinical oriented approach until the mid 1980's to a developmental one. This newer perspective regards the adolescent as the producer and manager of his or her own developmental transition to adulthood in either productive and adaptive ways or with maladaptive outcomes. A major contributor to the field of adolescent stress and coping research, Seiffge-Krenke has generated a developmental approach for studying adolescent coping. Influenced by the work of John Coleman and Anne Petersen (see the previous section), this model looks at how previous experiences
with relationships and stress management methods affect current coping attempts. The nature of the stressors and the internal and social resources are all considered important determinants of the coping response in this approach. Added to this is the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) where cognitive appraisals of stressful events play a critical role.

A variety of types of stressors have been studied in relation to adolescents. Seiffge-Krenke (1995f) notes that a large number of research efforts between 1967 and 1984 investigated coping with critical life events (e.g., death of a parent, illness, violent acts like rape and murder). These topics concerned loss or damage as described by Lazarus (1966). The severity of the event might call for the term trauma as being more appropriate (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995f). In addition, much of the research focused on defense processes and symptom formation—a clinical orientation and sampling. Although critical life events have dramatic effects on coping behavior, in order to focus on competence, a sampling of relevant and frequent stressors from an adolescent's everyday life is necessary (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995f). These minor events or normative stressors are of special relevance and may present a more comprehensive picture when studying adolescent stress and coping.

Some researchers differentiate between normative stressors, non-normative stressors and daily hassles (Hauser & Bowlds, 1990; Rice et al., 1993). Normative stressors are events that all adolescents must face and include physical changes, a transition to high school and dealing with peer influence, to name just a few.

Non-normative stressors are those events which can occur at any time, unexpectedly, and often in addition to other important transitions (Rice et al., 1993). Some examples are the death of a loved one, parental divorce, a poor grade at school and so forth. These stressors often amplify the impact of adolescent transitions. Hauser and Bowlds (1990) note that research evidence indicates that teenagers who recall parental conflict or family
tensions may be more at risk from health and behavioral difficulties like depression, aggressive and sexual behaviors and relationships problems.

An additional stressor category is daily hassles. These are day-to-day events that can accumulate and result in stress for the individual. Rice et al. (1993) believe that normative and non-normative stressors can multiply the number of daily hassles adolescents must manage. As an example, a parental divorce (non-normative stressor) has other consequences for an adolescent (e.g., feelings of guilt; adjustment to different family circumstances; potential financial hardship, etc.) that exacerbates his/her life and in turn, can affect behavior and health. Some researchers think that daily hassles are often more accurate as predictors of stress than are major events (Compas, Orosan & Grant, 1993; Compas, Howell, Phares et al. 1989). Non-normative situations can be chronic, such as living in poverty or conflict at home, and this has implications for an adolescent's level of stress (Compas et al., 1993). Occasionally, a major stressful event does not predict levels of stress, but is mediated or influenced by daily hassles.

According to Seiffge-Krenke's model of adolescent coping (1995c), a young person's internal (e.g., self concept and personality structure) and social resource system (e.g., parents and peers) may have a significant influence on the coping response. A stressful encounter by itself does not explain the reason an individual responds in an adaptive or nonadaptive way (Allen & Hiebert, 1991; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995e). Rather, an individual's perception (appraisal) of the adequacy or inadequacy of personal resources for dealing with a situation becomes critical in determining a manner of coping. Internal resources like interpersonal skills and self-esteem and personality variables like sociability and emotional instability may have a significant impact on how an adolescent manages the situation (e.g., Garton & Pratt, 1995; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995e).

In a study of the effect of personality variables on subsequent coping, Seiffge-Krenke (1995e) found that a cluster of adolescents who were characterized as depressed and emotionally unstable reported higher rates of minor stressors than other groups of
adolescents. They perceived the same problems as more stressful. It was also noted that
dysfunctional coping (e.g., withdrawal) was twice as high as for those adolescents in the
sociable and extroverted cluster and three times as high as those individuals in the
normal, controlled adolescent group. This gives added credit to the transactional models
of stress and coping which emphasize the role of the perceived meaning of a stressful
encounter in determining its impact on an individual (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Research by Garton and Pratt (1995) studied the relationship of stress and self concept
in early adolescent school students. Results suggested that as stress increases there is a
decrease in self concept. These researchers concluded, "levels of self concept, however,
remain the strongest predictor of which young people will indicate experiencing stress
and its negative effect (p. 625)." Daily hassles that were identified by adolescents as
stressful were included in the measurement scale for this study. Garton and Pratt
considered that this may have weakened the relationship between self concept and stress,
given there are many ways an adolescent may choose to cope with daily hassles. Self
concept may be but one moderating variable. Other variables like gender differences and
utilization of support networks may have added influence. These variables are worthy of
more detailed investigation.

Social Support

A social support network is crucial in helping adolescents to cope with stress
(Herman-Stahl & Petersen, 1996). It is important to consider that social support can be a
resource (e.g., an adolescent perceives the availability of helpful others) as well as a
coping strategy (e.g., helpful others are sought for coping assistance). In addition, family
and peers can be sources of stress as reported by adolescents.

A supportive family network can be an important buffer against the effects of stress.
The parent-adolescent relationship is a key to either fostering familial connectedness or
family conflict (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995b). Families where individuation and relationship
are supported allow the adolescent to express individuality and self-assertiveness. These
independent initiatives can be supported in a context of family cohesion. When conflicts occur that are perceived as stressful by young people, the disagreements are often about mundane topics like chores, curfews, dating and personal appearance (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995b). Commonly, emotional withdrawal and communication difficulties are reported by adolescents and parents. Seiffge-Krenke (1995b) mentions that typical ways of resolving family conflict like walking away or prolonged arguing do not represent optimal models of coping such as searching for a compromise. In a positive light, open conflict can allow individuals to express their distinctive views. This can be an excellent forum for parents to model conflict resolution processes to adolescents. In turn, this process can facilitate an adolescent’s autonomy and teach valuable life skills that can be taken out into other domains in the environment. In contrast, coercive parenting and lack of support may lead to behavioral problems. Thus, parenting style can be related to social competency among adolescents.

Hauser and Bowlds (1990) and other writers have noted that authoritarian, traditional and authoritative parenting styles have important implications for adolescent development which in turn are associated with different coping behaviors. Shulman (1993) conducted research that identified four different types of family climates and each generated its own mode of coping strategies. The unstructured conflict-oriented family (e.g., lots of conflict; lack of intrafamilial support) usually resulted in teenagers who lacked adequate coping models, and teenagers coped by withdrawal and passivity. Structured expressive, independence-oriented families (e.g., cohesive, feelings are expressed, clear rules, emphasis on relationship) tended to produce adolescents who were better equipped to deal with stress. Control-oriented families (e.g., authoritarian, explicit family rules with little emotional warmth) tended to produce teenagers who were passive and relied on family for decision-making. These clusters and results resemble what has been reported in other studies (e.g., Seiffge-Krenke, 1995b).
Just as the parent-adolescent relationship may be a source of support and encouragement for coping behavior or a source of stress, so too, is the peer relationship. The peer group bolsters self-esteem, provides companionship and emotional closeness as an adolescent moves toward psychological growth and social maturity (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995f). Friends can offer each other an accepting relationship where sharing beliefs, values and information can be an important buffer against stress (Petersen, 1988).

Peers become increasingly important as adolescents strive for independence. Adolescents spend more time with their peers than do children. Although supportive friendships have beneficial effects, adolescents who identify more with peers than with parents may be more at risk of stress and deviant behaviors. For example, when peers model and support problem behaviors like substance abuse or violence, and if adolescents have less positive adult supervision, they may be more susceptible to negative peer influences (Perry, Kelder & Komro, 1993). These young people are at a greater risk for poor peer group selection. In turn, this involvement can add stressors to the adolescent's life and to the adolescent's relationships within the family system.

Siddique and D'Arcy (1984) and other researchers (e.g., Petersen, 1998; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995f) indicate that peer influence does not usurp the influence of parents. Rather, parents and peers support different developmental functions and help teenagers cope with different stress issues. Seiffge-Krenke (1995b) reiterates that parents are valued for their advice on school and future-related concerns and generally remain significant discussion partners for their children throughout the adolescent period. However, adolescents tend to discuss very personal problems such as dating and romantic relationships with peers, perhaps because of shared experiences and greater comfort levels. It is obvious that friendships are vital in the lives of adolescents. The potential for the negative influence of peers in developing problem behavior such as drug and alcohol abuse, violence or premature sexual activity is possible. However, adolescents spend a lot of time just talking with friends (Csikzentmihalyi & Larson, 1984). Peers
offer a positive, supportive function in coping with stressors as well. Seiffge-Krenke's (1995g) research reminds the reader that this does not necessarily imply low stress in friendships. "Having trouble with friends was experienced less frequently than, for example, quarrels with parents. However, it was described in comparison to family discord as being more important and unpleasant and rather unexpected" (p. 228). Indeed, both family and peers have a major impact on adolescent stress and subsequent coping behaviors.

**Adolescent Coping**

Adolescents face many challenges, and coping is viewed as an important mediator between negative life events and psychological well-being (Herman-Stahl et al., 1995). So coping becomes an important determining aspect in an adolescent's emotional adaptation. Two broad categories of coping measures have been identified according to their functions. Problem-focused coping, which is direct efforts to deal with the problem, has been referred to as approach strategies. Emotion-focused coping has also been labeled as avoidant or withdrawal coping (Herman-Stahl et al., 1995). These researchers found that most adolescents display a dynamic approach to coping with stress. In general, those adolescents using a problem-focused style reported fewer symptoms of depression than those who avoided or denied problems. Perhaps this suggests that problem-focused coping (e.g., attempts to act on or change the stressors through cognitive or overt behavioral ways) is important for positive adaptation. A key in any coping seems to be the presence of active cognitive and behavioral efforts. A total reliance on withdrawal without active efforts to cope appears to have a negative effect on mental health. It is important to remember, though, that no coping strategy is inherently good or bad, but depends for success on the match between the strategy and the coping demands of the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Perhaps temporary withdrawal allows an adolescent time to gather more appropriate coping resources. A specific context must be considered. The presence of active cognitive and behavioral efforts can
reinforce a feeling of control for the adolescent. This could have a significant implication for inclusion of both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies in a stress management program.

Another consideration in this discussion about coping strategies is that adolescents of various ages may adopt different mechanisms to cope with stressors. Compas et al. (1988) indicated that younger teenagers were more likely to use problem-focused strategies like trying to change the stressor. Older adolescents appeared to use more emotion-focused methods (e.g., tried not to think about a problem or to think about what good might come out of the situation) which might attest to the greater degree of cognitive flexibility as teenagers mature. This would seem to affirm Piagetian theory which asserts that older teenagers progressively can think abstractly and project ahead to potential results of a particular course of action. Again, developmental stages of adolescence and coping strategies pose another consideration for stress management planning. Perhaps with early adolescents, more problem-focused methods would result in a more adaptive change to managing stressors. Seiffge-Krenke's (1995g) research has illustrated that adolescents have "remarkable competencies in dealing with stressors" (p. 229). Situation, context, social norms and conventions were very influential, in addition to an adolescent's internal resources. She concludes "the flexible shift in coping according to these various demands is thus a pre-requisite of successful coping" (p. 229).

Inge Seiffge-Krenke has been a major contributor to the field of research in adolescent stress and coping. It seems relevant at this point to highlight an example of the scope of her research efforts as many of her studies are referred to in this paper. In the 1980's Seiffge-Krenke embarked on a major investigation of adolescents that explored the activities, thoughts and feelings of adolescents as they dealt with naturally occurring stressors. Utilizing her model of adolescent coping as briefly outlined previously, 2,176 German adolescents aged 12 - 19 took part in cross sectional and longitudinal studies develop over a ten year period. Furthermore, in order to facilitate comparison with cross
cultural results, about 1200 adolescents were investigated in Israel, Finland and the United States. Research methods included a multivariate, multi-method approach (standardized questionnaires, interviews, open-ended questions and analysis of documents) where the adolescent remained the central source of information. A combination of cross sectional and longitudinal research designs comprised the research methodology. The time period for data collection ranged from brief spans of time (2 - 6 weeks) to longer periods (1 - 3 years). Seven studies were designed to establish a cumulative knowledge base that would help to increase knowledge of the processes underlying adolescent coping. This massive effort supplemented by the research of others has indicated some significant findings that may provide guidance in working with adolescents. Of particular interest, are the gender differences noted in stress and coping research by Seiffge-Krenke (1993, 1995) and others (e.g., Compas et al. 1987; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1991; Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984).

Gender Differences in Adolescent Stress and Coping

Adolescents manage a series of complex and inter-related developmental tasks while being confronted with a dramatic change in body shape. These are considered as normative stresses and may be exacerbated by non-normative stressors such as the critical life events mentioned before. Crockett and Petersen (1993) noted that early adolescence was regarded as a period of greater stress, attributable to the multiple transitions that had to be mastered simultaneously (e.g., physical maturation and transition from elementary to junior or high school). Early maturing girls were found to be at greater risk to develop problem behavior due to the cumulative stressors (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993).

Seiffge-Krenke (1993) mentions a "special vulnerability of females in early adolescence" which has been supported by other researchers such as Rice et al. (1993) and Compas and Orosan (1993). In reflecting upon possible reasons for this finding,
Seiffge-Krenke puts forth two ideas. The first is that females experience several transitions simultaneously in early adolescence (e.g., school transition, role transition and physical change) and males are able to accomplish these developmental tasks over a longer time due to a slower maturation rate. Second, females and males look at pubertal changes differently. A girl is more likely than a boy to perceive herself more negatively. Generally, girls are dissatisfied with their physical appearance and experience environmental challenges as very stressful (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). The key research issue seems to be the identification of individual and social factors that lead to a varying level of coping and may make the transition to adolescence more difficult for girls than for boys.

Simmons et al. (1987) hypothesized that early adolescent transition was generally more stressful for girls than for boys in the U.S.A. for two related reasons. First, in early adolescence, girls begin to experience more conflict than boys regarding the competing goals of achievement and popularity. One possible explanation for this was the gender intensification hypothesis (Hill & Lynch, 1983) which posited that pubertal change in early adolescence stimulates increased focus by both girls and boys on the importance of their gender. Second, the typical junior high or high school is very different from the typical elementary school in terms of organization.

The School Setting, Gender Intensification and Self-Image

Simmons et al. (1987) proposed that junior high schools were oriented towards goals, behaviors and roles that boys are socialized to value, such as achievement. As well, the junior high school has more students and a more "impersonal" nature of interactions, which can be problematic, especially for early adolescent girls (Simmons et al., 1987). In addition, Bush and Simmons (1987) note that junior high school is organized somewhat like a bureaucracy: a certain subject is taught by a specific teacher, students vie for roles in student government and on athletic teams, there is a distinct "age-graded authority structure" among the students, and formal written rules and procedures govern
behavior. As a contrast, several researchers contend that girls are usually socialized toward an "affiliation orientation," where interpersonal intimacy and social relationships are valued (e.g., Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Simmons et al., 1987).

Bush and Simmons (1987) found that girls who remained in a kindergarten to grade 8 elementary school generally experienced a steady increase in self-esteem and coped better with a transition to high school. Girls who moved into a junior high school (grades 7 to 9) after being in a kindergarten to grade 6 school setting generally experienced a marked decline in self-esteem. Boys started with higher self-esteem in the sixth grade and maintained a steady increase in self-esteem regardless of the change in school structure. As boys are less likely than girls to experience the onset of pubertal growth at the same time as the transition from elementary to junior or secondary school, girls often deal with more emotional distress (Simmons et al., 1987). These authors add that males and females who undergo simultaneously multiple life changes (e.g., changing schools, onset of puberty, dating) suffer negative effects. Thus, it is not only the bureaucratic structure of a school that is difficult for early adolescents, but also stressors stem from the timing of the transition to the new school setting. This supports Coleman's (1974) "focal" theory of change, which espouses that sequential change for adolescents is less emotionally disturbing than simultaneous changes (as cited in Bush & Simmons, 1987).

Bush and Simmons (1987) argue that adolescence is the key period that shapes gender differences in the way stress is experienced. During early adolescence, traditional sex-typed expectations of the adolescent by parents, peers and teachers become more pronounced. This has been called the gender intensification hypothesis, where pubertal changes serve as the impetus which accelerates different socialization processes for girls and boys.

Roberts, Sarigiani, Petersen and Newman (1990) studied the relationship between school achievement and self image and found that there were developmental differences for girls and boys during early adolescence. The findings were discussed in terms of
gender intensification and social context changes. This study followed 242 students from grade 6 through grade 8. Achievement was defined by the performance in school as assessed by final grades in literature, language arts, mathematics, science and social studies in grades 6, 7 and 8. Self-image was assessed with the Self-Image Questionnaire for Young Adolescents (SIQYA), a revised version of the Offer Self-Image Questionnaire. Multiple correlation and covariance matrix analyses showed a strong correlation between school achievement and self image for girls and boys in the sixth grade. The correlation was more significant in the seventh grade when the majority of the subjects (72%) made a school transition. The relationship between self image and achievement decreased for girls and increased for boys as they moved from grade 6 to grade 7. Overall, boys showed an increase in the link between self-image and achievement from the sixth grade to the eighth grade. Roberts et al. (1990) looked at this finding as being consistent with the gender intensification hypothesis which proposed that boys faced greater social pressures for achievement than girls as they moved into adolescence.

With girls, the decreased correlation as they moved from grade 6 to grade 7 may show the combined effects of gender intensification and environmental changes (Roberts et al. 1990). Consider that a young adolescent’s social network can be disrupted in moving to a new school. Perhaps girls, more than boys, are negatively affected by the discontinuity that might occur in peer relationships. These authors add that "perhaps girls focus their attention on re-establishing social ties at this time, which may compete with the attention they focus on school achievement" (p. 172). It was interesting to note in this study that once these girls had adjusted to the new school, the correlation between achievement and self-image became more positive. One might wonder how important the re-establishment of social connection and friendship is for girls. Could this be related to other research findings (e.g., Simmons & Blyth, 1987) which indicated that early adolescent girls attach more significance to popularity with peers than do boys? Bush
and Simmons (1987) also note that their data has revealed that girls value popularity over competence and independence in the seventh grade. These differences between the genders are much larger in early adolescence than in childhood (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). The social organization of adolescence specific to gender is complex, and the area of self-image may be considered a source of stress, especially in early adolescent girls.

It seems reasonable to consider the personality variable of self image when investigating adolescent stress and coping. Simmons and Blyth (1987) used the term "global self images" to include self-esteem (an individual's positive or negative attitude toward him or herself), self stability (an individual's sense of identity) and self consciousness (in social situations). They conducted a study between 1974 and 1979 in two major phases. The first phase examined the transition from late childhood to early adolescence and used a 2-year longitudinal design. The second phase, another 2-year longitudinal design, was devised to study the transition to senior high school. 621 students were followed as they made their transition from elementary to junior high and then to senior high school. Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAS) were performed to look at gender variable significance. One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAS) were run each year for each variable, with gender as an independent variable. A repeated measures design was utilized to summarize the effects for variables across years.

Females scored significantly more negatively than males in all 4 years for self-esteem and sense of self stability, and higher in self consciousness. Girls also showed greater variance in scores than did boys, thus exhibiting greater variability of response (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). On other variables like body image, girls scored less favorably. The authors note that the combination of body image dissatisfaction and high regard for appearance tended to be detrimental to the overall self-esteem of girls. Girls rated themselves as less good-looking than boys and reported less satisfaction with body image
variables such as looks, weight and body build. In addition, Simmons and Blyth (1987) measured the value that girls placed on physical appearance. They found that after grade 6, at the same time that girls rated their appearance less favorably than boys, they placed a higher value on looks, weight and body build. In terms of self-image, girls appeared more disadvantaged throughout the early adolescent age period (Simmons & Blyth, 1987).

Social Stress

Are female adolescents more vulnerable to social stress? Siddique and D'Arcy (1984) found significant gender differences in locus of control. Female adolescents showed a greater externality (reinforcement is the result of chance, luck or other forces outside the person) than males. In addition, this external perception was closely related to several distress symptoms. Seiffge-Krenke (1993) in her research reiterates, "we found that females felt more stressed than boys by the same events--entailing social conflicts with significant others-- on the other hand, they more often apply coping strategies which require using these same social relations" (p. 223). A dilemma may result for female adolescents as they exhibit greater social and psychological dependency. Consider as well that data from attribution studies tends to show that girls are less likely than boys to attribute success at a task to ability (Bush & Simmons, 1987). In research findings on perceived intellectual ability and self-esteem, it was suggested "that girls not only have a more negative self-image than boys, but that they tend not to have a stable set of internal standards for judging task performance" (Bush & Simmons, 1987, p. 210). This seems to confirm Siddique and D'Arcy's (1984) data that girls depend more on others for assessments of ability, and when they need to evaluate the self, girls utilize others as "yardsticks." This would put young adolescent girls at the mercy of outside judges. Combine this perception with a school transition and it would become very difficult for these girls to develop a sense of control in their environment. Perhaps the importance of
external assessments to girls, such as popularity with peers, also provides some insight into the significance of connection to adolescent girls.

The notion that girls seek more social support is in keeping with Gilligan's (1982) findings that girls utilize a "relationship perspective" in their developmental path. Theories of gender differences are in their early stages of development (Chubb, Fertman & Ross, 1997). Miller (1976) proposed a theory of women's development that highlighted the importance of relationships to women. Traditional theories of development promoted autonomy and separation as goals of healthy development (Chubb et al., 1997). This seems to be largely an explanation of the male experience of development. How can the same group of factors be used to account for female developmental experiences? Does early adolescence, with its gender intensification, provide girls with conflicting messages? Girls look to others for validation, yet they live in a society that still emphasizes autonomy and separation as ideal values. Perhaps this inconsistency presents additional social stressors for girls. A key resource for coping is maintaining a strong sense of self. However, if a girl's sense of self is largely dependent on the reactions and evaluations of others, adolescence may provide more potential stressors and fewer coping resources for girls.

Gilligan (1982) draws attention to the disparity between women's experience and the largely male-defined theories of human development (e.g., Erikson, 1968). This disparity has often been interpreted to signify a problem in women's development. Gilligan expresses a different conceptualization. "Instead, the failure of women to fit existing models of human growth may point to a problem in the representation, a limitation in the conception of human condition, an omission of certain truths about life" (p. 2). This omission in the concept of human development is the idea that girls develop a sense of "self-in-relation" based on the importance of interpersonal relationships (Friedman, 1997). Males develop a sense of "self-in-separation" which emphasizes accomplishment and performance. For girls, relationships and identity are interdependent (Friedman,
In support of this different starting point for women's development, Miller (1976) calls for a "new psychology of women" that recognizes that "women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make, and then to maintain affiliations and relationships" (p.83). This highlights a distinction between the female and male voices which is helpful in generating a new interpretation of developmental theory—one that will present a more encompassing view of the lives of both genders.

As mentioned in the previous section of this paper, main sources of social support for adolescents tend to be family and peers. Studies have shown that parent-adolescent and peer relationships may be either stressful or supportive (e.g., Seiffge-Krenke, 1995b). An adolescent's interpersonal resources like family and friends, combined with intrapersonal factors such as age and gender, are viewed as critical predictors of coping and adaptation (Herman-Stahl & Petersen, 1996).

Compas and Wagner (1991) indicated that both the intrapersonal (identity formation is looked at as a central developmental task) and the interpersonal (involvement with the peer group is balanced with family attachment) domains serve as sources of psychological stress in adolescence. The main purpose of this study was to examine the importance of these domains in adolescence while making two key points: (1) interpersonal stressors have personal meaning and consequences, and (2) personal stressors experienced by adolescents and others in their social environment have interpersonal meaning and consequences. Of interesting note is the attention paid to gender differences and the pattern of greater vulnerability to stress indicated by female adolescents.

As a first step, Compas and Wagner reviewed studies that provided evidence for the impact of interpersonal stressors on adolescent adjustment. Secondly, evidence for the interpersonal ramifications of personal stress was reviewed. Finally, the authors highlighted the need for a model of the intrapersonal and interpersonal processes in adolescent stress to study their impact on adjustment. In the first part of the study,
information gathered from a 1990 investigation by the same authors was utilized. It was hypothesized that many of the interpersonal stresses that might have an impact are everyday occurrences rather than major life events. Samples of 375 adolescents (junior high, high school and college aged) were administered the age appropriate Adolescent Perceived Events Scale (APES; Compas, Davis, Forsythe & Wagner, 1987) and the junior high students completed the Youth Self Report version of the Child Behavior Checklist (YSR; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987) while the senior high and college students completed the Symptom Checklist 90 Revised (SCL-90R; Derogatis, 1983). Results indicated that adolescents were affected by stressful events that occurred in the lives of others in their social networks, especially females.

Separate multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAS) were conducted for each of the three age samples where the dependent variable consisted of the negative events reported in five stressful event categories (network, intimacy, family, peer and academic stresses). For junior high students, univariate analyses revealed that females reported more of each of the interpersonal stresses (e.g., more negative network, intimacy, peer and family events) but did not show any significant differences from males on academic events.

Females may experience more interpersonal stress than males. Might females be more willing to admit to the experience of interpersonal stress than males? This is an area where another method of data gathering (e.g., reports of parents and friends) in addition to the self report method may supplement the findings and validity of this study. As Gilligan (1982) reported, girls' emphasis on their relationships and connections with others has evolved into an ethic of care which may put girls at higher risk for experiencing distress associated with the stress of others.

Depression

Despite the earlier findings indicating more negative self-image scores for girls, the Simmons and Blyth study (1987) failed to show that females were more at risk in
terms of depressive-affect (a measure of general happiness or unhappiness versus serious depression). Although girls showed significantly greater variance than boys (a repeated measures analysis indicated an overall significant effect for gender), these authors found that pre-adolescent girls and adolescent girls were significantly less "depressed" or "more happy" than boys. Their study did not identify mental health disorders or serious depression; however, a measure of self-perception of depressive-affect where adolescents identified themselves as generally "happy" or "unhappy" was used. Given their findings, perhaps depressive symptoms could develop in later adolescence. Petersen et al. (1991) refute this idea in their research. In general, research in the area of depression and adolescence shows variable results when considering age and gender; however, an association between stressors and depressive symptoms has been established by Compas, Orosan and Grant (1993) in a summary of more than 40 studies.

Other studies have tried to determine whether certain types of stress are related to depression. Results have revealed correlations for major events (have a high impact but occur infrequently) usually being lower than those for minor events or everyday hassles (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995f). This author indicated that research with adults has shown that daily hassles (events that irritate, annoy, or upset an individual or can cause problems, pressures or difficulties) and minor events play a vital role in understanding stress and symptoms within individuals. Compas et al. (1987) in their research suggested that stress and everyday problems play an important role in adolescents' maladjustment. Compas et al. (1989) confirmed the contribution of minor and major events to adolescent depression. Seiffge-Krenke (1995e) points to further correlations between major and minor stressors, where major events may lead to an increase in daily stressors that in turn lead to depressive symptoms. For example, if an adolescent's parents are undergoing divorce proceedings (major event), stressors like potential financial constraints and changes to the family structure become a daily reality and probable sources of stress.
This may lead to more depressive symptoms. Stress and depression then could have a reciprocal influence on each other.

Petersen et al. (1991) reported that at age 13-14, girls consistently show higher rates of depression than boys. Several variables have been suggested in an effort to explain the consistently higher rates of depression among adolescent females, including explanations of both the biologic and psychosocial models of development (Herman-Stahl & Petersen, 1995). Brooks-Gunn (1991) found no consistent relationship between high rates of depression and hormonal changes. She suggests that it may not be hormonal changes per se, but the interaction between pre-existing risk conditions and the many social and physical changes that increase females' vulnerability to depressive disorders. Again, individual and contextual resources need to be considered when looking at gender differences and depression.

Petersen et al. (1991) collected longitudinal data on 335 adolescents who were randomly selected from two school districts. The design for the research was cohort-sequential and the subjects were assessed in the 6th through 8th grades and then followed again in the 12th grade. During early adolescence the data were obtained through twice yearly individual interviews and through twice annual group assessments. For the 12th grade follow-up, questionnaires sent out in advance and collected at the individual interview were utilized. Constructs included mental health in the domains of school, peer, self and family; cognitive abilities and development; and sex role. Similar constructs were used for the 12th grade with the exclusion of cognitive ability, but more depression measures as well as measures to access age appropriate constructs such as work values and problem behavior were added. Findings revealed that girls were at risk for developing depressed affect by grade 12 because they experienced more challenges in early adolescence than did boys. These researchers also looked at three major theoretical perspectives that may potentially explain the emerging gender difference in depression during adolescence: (1) the gender intensification hypothesis (Hill & Lynch, 1983), (2)
both internal and external coping resources (e.g., Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987), and (3) stressful life events (e.g., Compas et al., 1987). Gender intensification, stressful life events and both internal and external coping resources have been discussed previously; however, the results of this research warrant further emphasis. Adolescent girls show more depressed affect and poorer emotional tone than boys by grade 12. The difference appeared to surface at about grade 8 (13 years) and then increase over subsequent years.

In further discussion, these authors indicate that the gender differences in depressed affect appear to be related to changes experienced in early adolescence. Pubertal change prior to or simultaneous with school transition affected both girls and boys in similar ways. However, as girls are more likely to experience pubertal changes before or concurrently with school change, perhaps the gender difference in depressive affect that emerges becomes more salient. Early puberty showed long-term negative effects only for girls. Of interesting note was that of an enhancing effect among boys of negative family events during early adolescence in terms of their subsequent changes in adjustment. One interpretation offered by Petersen et al. (1991) is that negative family events during early adolescence induce boys, but not girls, to develop coping responses that are influential in reducing depressed affect.

Mikesell (1988) also investigated parent-adolescent relationships. Girls from dysfunctional families (as defined by low cohesion, communication, and organization) reported lowered mood and poor functioning. On the other hand, boys from such families reported even better mood than boys from other family situations. The researcher also found that boys were exaggerating or overestimating their social skills and popularity based on data from other sources (as cited in Petersen, Leffert, Graham, et al. 1997). These males were coping; however, the longer term effects of such coping behaviors are questionable. Nolen-Hoeksema's (1987) research considers that there is a gender difference in methods used to cope with stressful problems. She hypothesized that men and women are socialized into different coping styles according to gender role
stereotypes. After reviewing studies on unipolar depression, Nolen-Hoeksema (1987) concluded "that men are more likely to engage in distracting behaviors [e.g., doing something physical, playing a sport] that dampen their mood when depressed, but women are more likely to amplify their mood by ruminating about their depressed states and the possible causes of these states" (p. 259). She recommends that women who are depressed seek help through increased activity and education regarding the distorting effects of mood on thinking. Rumination implies thought processes, and a potential area for consideration in working with adolescent girls is their ability to cope cognitively with stress. Miller and Kirsch (1987) remark that there is surprisingly little in the literature on gender differences in cognitive coping with stress. Perhaps cognitive restructuring such as positive self talk and increased physical activity would be helpful to alter mood and may have a place in a stress management program for early adolescents girls.

The implication that positive methods of coping and maintaining a closeness with young people during the early adolescent years may provide moderating effects on depressive symptoms remains (Petersen et al., 1991). Simmons and Blyth (1987) present the idea that early adolescents need an "arena of comfort" as they cope with their transitions. Close relationships with parents may mediate some of the longer-term effects of depressive mood by providing security and safety in an adolescent's rapidly changing world (Petersen et al. 1991). These authors conclude their study by saying "interventions focused on coping skills and parent-child relations targeted at those young adolescents undergoing multiple changes could possibly help prevent their development of depression in middle adolescence" (p. 268).

It seems that early adolescent girls are especially vulnerable to stress. A combination of biological, environmental and psychosocial changes can accumulate to a level where an adolescent's coping resources are being overtaxed. The energy it takes for adolescents to deal with their many challenges may circumvent, at least temporarily, the developmentally appropriate chances for continued personal growth. Academic
environments, social context changes and gender role pressures contribute to multiple stressors in early adolescent girls. Roberts et al. (1990) encourage people in the teaching profession to strive for creating a school environment that is conducive to girls' as well as boys' achievement. Greater awareness of the needs of young adolescent girls and offering them support to challenge gender role influences could help create more of an "arena of comfort" for them. It would seem that early adolescent girls would benefit from preventive interventions offered in a school setting, aimed at bolstering coping skills in order to facilitate healthier development.

Adolescent Stress and Coping: Preventive Interventions

Given the wide variety of research in terms of adolescent stress and coping, it is important to note several considerations for interventions with early adolescents in order to help them meet the challenges of development. Compas, Phares and Ledoux (1989) recap these considerations for what they call "stress and coping preventive interventions for children and adolescents" (p. 320). First, stress is a function of both the person and the environment so interventions must address both areas. Second, stressors can be major life events or chronic, daily hassles so both may need to be targeted. Third, there is individual variation in vulnerability to different stressors because of appraisals, values, goals and commitments. Interventions need to enable individuals to identify the types of stress to which they are most susceptible. Fourth, interventions need to include components to enhance both problem- and emotion-focused coping in helping youth.

It seems there is a significant opportunity to intervene in the lives of young people to prevent difficulties and increase the likelihood of positive developmental paths (e.g., Petersen & Ebata, 1987). Petersen, Leffert, Graham et al. (1997) developed a psychoeducational intervention program to teach young adolescents adaptive emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses to stressors and to decrease the development of depressive symptoms. The idea was to develop or support intrapersonal and
interpersonal ways of coping with challenges. Didactic and role-playing exercises were 
incorporated into a 16 session program where each session focused on a particular social 
skill or coping method. This study (Penn State Adolescent Study—PSAS) was a cohort 
sequential longitudinal study of 335 grade 6 students. Subjects were assessed six times. 
Three assessments were done before, one immediately after, and again six and twelve 
months after a school-based psychoeducational intervention. The measurement design 
for students included paper-and-pencil questionnaires and assessments gained through 
individual interviews. Results revealed that the intervention was effective in producing 
better coping for a short period of time. The short term effects of measures of depression 
were mixed. The control group reported increasing externalization of problems, whereas 
the intervention group reported decreasing problems for this area. Both groups reported 
decreases in the internalization problems, with the intervention group reporting 
significantly fewer problems than the control group. A gender difference was noted in 
the intervention group for the Child Depression Inventory and Emotional Tone 
MANOVA. There was improvement among the girls but increased depressive symptoms 
among boys for this group. No main effects of the group persisted in influencing coping 
and depression nearly a year later.

Petersen, Leffert, Graham et al. (1997) had hypothesized that the impact of their 
psychoeducational program would be stronger for girls than for boys because the 
curriculum arguably could be more pertinent for girls. Consider as well that previous 
studies have shown stronger effects on girls' coping. Herman-Stahl, Stemmler and 
Petersen (1995) reported that the high use of active coping was important for positive 
adaptation. In their longitudinal study of 603 students from grades 6 to 12, a 2 x 2 
MANOVA with gender and grade as independent variables revealed that females in all 
grades used higher levels of approach-oriented coping than males. Seiffge-Krenke 
(1995f) confirms that regardless of the type of problem, girls addressed the concerns right 
away, talked about them more with significant others, and usually tried to problem solve
with the person involved. Girls also worried more about problems and expected negative outcomes more frequently than boys, which in turn may be a factor in their reporting depressed affect. Girls seem to respond well to processes that help them actively develop coping skills as they strive to manage the stressors in their lives. A group experience, given a females' affiliation orientation, may reinforce the natural tendency of girls to turn to their social support network for assistance.

It was promising that coping skills could be taught and that their development has the potential to decrease the likelihood of depressive symptoms in girls. The effects of the intervention did not last. One must consider all the changes occurring in early adolescence. Petersen et al. (1997) mention that researchers of smoking behavior have achieved significant effects over a longer period of time by using booster sessions during follow-up activities. That may point to the effectiveness of reinforcement of coping skills during the school life of individuals in order to enhance healthier development.

Implications for further research are numerous: there is a need to examine ways to extend benefits over longer time periods; the question of specificity of the intervention requires attention as externalizing behaviors were reduced over the short term; how significant is this intervention with adolescents exhibiting more severe behavior problems; and how effective is this intervention with youth who experience acute challenges (e.g., parental death or divorce; loss of a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend).

These results do suggest that interventions can be helpful during developmental transitions. Even short term benefits can give adolescents another year or more traveling a positive developmental trajectory. Rice, Herman and Petersen (1993) advocate the presentation of a depression prevention program in the 7th grade for girls who are at risk of developing depression during their subsequent adolescent years. This intervention is timed to assist girls during a period of increased stress due to elementary to secondary
school transition. Given the research that indicates that parent support helps alleviate some of the negative effects of developmental changes for adolescence, Rice et al. (1993) mention the inclusion of a parent-training component to be run concurrently with the adolescent group (e.g., Clarke & Lewinsohn, 1986; Youniss & Smollar, 1985 as cited in Rice et al. 1993). These authors also indicate the need for an intervention model which not only considers a focus on the individual, but also considers the larger context in which the adolescent is developing. This includes consideration of family structure and a focus on communities and schools.

Research indicates a variety of findings concerning the stressfulness of adolescence in relation to girls. Brooks-Gunn (1991) reminds the reader that "today, the question is not whether the transition is stressful, but for which girls, in which circumstances, and at what ages it is stressful" (p. 132). A few studies have highlighted three kinds of protective factors that buffer the effects of stress: family environments, support networks and personality characteristics (Hauser & Bowlds, 1990). Resiliency research (a resilient adolescent is one who, despite exposure to significant risk factors, shows few or no signs of developmental impairment) continues to look into the factors that support stress resistance (Hauser & Bowlds, 1990).

Clark (1995) focused attention on resiliency factors in adolescence and how gender differences affect adolescent resiliency. This author proposed that knowledge of the risk and protective factors of young people would help teachers and others empower young adolescents to become more resilient. So the focus was on the ecological context that included adolescents' individual and behavioral characteristics as well as their family, friends, school and community. Risk factors were considered as individual or environmental hazards that increased a young person's vulnerability to a negative developmental outcome. Protective factors were individual or environmental safeguards that enhanced an adolescent's abilities to resist stressful events so situations could be
dealt with by positive adaptation. Protective factors needed to be in place before they could be accessed by the adolescent.

Clark's work analyzed some major U. S. surveys, and one analyzed data according to gender. The Minnesota Adolescent Health Survey (Minnesota Women's Fund, 1992) reviewed data from over 36,000 public school students in grades 7 to 12. That research found that some adolescent girls tend to have "quietly disturbed" problems such as experience with sexual and physical abuse; were under emotional stress; had poor body images and self-images; and had symptoms of disordered eating. Conversely, adolescent boys tended to "act out" their concerns by committing delinquent acts, taking physical risks, engaging in unprotected sex, and consuming large amounts of alcohol and other drugs. These behaviors were not gender exclusive, as there was a cross-over. This survey reported that over 80 percent of girls were at high risk for at least one "acting out" behavior when they displayed two or more "quietly disturbed" behaviors. Although all our youth require enhancement of protective factors, Clark reminds the reader to "pay attention to girls' troubles" because often "they don't get the attention they need because they don't 'act out' their troubles" (p. 9).

School can be both a potential risk factor and a protective factor. As such, it is critical that schools foster the development of protective factors (e.g., enhancing achievement opportunities, modeling respect, increasing parental involvement and community collaboration) that can help create more confident, caring and connected adolescents. It would appear that the school is an appropriate setting to offer a stress management program to early adolescent girls. Coping skills are identified as an individual protective factor or buffer against stressors (e.g., Clark, 1995; Petersen, Sarigiani & Kennedy, 1991). Rice and Meyer (1994) looked at the school setting as being the only institution that has "significant and sustained" contact with children and adolescents. Moreover, a program that was timed to provide assistance to students who are making the transition into a new school setting may be a valuable asset in helping them adapt to the transition.
Compas, Phares and Ledoux (1989) state that school-based stress and coping preventive interventions for adolescents are in their early stages of development. In considering directions for future research and program development, these writers point to the need for interventions to address the differing needs of girls and boys when dealing with sources of stress and characteristics of coping. What might be some helpful ideas from intervention programs that have been specifically developed to assist girls?

Friedman (1997), who developed a Girls in the 90's program, altered her original idea from focusing on eating disorders to an open discussion group for girls. The group leaders validate girls' stories and provide girls with an understanding of their concerns, experiences and feelings that is framed in the context of female development and socialization. The program emphasizes maintaining connection with girls, building communication skills, looking at self and relationships with family, friends and society.

The group format supports Seiffge-Krenke's (1995f) idea that for coping strategies, female adolescents prefer talking and conversation as a means of using social resources. Encouraging the building of positive self-image and positive relationships with same-sex peers is verified by some researchers (e.g., Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Petersen et al. (1997) conducted their intervention with the potential that it would be usable in a school setting. What aspects of that program might be more specific to females? Sources of stress change with development and this is important when considering intervention efforts. As an example, Compas and Wagner (1989) found that young adolescent girls reported more stressors that affect others in their social networks. This indicates that girls and boys may struggle with different types of stress and would thus require different interventions in helping them cope. What do early adolescent girls identify as their stressors and their primary needs in dealing with these stressors? How are they coping? What about the needs and preferred coping styles of other ethnic groups and specifically, the girls from these cultures? Including this feedback is crucial in developing programs to increase feelings of personal control and power in young adolescent girls. Hamburg,
Millstein, Mortimer, Nightingale and Petersen (1993) state that "adolescents should be a part of the process of developing and implementing adolescent health promotion programs" (p. 379). Including adolescent perceptions and beliefs would strengthen the efficacy of such programs. One distinctive way to do this is by using adolescent focus groups to inform development.

Method

Participants

Two focus groups of early adolescent girls from grade 8 (ages 13-14) were convened for structured discussions about their stressors, their methods of coping and their needs in managing these stressors. The first group consisted of five girls and the second group comprised four girls (a fifth girl had an unforeseen time conflict the day of the group). The participants reflected some ethnic diversity with First Nations, East Indian and Caucasian cultures being represented. The high school population these girls were drawn from consists of different socio-economic strata and cultural variety among its 630 grade 8 to 12 students.

An open, public invitation through the school announcement system asked for volunteers who would be interested in sharing their thoughts and ideas about stress and coping strategies specific to the targeted population, grade 8 girls. This process was personalized by contacting several grade 8 girls during their recess and lunch breaks to ensure that the importance of each potential participant's experiences and insights was communicated.

Names of interested girls were collected and these girls were invited to an information meeting so additional questions could be answered and appropriate times for the focus groups finalized. Parental consent forms were given to the students so they could share this information with their parents. The forms were requested to be returned before any selection was made (see Appendix A for an example of the parental consent form). The
random selection process was enhanced by 10 students returning their signed consent forms very promptly so they formed the groups. The remaining 10 interested girls were thanked for their enthusiasm with the note that their contributions to future work in this area would be sought.

In addition, approval for this research was granted by school administration with very positive support. Notification of this research proposal was sent to the superintendent of the school district. Parents were encouraged to contact the researcher and/or the university supervisor if they had any questions or concerns. The focus group discussions were confined to one session of approximately 40 minutes during two consecutive lunch hours.

**Procedure**

An empty classroom was used to meet with each group. A pizza and juice lunch was provided as an incentive as well as a compensation to the participants for their investment of effort. The food was served before the discussion to allow for participants' casual conversation and to help increase the comfort level of all involved.

A round table was set up with chairs so participants were able to face each other. The discussion was audiotaped so no comments would be missed. Participants were encouraged to speak one at a time for the purpose of clarity. An introduction was supplied by the facilitator to reiterate the purpose of the discussion group. It was announced that all opinions were valued and that there were no right or wrong answers for any of the questions. The facilitator made the participants aware that brief notes might be taken, but that this should not interfere with the spontaneous nature of the discussion. Overall, a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere was the setting for these discussions.

The questions for the discussion were standardized across both the groups, though opportunities existed to pursue related topics raised in the individual groups. Questions were phrased in an open-ended yet directive manner, with the intent to encourage
discussion. The objectives of the questions were to obtain information about what young adolescent girls identified as their stressors, how they coped with those stressors, and what else would help them to manage their stress issues. The questions were arranged from general to specific. The initial questions asked about stress and anxiety to establish the context and subsequent questions focused on more personal circumstances. Krueger (1994) refers to this as a funneling technique which focuses the sequence of questions so they seem logical to the participants. Also, a "circling back" technique for the questions was included to allow for additional input by the participants.

The question guide was reviewed by the facilitator's university supervisor and revisions were made as a first pilot test. As well, a second pilot test was conducted by having members of a stress management group for girls that was offered in the fall comment on the questions. This provided an opportunity for a sense of the commentary that might be expected and an affirmation of the appropriateness of the questions for the specified age group (see Appendix B for the Focus Group Question Guide).

As the discussion proceeded, the facilitator was sensitive to "echoing" of the same concepts and utilized probes to elicit further information (e.g., Could you tell us a little more about what annoys you?). A few serendipitous questions were sparked by the comments of the members (e.g., Would you share with us some of the "self talk" you use?). It was beneficial to learn of this method of coping and how it helped some participants in managing their stress. Positive coping statements are skills that can be practiced and reinforced in a group setting.

The facilitator was aware of non-verbal communication both of participants and from herself. Head nodding on the facilitator's part was kept to a minimum. Awareness of facilitator responses that implied judgment or agreement prevailed, and more neutral comments like "uh huh" and "yes" generally were utilized (Krueger, 1994). A short debriefing took place after each focus group to give the participants an opportunity to share how they felt taking part in the process.
It is important to acknowledge that there are inherent limitations with focus group methodology. There was the tendency for two members to be more vocal and the facilitator worked by focusing probes along with non-verbal cues like eye contact to invite opinions from all the participants. A co-facilitator or an assistant could be advantageous in terms of providing another pair of eyes for observing and another resource for relevant questioning. It is important to note that the focus groups took place in a school setting, so perhaps this situational context affected the responses. There was a particular emphasis on school related issues. Another context may have elicited some different responses about stressors. Other contextual variables that could influence commentary are cultural and economic situations, as well as the daily happenings of the participants. For example, if the focus group had taken place after lunch and if there had been some peer conflict over lunch, the peer stressors may have had more prominence.

However, for the particular research objectives of this project, the advantages of focus group methodology outweighed its limitations. The small groups of four and five offered more opportunity for individuals to talk. The groups were practical to set up and manage (Krueger, 1994). Another strength in focus group process is the allowance for social interaction, and the girls who participated appeared very comfortable and enthusiastic. Their commentary was sincere and believable, so the face validity of this process was high. Most importantly, the focus group discussion provided a relaxed environment where information was disclosed, insights were gained and the data was reflective of the girls' views.

Data Analysis

The raw data from the group discussions was transcribed from the audio recording using a word processing program. This data was then synthesized and tabulated in order to identify patterns and important themes that emerged from the participants' experiences, perceptions and opinions.
Krueger's (1994) five factor analysis was used to determine the dominant themes and ideas that were enmeshed in the data. First, the words used by the participants and the meanings of the words were considered. Second, the context of the participants' words triggered by the facilitator's question or a comment from another group member was looked at including the tone and intensity of the oral presentation. Third, the internal consistency of participants' words was monitored. Were there any changes in participants' opinions? Fourth, the frequency and depth of participant commentary was considered. Fifth, the specificity of the responses was given more weight than vague, impersonal commentary. Overall, the "big ideas" emerging from the data were noted.

Results and Discussion

A narrative style as suggested by Krueger (1994) was used to interpret the results. This interpretive technique consisted of key questions asked during the focus group discussion in the areas of young adolescent girls' stressors, coping and ideas that would help them to manage stress. A condensed description of the participants' responses and illustrative quotes were highlighted. This was followed by an interpretation of the student responses. As well, some comparison of this data with findings from other researchers (e.g., Bush & Simmons, 1987; Herman-Stahl et al., 1995; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995e) was incorporated to create a more complete perspective on early adolescent girls' stressors and methods of coping.

The first question was "How do you feel when you are stressed and anxious?" This question was posed to obtain information about the participants' knowledge of stress. The question was answered with comments offered in rapid succession. The responses indicated a categorization of the physical, psychological and behavioral effects of stress. This might be useful to illuminate in a stress management program, with subsequent training in awareness and coping skills specific to the effects of stress in these three areas. For example, responses included references to physical effects of stress such as
"My stomach gets all uptight and I get real panicky," "I have butterflies in my stomach," and "feeling tense, really alert; not really tired but all worked up." The psychological effects of stress were indicated by statements like "I get really cranky," "I'm grumpy and I don't want to talk to anyone," and "I get really nervous and scared like if I'm going to fail a test or something." Behavioral effects of stress were reported by comments such as "I yell at my mom for silly little reasons," "I take it out on my pillow," and "I take out my stress on my family and friends."

It was interesting to note that some of the participants acknowledged taking their stress out on family and friends. A probe from the facilitator asked, "What makes you comfortable enough to take your stress out on these people?" Participant responses included "Good friends understand and they've known you for a while," and "Your parents because they know what you're stressing about; you've known them forever so it's easy to get closer to them." This would seem to point to the importance of a support system that has been established. Petersen and Ebata (1987) proposed that parent and peer support might buffer any negative effects of stress. Parents and peers appear to help soften the realities of stress for some adolescents. One participant commented, "I don't take it out on my friends; just my mom." A probe of this response may have gleaned some information about turning to a parent versus peers for the release of stress. Perhaps as Seiffge-Krenke (1995b) suggests, young adolescent girls rely heavily on social networks and that although conflict within the networks is common, the stress-buffering effect is stronger for parent support.

The second question was more specific and asked, "What are some of the things that make you feel stressed?" The comments focused on school, family and friendship stressors, although being involved in lots of activities added stress for some participants.

In terms of school stressors, "tests" got several votes, as well as "piles of homework because four classes is a big stress." Achievement on tests was significant to some participants, as evidenced by statements like "You get disappointed because you tried
hard and you don't know what you did wrong; it can be really nervewracking," and "I stress myself out about being on the honor roll like everyone else does." One member linked effort, achievement and self-confidence by saying, "And if you don't try your best that's one of the things that totally pulls you down; cause if you want to reach a goal like get on the honor roll and you don't do something very well, that really pulls you down like self confidence-wise." A facilitator probe at this point may have considered whether these girls' attribution of effort was more significant than ability in determining success. Or was an external marker like reaching an honor roll average of 86% the only way she evaluated success? Bush and Simmons (1987) hypothesized that the social organization of gender in early adolescence (social organization is created by and simultaneously creates social interactions, of which families and school take on a special significance) produced stressors and reduced effective coping for girls. As an example, since girls attribute failure to lack of ability and success to luck, effort, or ease of a task, they are more at risk of lowered self-image and perhaps failing again. It would be helpful to investigate this to see if young adolescent girls have a stable set of internal standards to evaluate task performance, or do they turn to others for validation?

Family stressors included responses such as "Family can be stressful too; like they can be annoying and put a lot of stress on you." A further probe about what "annoying" meant was answered like this. "Just they're always after you or whatever and just don't stop." For another participant it seemed to be the accumulation of stressors and school combined, as indicated by "You get annoyed if they keep asking you questions and you have to do more things and answer all of them when you're doing something else, like if you have four hard classes." This also led to another comment about family putting pressure by "trying to get on the honor roll and you try really, really hard and still miss it." A second participant added, "or fail a test." Again, the idea of effort attribution and external validation like passing or failing a test were apparent. In addition, family and school stressors seemed interrelated in this situation, since family was perceived by a few
participants as exerting pressure to achieve in school. How important is it for girls to meet their parents' expectations? Does a girl's achievement behavior change during early adolescence and, if so, in what areas? Are there differences in parental expectations regarding school achievement that might be based in gender role socialization? In the literature survey presented earlier, it was indicated that achievement was expected more from boys than girls during early adolescence. These girls indicated that achievement was important to them. They perceived their academic achievement as significant to their parents as well. Further investigation would enhance these areas of study and also call attention to the gender intensification issues that may operate in early adolescence.

Other family stressors included "divorce" and "getting in trouble for fighting with your brothers and stuff." It is obvious that both major life events and daily hassles impacted these participants.

Peer stressors were indicated by participants, but not with the intensity of school and family challenges. One student stated, "Like when someone makes fun of you and you don't know what to do." Another indicated "If someone's calling you down you might not mind the first while, but after a long time, it gets to you," in responding to a participant saying, "friends can be a problem too." Evidence was presented for the support of peers when a member stated, "If someone is bugging me, I just tell my friends and they tell them to back off." One important role of friends is to provide a coping function when dealing with the negative influence of peers. Researchers (e.g., Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995f) have indicated that girls' friendship patterns can be described in terms of inter-personal relationships. As an example, girls are more likely to use social support and to engage in more self-disclosure than boys, whose friendships tend to be more guarded.

Other activities produced some anxiety for participants. Again, these stressors were discussed in terms of their relationship to school. "Another stressful thing is when you have extra activities after school like dance ... and we don't really have time for
homework." Two other girls reiterated that activities were important and agreed that sometimes there was no time for homework. Perhaps some assistance in time management strategies would be helpful in alleviating these concerns.

When the question "What might your close friends feel anxious or stressed about?" was posed, there were several nods to affirm that "most grade 8's were stressing out about the same things." One girl emphasized that "The majority of the stress for grade 8's is about school; like it's a new school and it's a change from elementary to high school and it's hard." In adding to this information a student said, "Friendwise it's okay, because we know our friends and stuff, but school is a big difference."

It is clear that the transition from elementary to secondary school was stressful for members of one of the focus groups. There was no concern mentioned regarding participants' friends, perhaps because all the grade 7 students from one elementary school attend the same high school. There is ample opportunity to maintain peer affiliation and to develop other peer relationships as five elementary schools send their students to this same high school. The challenge of the work delivered in four classes, writing final exams based on a semester of material in those classes and a rigorous extra-curricular activity schedule were noted as big changes in structure of the school experience. There is a greater emphasis on independence in high school and on student responsibility. One participant indicated "If you have someone to talk to, not exactly a teacher, maybe you could find someone else." Another student pointed out that "I think the peer tutoring is a very good idea," with yet another member agreeing "that helps out a lot of kids; the stress goes down, like it's a lot easier." It was evident that these girls were oriented toward social relationships. They wanted to connect with other people and this seems to support Gilligan's (1982) idea that a female's experience is based on the theme of connection with others. The importance of peer assistance seemed to be valued and to hold merit in terms of incorporating other peers into a support system, like peer tutoring and peer counseling within the school setting. Yet another participant mentioned, "I have cousins, neighbors
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here, and I can talk to them and they'll tell me what to do or what to be prepared for."

Social support is both a resource (perceived availability of helpful others) and a coping
strategy (seeking helpful others for coping assistance).

The importance of social support as a coping strategy was prominent in the girls'
comments responding to the facilitator's question, "What sort of things might help you
feel less stressed or anxious?" One girl said, "I like to call my sister and talk to her on the
phone about problems." Other responses indicated the importance of social connection
such as "I usually just talk to my mom about lots of stuff," "I'm pretty open to my
parents," and "You can talk to your parents or a friend about it." It seemed important for
one girl to know she had an ally as she dealt with her stress. "Someone who is on your
side but not part of the problem." Seiffge-Krenke (1993) mentions that girls may face a
special dilemma in coping with stress, as their social support system is often the field for
precipitating stressors as well. This may indicate the importance of having more neutral
people in their support systems, or at least a larger repertoire of coping skills when they
require problem solving help.

These participants utilized other methods of coping, too. Two girls said they
sometimes react with emotion-focused coping strategies like "I might cry," and "I just get
mad." It was enlightening to hear the responses designed to improve one's emotional
reactions to stressful situations, specifically positive self-talk. When one participant
mentioned "Talking to myself helps," a probe drew out examples like "You've got to
calm down," "It really isn't that much; you're just making it seem like a big deal," "You're
making it worse by thinking about it," and "Just do a little bit at a time." This distress
minimization seemed to be a helpful strategy and may signify the importance of
including cognitive restructuring (e.g., practicing positive coping statements) in a stress
management program. Hains (1994), who developed a school-based, cognitive
behavioral stress management program for adolescents, indicated that training in
cognitive restructuring resulted in improvement on self report measures of trait anxiety, self-esteem, depression and anger.

Two of these participants mentioned that people deal with stress by avoidance like "Lots of people run from their problems," and "Sometimes you feel just like running away." Avoidant coping seemed useful in dealing with a parent who was stressed. One participant said, "I'll just go to my room until mom deals with it," and another talked about the importance of appropriate timing by saying, "I just wait a while and find a better time." There seemed to be effects on these girls from interpersonal stressors. For example, if their mother was feeling stressed, this in turn affected how they chose to deal with their own concerns. Responses included, "She doesn't have time to answer questions," "I don't even talk to her when she's stressed out," "she'll start yelling at me," and "I wait till the next day."

Other methods of coping mentioned were "going for walks" and "praying about stuff." Accessing older friends in the girls' support systems was beneficial, such as "I found a really good friend who goes to my church and he's on the Ministry team and I can talk to him."

In coping with peer stressors, one participant mentioned approaching a peer to talk about the problem. "You could talk to them and tell them how you feel." This comment brought the response, "Sometimes they don't listen to that." A further probe about the ease of approaching a peer and saying what you feel elicited answers such as "Yah, I guess," and "You could practice what you want to say like standing in front of a mirror and practicing how to tell them." There appeared to be positive responses to rehearsing thoughts and actions. Problem-focused coping was evident from these examples in terms of problem solving and interpersonal negotiation skills.

There was one participant who thought role-playing as a way of practicing to ask a teacher for help would not be helpful "because you are not in the situation ... it wouldn't be the same." When a difficulty with a teacher was a concern, one student mentioned
turning to a parent for assistance like "You could get you mom to," and another added "If you have a problem and you don't know how to solve it." Again, parents are perceived as a means of social support, specifically coping assistance. The girl who perceived role-playing as being unhelpful with teachers later indicated a change of thought when she considered role-playing situations where peers were approached. As well, another group member said, "Thinking it through might actually help." The revised response was "Yah, because you could put it in a different perspective." There was an openness to considering the value of role-playing and for this girl at least it would be "fun." Perhaps, it is more realistic for same-age peers to practice skills such as assertive responses within their own relationships, as opposed to approaching a perceived authority figure like a teacher or even an older student where there is an obvious hierarchy of interaction in the school setting. Peers are more likely to copy each other than adult role models. Other resources for problem-solving included, "Counselors help a lot," "I have a good friend in grade 12," and "I think the student handbook is helpful for study information."

These participants offered other insights into what would help them deal with their stress. One participant mentioned, "We aren't really able to talk to anybody at the school." Another girl immediately responded by saying, "I feel comfortable doing this [talking in a small group] ... I feel I can open up." The facilitator asked if the participants would feel comfortable in a group that met weekly to discuss and practice skills for stress management or other special topics (e.g., how to study or manage time). Responses affirmed this idea like "The study group and in a group maybe go after school for about an hour," "I think that would help a lot of kids," and "For a group, get a previous grade 8 and tell them some experiences." It seemed that an older student's assistance would be valued and the word "role model" was used. When the facilitator asked if an all girl group would be more comfortable there was a unanimous response of "Yah, definitely."

As stated previously, some of the girls' responses indicated that practicing what to say would be helpful. Perhaps activities like role-playing to view people modeling different
skills would be beneficial. These focus group participants are utilizing both problem- and emotion-focused methods of coping with their stressors. Herman-Stahl et al. (1995) considered this as approach-oriented coping, represented by both internal and active ways of coping. These researchers found that females in their studies used higher levels of approach-oriented coping than did males. The young people who primarily used this coping style reported fewer depressive symptoms. They concluded the use of active methods of coping with problems may contribute to positive adaptation. Many of the participants' comments indicated that actively dealing with their stress was happening. Also, many of these girls expressed a willingness to seek assistance in working through their stressful encounters. Young adolescents need help coping with their developmental challenges, and enhancing their knowledge of coping skills is paramount.

It was clear that there is a high level of knowledge among grade 8 girls about stress, its causes and its consequences. What also became clear was that their experiences with stress should not be underestimated by adults, especially in the school setting. Not only do we need to find ways to enhance the effectiveness of their ability to cope, but also we need to ask what we can do to reduce the extent of the challenges that confronts so many young people.

The school system is one obvious arena for this focus. School is a source of information because of its educational function and it is a place where adolescents congregate. The school setting is also a place where many of an adolescents' stressors transpire. Education and practice regarding stress management for young adolescents is important, especially for girls. Consider the obvious potential of simultaneous changes for these girls. Many enter puberty prior to or at the same time as they move from elementary to secondary school. This may create increasing anxiety. Petersen and Ebata (1987) argue that the transition into and out of adolescence are the most appropriate times for intervention efforts. They add that social skills are needed to enhance self-confidence so that other areas such as school achievement will not be compromised.
Girls seem to value relationship and given research noting their vulnerability, especially in early adolescence as they make the transition to a new school environment, a group stress management program has the potential to strengthen their developmental paths in positive ways.

The proposed stress management program which follows was developed to address the issues indicated by the girls who participated in the focus groups. This data affirmed many findings from other research in the area of adolescent stress and coping. As well suggestions from previous researchers were incorporated (e.g., Carrell, 1993; Morganett, 1990; Petersen et al. 1997; Rice & Meyer, 1994) in the program's development. Sessions one and two were developed to give the participants an awareness of their stressors and how these stressors affect different areas in their lives. Problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies are addressed in sessions three to five. These were developed to enhance the active coping methods young adolescent girls utilize in managing their stressors. A particular emphasis is placed on making the activities practical, meaningful and experiential for the participants. There is enough activity flexibility to ensure opportunities to practice coping strategies specific to school issues (e.g., a brief presentation regarding time management or study skills; although this may be better addressed by a group experience specific to these areas, depending on the need).

Sessions six and seven focus on the physical, psychological and behavioral effects of stress. The participants will practice a progressive muscle relaxation technique and cognitive restructuring ideas. To address the importance of social network stresses for the participants, sessions eight and nine keynote experiential activities within parental and peer relationships. The closing session affirms the participants' commitment to learning and their subsequent goals to continue practicing stress management methods that are meaningful to them.
Stress Management Group Organization

Groups can be used for either therapeutic and/or educational purposes, and the group process has unique learning advantages. There is value in group counseling for specific populations as well. Corey (1995) advocates groups for adolescents because they have a place to explore self-doubts and come to the realization of shared concerns with peers. Groups offer an opportunity to modify behaviors that need changing and offer adolescents a chance to be instrumental in each other's growth (Corey, 1995).

In considering the value of groups from a developmental perspective, peer relationships are crucial. Carrell (1993) views adolescent groups as having these strengths: (1) challenging the myth of uniqueness where members share experiences and acknowledge common bonds with peers, (2) offering a place for teens to practice new social skills (e.g., coping skills) in a safe environment, and (3) building the ego strength of its group members so that peer acceptance and the development of assertiveness grows with group cohesiveness.

Guidelines for Group Success

Carrell (1993) and Corey (1995) propose several conditions more ideal for adolescents. There are convincing arguments for the structuring of group sessions which provides a framework for the work to be done. This can help young people who may be uncomfortable in new situations and allows leaders to focus on the internal dynamics of the group process. Younger adolescents (12-14) often work better in same gender groups which reflect the reality of their lives and the intensification of gender roles in early puberty. Girls tend to talk to girls and boys talk to boys. Bush and Simmons (1987) present the idea that the social organization of gender creates experiences and interactions for boys and girls that can have similarities, create conflict or be entirely different. Same sex groups in early adolescence afford the opportunity of sharing experiences without the potential conflict that may arise from gender role influences.

Other important aspects of adolescent groups include group size suggestions of numbers.
from 6 to 8. This generally allows for participation and different viewpoints and behaviors. Both these authors recommend closed membership once the group has begun. This allows for the evolution of group process and the building of trust among members. In addition, Carrell (1993) and Corey (1995) mention that weekly meetings and shorter sessions with a specific end date are other important considerations for the adolescent group experience.

Description

The purpose of this group experience is to provide support to young adolescent girls as they make the transition from elementary school (completion of grade 7) into secondary school (grades 8 to 12). This psycho-educational experience will attempt to help girls by teaching adaptive emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses to stressors or challenges. In psycho-educational training, a combination of various didactic, instructional and audiovisual techniques are delivered to increase a participant's skill competence, which in turn enhances effective daily living (Goldstein, Sprafkin, Gershaw & Klein, 1980). This stress management program for young adolescent girls will place special emphasis on coping with normative challenges (e.g., developmental transitions, conflict with family and peers, school stresses) and daily hassles. The program will attempt to enhance girls' internal and external resources for meeting those challenges.

Ten group sessions lasting about 45 minutes each will be presented over a ten week period. Each session of the program will be divided into three parts: an introduction (ice breaker or review), working time and closing time (Morganett, 1990). The first session will begin with an ice breaker activity designed to introduce members to each other and to encourage trust and cohesion. Subsequent sessions will begin with a review of the content of the preceding session.

The working time will focus on a particular social skill (e.g., assertiveness), coping method (e.g., problem solving), or challenge (e.g., managing stressors with peers). Activities will be conducted to stimulate interaction with one another in a fun way.
These activities will be designed experientially to give the girls an opportunity to practice skills (e.g., role playing, dyad work for problem solving, small group cooperative sharing exercises). Participant feedback and comments will be encouraged.

The closing time will be arranged to help students achieve a sense of completion and "a degree of cognitive and affective comfort" (Morganett, 1990). This is a time to deal with any unresolved feelings of participants before they return to their regular school day activities. The major points of the session will be reviewed and a link to future sessions made. Self improvement exercises will give members the chance to behave in different ways outside the group. Hopefully, this will promote the transfer and generalization of what they learned inside the group to their daily environmental context.

The early sessions in the program focus on setting ground rules (e.g., confidentiality) and on the nature of the stressors or challenges that the girls are facing (e.g., people, places or events). A framework for further understanding of challenges will be presented through Life's Circle (see Appendix C for a diagram) which depicts different areas of one's life that may be more or less important to each individual, given unique priorities and values (Rice & Meyer, 1994). The participants will be encouraged to consider where their priorities are and how priorities may result in conflict between areas (e.g., social, physical, mental and spiritual domains). These areas may precipitate challenges as well as resources in coping with those challenges. As an example, an adolescent may feel inadequate in the social realm where peers are concerned, yet utilize resources like family or community involvement to help enhance the social domain.

Subsequent sessions will offer students the opportunity to practice specific problem solving methods, assertiveness skills, emotion-focused coping and cognitive restructuring skills specific to developmental challenges confronted in early adolescence (e.g., friendship issues, family conflict, peer pressure). Some audio visual resources will supplement these sections.
The final sessions will include a brief review of the key points of the program with some role played scenarios. The participants will complete a personal letter to themselves where they promise to utilize certain skills they learned that are of the most use to them. These letters will be given to the students in the post group follow up session planned within two months after the completion of the program. As well, students will complete program feedback evaluations and share in a closing celebration with food and juice provided.

**Participant Selection**

As mentioned previously, a group size of 6 to 8 allows each member to participate actively and to express thoughts and feelings. The group experience will be advertised to grade 8 girls, parents, teachers, administrators and counselors to generate both student volunteers and to gain input from those people who have regular contact with the student population. Approval for this group will be obtained from school administrators and school district administration. A meeting of interested girls will disseminate information regarding the purpose of the group, examples of skills presented, the importance of commitment to the group if selected and respect for basic group generated rules like confidentiality in order to protect member privacy. A discussion of expected benefits and potential discomforts will be mentioned. The girls will be given an opportunity to ask questions. Parental informed consent must be obtained in order for the students to participate in this group experience (see Appendices D and E for samples of a Parental Information Letter and Consent Form). A pre-group interview will take place.

Morganett (1990) states the main purposes of this interview are (1) to obtain informed consent from the student, (2) to request the student's commitment, and (3) to obtain information that will be helpful in making the selection decision (see Morganett, 1990 for an example of a Student Selection Checklist).

Corey (1995) emphasizes the critical factor of the selection of group members and points out that the group member’s level of motivation to work is an important variable.
The screening process allows potential members to ask questions to determine if the group is right for them. Group leaders can also get a sense of the appropriateness of the group experience for any particular individual. Morganett (1990) makes some suggestions for possible candidates for a stress management group: (1) recent life transitions, (2) pressure to perform academically, athletically or socially, (3) observed poor skills for coping with challenges (e.g., low frustration tolerance or withdrawal), and (4) some aggressiveness or anxiousness in situations. This author also emphatically notes the significance of choosing a few members who can model some positive behaviors in terms of stress management. "Rule number one in selection is that each member needs other members from whom ... she can learn appropriate behaviors" (p. 5).

**Evaluation Measures**

An informal self-report measure to gauge the level of the individual girl's anxiety will be administered to each girl interviewed. This can provide valuable feedback for selecting members who could benefit the most, as well as offer information to the group leader, the group members and school personnel about the value of the experience through a change in attitudes or behaviors. The same informal instrument will be used as a post test immediately after the group concludes, to get a measure of learning from members (see Appendix F). Morganett (1990) encourages the use of a standardized instrument for more in-depth research purposes. Examples may be the Adolescent Perceived Events Scale (APES, Compas et al. 1987) and the Children's State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAIC; as cited in Morganett, 1990). Additional thoughts for further investigation are included under the Recommendations section of this paper.

**Co-leadership**

Corey (1995) presents a number of distinct advantages for co-leadership of groups: (1) the benefit of shared life experiences and insights; (2) the potential of complementary expertise; (3) the opportunity to share feedback about group process and offer feedback to participants; and (4) the offering of two behavioral models for the group. For this
experience, co-leadership with another female counselor from the elementary schools will be planned. This will promote some linkage with the grade 8 girls' transitions from their respective elementary schools. In addition, this stress management program may be very helpful to girls in grade 7 as they get ready to move to high school. A secondary counselor in their receiving high school could be a valuable connection and a co-leader in the elementary setting.

**Scheduling Sessions in the School**

Several factors can contribute to the successful functioning of the group. The importance of weekly group meetings to foster trust, cohesion and commitment has been established. Another key consideration in the school setting is scheduling the meetings to avoid causing students to frequently miss their courses. This group experience will be scheduled during the lunch hour and if the financial situation allows, a variety of healthy snacks will supplement students' own lunches. The setting will be a smaller classroom and the group members will sit on chairs in a circle to honor the communication and interaction processes that are essential for group growth.

**The Group Stress Management Program**

**Session One**

*Getting Acquainted and An Introduction to the Challenges of Adolescence*

**Goals**

1. To help group members get to know each other and begin to feel comfortable in the group setting;
2. To share in developing appropriate ground rules for the group sessions;
3. To define stressors as they relate to these group members and introduce *Life's Circle* to highlight awareness of different areas of life (e.g., family, friends, school) being both challenges and resources.
Process

Introduction
1. Welcome the students and describe the goals of the group in general as well as the goals of session one (the use of chart paper/blackboard are good visuals for this).
2. Invite all group members (leaders included) to complete a "Find a Friend" exercise. Each participant needs to find out an interesting bit of information from every group member based on the descriptions they have been given (see Appendix G for an example of this handout). Tell the students they will be introducing one group member with accompanying descriptions when everyone reconvenes.
3. Share the information generated and commend the students for sharing their information.

Working Time
1. Introduce the ground rules with the emphasis that rules help everyone be respected. A few basic ground rules will be suggested (e.g., What we say and do here is private and stays in the group; Each person gets time to talk; When someone is talking, everyone else will listen) and then members will be invited to share other ideas. Additional ideas will be written on chart paper with the intent to have this posted for each session as a group generated reminder of respectful process.
2. Group members will be asked to share some things that cause them stress and how they handle those challenges. A diagram of Life's Circle and linking their stressors to the wheel will be started. A general definition of stress will be identified (e.g., When things happen in our lives that are too much for us to deal with, we can get upset or behave differently than we usually do).
3. Some general discussion questions might include: (a) What happens to your body when you feel stressed? (typical answers might be the physical reactions like the heart rate speeding up, breathing speeding up, more blood going to our muscles - "fight or flight" response); (b) What kinds of reactions do you have when you are stressed? Point
out ideas such as stress can be caused by things happening outside ourselves (e.g., dealing with a bully) and things inside ourselves (e.g., thinking about failing an upcoming test); (c) What are some negative stressors? (e.g., worry, poor concentration, disruption of sleep, frustration, headaches, grinding teeth, etc.); (d) What are some positive results if stress is handled well? (e.g., more creativity, a sense of control, better relationships, higher energy levels and flexibility, etc.).

Closing Time
1. Invite the members to share something they learned in the session.
2. Encourage students to be aware of stressful situations they may find themselves in over the week and to think about a situation they would like to handle differently or need support to handle. Invite them to bring ideas with them to the next session.
3. Mention the topic of the next session and remind students of the confidentiality rule.

Session Two

What Are My Stressors? and Life's Circle with its Strengths and Challenges

Goals
1. To explain what stressors are and to help members identify the biggest stressors or challenges in their own lives;
2. To promote students' awareness that others in the group have similar challenges and are dealing with them in different ways;
3. To increase the awareness of different areas of life (e.g., social, mental, physical) and the importance of using strengths when challenges in other areas are causing stress.

Process

Introduction
1. Spend a few minutes going over the idea of stress and how we can react differently than usual when we are feeling threatened or overwhelmed. It might be necessary to do some additional "interaction and get-to-know each other activities" as well.
**Working Time**

1. Discuss the goals of the session.

2. Explain that stressors can be people, places or events and invite students to share examples of each type of stressor as it applies to them. Work in dyads and distribute blank copies of *Life's Circle* handouts so members can generate their own personal wheels and share some of this information before they reconvene as a large group.

3. Ask for some volunteers to record their responses on a larger version of *Life's Circle* chart. Encourage members to identify the strengths or resources they have in dealing with their stressors.

4. Invite the participants to write out one or two stressors that they would like to learn different ways of handling. Collect these and let members know you will incorporate these requests into subsequent sessions to make this more meaningful and experiential for each person.

**Closing Time**

1. Encourage members to share something they learned about their own stressors. Invite responses to the question: How did it feel to talk about their challenges and hear about others' stressors?

2. Ask whether there is anything else people would like to say. Mention the topic of the next session (problem solving) and the confidentiality rule.

Note: Review the students' written ideas about stressors with the intent of utilizing examples for problem solving in the next session. Make sure students give permission to share these with the group.

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**Session Three**

**Problem Solving: Are There Other Solutions?**

**Goals**

1. To learn a 5-step approach to coping with challenges;
2. To learn how to brainstorm for possible solutions to problems;
3. To practice this skill on relevant concerns generated by the participants.

Process

Introduction
1. Briefly review Life's Circle and its importance in supporting people when they deal with challenges.
2. Invite participants to share a few of the stressors that they would like to problem solve and find alternative solutions so they feel they handle things better.

Working Time
1. Tell the members about the 5-step approach to problem solving:
   a. Stop, think and identify the main issue or problem;
   b. Explore the problem: Brainstorm alternatives and consequences;
   c. Choose the best plan;
   d. Act upon your choice;
   e. Evaluate the results.
2. Show the group members how to go through this process by doing a role play (co-leaders). Try to choose a situation from the feedback given at the end of session two or ideas generated from session three. This gives the students a chance to observe. Make sure each step of the process is clearly outlined.
   (a) Identify the central problem
      Ask these questions: What is the problem?
                      When does it occur?
                      Who else is involved?
                      What interferes with making a decision?
   (b) Explore the problem: Brainstorm alternatives and possible consequences
      - Think of as many ways to handle the problem (no evaluation at this point).
      - What are the pros and cons of each proposed solution?
- The final decision reflects what you believe is most important.
- What do you value?

c) Choose the best plan.
- We make choices that are most advantageous to us and for others who are directly affected by our choice. Choices must be one's own responsibility.

d) Act upon your choice.
- Making a decision shows we are responsible -- that we can determine what happens to us.

e) Evaluate the results.
- How am I feeling about what has happened as a result of my decision?
- Reflect on the consequences that result from your choice.
- The more you use this problem solving approach, the more skilled you will become. You take more responsibility for your own life.

3. Invite the students to work in pairs to practice the 5-step approach to problem solving. This can be structured where you encourage members to work with others by saying, "Please work with someone you haven't been a partner with yet." Give the students a time limit for the exercise and practice.

4. Ask for a pair to go first to role play their problem solving process. If time permits and all pairs are willing, have each dyad role play their situation.

5. Helpful feedback may be offered like, "I really liked the way you ...."; "It might have been helpful if you ...." Positive comments need to come first.

Closing Time
1. Invite group members to give their responses to the role playing (e.g., I learned ...., I found that idea really helpful).

2. Mention the confidentiality rule and that the next session will focus on how to be more assertive within your relationships.
Note: Students' problems or concerns generated in all previous sessions can be utilized in planning for session four.

Session Four

Being Assertive: A Four-Step Plan

Goals

1. To differentiate between passive, aggressive and assertive communication;
2. To utilize "video modeling," showing students an example of coping with difficult people by watching how others model a 4-step assertive plan (e.g., Stanfield, 1997);
3. To practice the 4-step assertive plan using participant concerns (e.g., dealing with bullying, responding to criticism).

Process

Introduction

1. Mention the 5-step problem solving approach and encourage students to share any opportunities they had to use the process in the past week.

Working Time

1. Introduce the ideas of passive, aggressive and assertive ways to respond in difficult situations. Consider this in the context of "Looking, Thinking and Acting" passive, aggressive and assertive. Overheads with information outlining common passive, aggressive and assertive responses can be used.
2. Show a video clip dealing with a situation relevant to the group members (e.g., bullying and responding in a passive, aggressive or assertive way). Discuss each method of responding with the inherent pros and cons. The assertive message will be presented as the positive way to handle the situation.
3. Focus on the 4-step assertion plan to cope with a difficult person in a difficult situation. Emphasize that if threat of hurt or violence is present (power imbalance), a student needs to get help from an adult.

Assertion Plan
   Step one: Tell the person what behavior you don't like.
   Step two: Tell how you feel.
   Step three: Tell what you want.
   Step four: If you don't get agreement, tell what will happen if you can't work things out.

4. Have the members work in pairs to role play a situation where they can practice the 4-step assertion plan. Give a structured amount of working time.

5. Invite a couple of pairs to role play their situations and offer constructive feedback. All dyads are welcome to present.

Closing Time
1. Invite group members to share their responses to this exercise in a closing round.
2. Encourage members to practice this plan in a situation that they feel safe in and can manage. Help is available to them if needed by contacting the group leaders.
3. Mention the focus of the next session will be on managing feelings (emotion-focused coping).

Session Five
Managing Our Emotions: Emotion-Focused Coping

Goals
1. To understand that when we make attempts to change or control our emotions we are using this type of coping;
2. To talk about different ways of managing feelings like distancing, self-controlling and accepting responsibility;
3. To practice managing our emotions (e.g., anger) in stressful situations drawn from your own experiences;

4. To realize that problem solving and managing our emotional responses can be used together in handling stressful situations.

**Process**

**Introduction**

1. Go over the 4-step assertion plan and discuss it as a way of confronting a challenging person. Invite members to share any opportunities they might have had to utilize this plan over the past week.

**Working Time**

1. Mention that the 4-step assertion plan and the 5-step problem solving plan are ways we attempt to directly change a situation that is causing us concern. Introduce the term emotion-focused coping and ask members what they think this means. Generated responses may lead to some of these important ideas:
   - Distancing is when a person decides not to let her/himself worry too much or be upset by a situation;
   - Self-controlling is when a person may delay making a decision so choices can be looked at, or when feelings are kept to oneself;
   - Accepting responsibility may happen if a person realizes she or he caused a problem and thinks about ways to change the situation another time.

2. If the idea that ways of coping like problem solving and managing our feelings can be used together does not emerge from the discussion, make sure that this is pointed out.

3. Ask students if they have been in situations where they found it difficult to handle their emotions. Feeling angry is an emotional reaction to certain kinds of stress. The key point to make is that learning to feel and express anger effectively is important in managing stress.
4. Have students work in pairs to generate a list of typical situations in their lives that usually trigger their anger (e.g., When a friend talks behind your back, When someone borrows something from you and doesn't return it). Second, have the students write down how they usually respond to handle their angry feelings (e.g., blow up in anger, take a walk to work things out, listen to music, etc.).

5. Invite the students to choose one situation that they would like to handle better. Mention some important ideas like these concerning anger:
   - Anger can be useful because it gives us energy to deal with conflicts;
   - Anger helps us express our feelings and thoughts to others;
   - Anger helps us attend to things when we know something is wrong, frustrating, threatening or annoying about situations we are in;
   - Anger can lead us to do something about a situation to feel we can regain control and be in charge of the situation.

6. Differentiate when anger is a problem:
   - When our anger lasts a long time or does not go away and we turn our anger inward;
   - When our anger leads us to be aggressive; when we want to hurt someone else either verbally (e.g., calling other people names or raising our voice) or physically (e.g., punching, hitting, pushing or throwing things).
   - When our anger disturbs our work or relationships with others.

7. Have students evaluate how they managed the situation they chose in number 5. Invite the students to work together to come up with things they could do to manage their anger differently. Ask the pairs to practice a role play with the “new situation.” Encourage the use of both emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping (e.g., 5-step problem solving, 4-step assertion plan).

8. Reconvene as a group and invite students to share their role plays with the group. Again, constructive feedback can be offered.
Closing Time

1. Invite students to share at least one "learning" from today's group. Affirm their efforts.
2. Mention that the next session will focus on how to pay attention to the body's cues when feeling stressed. A muscle relaxation technique with deep breathing will be taught. Encourage members to wear comfortable clothing next session.

Session Six
Progressive Muscle Relaxation Training

Goals

1. To illustrate progressive muscle relaxation procedures as a potential way of managing stress;
2. To clarify physical, psychological and behavioral effects of stress;
3. To give students the opportunity to practice progressive muscle relaxation in the group setting and to encourage them to practice and use this technique outside the group.

Process

Introduction

1. Take the students back to session one and the discussion about what happens to the body when we are stressed. Ask for input from the group. Ideas may include some of the following descriptions:

   Physical Effects
   - rapid heartbeat
   - dry mouth
   - upset stomach, diarrhea, ulcers

   - sweating palms or other body parts
   - headache
   - shortness of breath

   Psychological Effects
   - forgetting things

   - feeling out of control
- feeling angry or depressed or irritable - getting upset over little things

Behavioral Effects
- exploding in anger - avoiding doing things
- doing hurtful things to others - breaking into tears easily
- being unable to focus attention - doing things to get into trouble.

2. Mention that today’s exercise will focus on relaxing your muscles in tense situations so you can learn to feel more relaxed all over.

Working Time
1. Explain that progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and relaxing your muscles all over your body, one muscle group at a time. Often the forehead is the starting point and the movement goes to muscle groups lower in the body. Muscles have two ways of being: tense or relaxed. These two states can not happen at the same time. So learning to relax your muscles when you’re feeling tense can help you feel more relaxed all over.

2. Describe the four steps involved in progressive muscle relaxation:
   - Tense muscles for about 5 seconds.
   - Think about what the muscles feel like when they are tense.
   - Relax the muscles.
   - Think about what the muscles feel like when they are relaxed (Morganett, 1990).

3. Ask if there are any students with heart problems, strained muscles or other physical concerns that may need special consideration before this technique is experienced.

4. Instruct students to make themselves comfortable by facing their chair away from the group or finding a comfortable spot on the floor. These should be plenty of room between people.

5. Read a Progressive Muscle Relaxation Training Script slowly and clearly, instructing students to follow your directions (Morganett, 1990, pp. 114-115. Permission to copy for student use has been granted).
6. Once the exercise is completed, invite members to move back to the circle. Debrief the experience with some questions:
   - What did you like or dislike about the experience?
   - What did you feel when you did the exercise?
   - Are you feeling tense or relaxed now?
   - How might this exercise help you to lessen your stress?

Closing Time

1. Copies of this script may be given to students. Encourage students to practice progressive muscle relaxation several times before the next group session. Encourage students to share this with another person by having the script read to them. This can be done alone as well.
2. Mention the topic of the next session will be Enhancing Self Esteem and Reducing Stress by Using Positive Thoughts.

Session Seven

Enhancing Self Esteem and Reducing Stress by Using Positive Thoughts

Goals

1. To understand the differences between thoughts, feelings and behavior;
2. To understand how our thoughts can affect our feelings and behaviors;
3. To give students practice in making positive self talk statements when they encounter stressful situations.

Process

Introduction

1. Invite members to share any experiences of using progressive muscle relaxation during the past week. How was this useful to them?
2. Introduce the idea that our thoughts and feelings affect our behavior. They can work together to create stress or to relieve stress.
Working Time

1. Spend some time differentiating among thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Perhaps use parallel terms like "thinking", "feeling" and "doing" to help.

   - Thoughts: we use our brains to think and when we think we tend to talk to ourselves. These thoughts can be opinions, what we know, and conclusions about what we experience.

   - Feelings: these are our emotions like feeling mad, sad, glad, afraid or ashamed. Our feelings come from our thoughts. When sharing feelings we begin by saying, "I feel ...." Expressing thoughts might begin by saying, "I think ...." Invite students to share examples of thoughts and feelings.

   - Behaviors: this is what we do or what others can see as our actions.

3. Mention that our thoughts, feelings and behavior all work together. Give an example of this. Freda has to make an oral presentation to the class in ten minutes. She feels nervous and nauseous. She thinks she will stumble over her words and thinks, "I can't do this," and that the class will laugh at her. She decides to tell her teacher that she is sick and asks to go to the medical room to visit the school nurse.

   Freda could choose other alternatives if her thoughts were different. Mention that in this example, Freda gave a negative message, "I'll stumble over my words", "I'll get laughed at", and "I can't do this."

   You can learn to program your thoughts with positive self-talk to accomplish your goals. Freda could think and say things to herself positively like "I have prepared for this and practiced reading it," "I will do my best," "It is all right to be nervous," and "Take deep breaths and try to relax." Positive thoughts can be substituted for negative ones before, during and after the oral presentation (Meichenbaum, 1985).

4. Invite the students to think of a recent situation in which they felt stress. Invite members to share this with the group. What messages did they say to themselves?
5. Have a student volunteer to record information on a chart or blackboard. Have the group choose a couple of the situations generated and brainstorm for positive self-talk messages that would have been more helpful in the situations.

6. Invite students to write down the positive statements they could use in their own situations and encourage them to carry these with them as a reminder that they can change their thoughts and in turn affect how they feel and behave.

Closing Time

1. Encourage students to try substituting positive self-talk messages for negative ones in real situations when they experience stress. They can also use progressive muscle relaxation to relax parts of the body if they feel tense.

2. Remind students of the confidentiality rule. The next two sessions will focus on resolving problems with peers and with family members. Students will have an opportunity to use all the ideas they have learned in managing their stress in these relationships as well as resolving problems at school.

Sessions Eight and Nine

Relationships: Resolving Problems with Family, Peers and Others

Goals

1. To discuss what constitutes aspects of a healthy relationship whether with family, peers or others;

2. To provide the group members with practice in expressing negative thoughts and emotions in dealing with family, peers and others;

3. To have participants incorporate previously learned coping skills from the other sessions into their practice (e.g., reinforce the use of the "I" message as an assertive response).
Process

Introduction

1. Invite students to share some of the positive self-talk statements they might have used during the week. How helpful were these in managing their situation?

2. Mention that relationships are important in everyone's life. Building and maintaining healthy relationships with family, friends, and others is an important life skill. Expressing how we feel when we are dealing with negative emotions within these relationships can be a beneficial coping strategy.

3. Share another video segment with the group that focuses on parent and teen conflict (e.g., Stanfield, 1997). The video should highlight different ways of responding in a conflict with an emphasis on being assertive. The assertive or "I" message will be noted, along with its similarity to the 4-step assertive plan. Consider the following stems for practicing assertive responses:

- When you ____________(identify the behavior), I feel ___________(identify the feeling(s) because ____________(identify what is important to you).
- I feel ____________ because __________ and I'd like __________.
- I realize __________ but _______________ so ______________.

Working Time

1. Have the students work in dyads to complete these statements: "I think these things are important in order to have a healthy relationship with a person...." and "I think these are things to watch for because they hurt people in a relationship...."

2. Reconvene as a group and invite a recorder to list generated ideas on a chart or the board. Some significant aspects of healthy and unhealthy relationships that could emerge are as follows:

   healthy
   - listen to each other - shares interests, activities, beliefs
   - considerate of feelings and ideas - enjoys spending time together
- respectful to self and others
- encourages you to reach your potential

unhealthy
- ridicules you or the things important to you
- doesn't respect a person's confidences
- ignores your feelings and wishes
- doesn't listen or ignores you
- shows anger by using threats or violence
- pressures you to do things that make you feel uncomfortable.

3. Ask the group how these thoughts about healthy relationships could be applied to their relationships with their family. Write down the ideas for possible reference. Ask how the students are handling some of these problems within their families. A discussion about "you" messages and how prevalent they are in our communication patterns is important here. Generally, "you" messages are hurtful. "I" messages are respectful because you express your feelings without hurting any one else.

4. Give examples of utilizing a problem solving approach to cope with the stresses they feel. Give an example of using an assertive message--either the 4-step plan or the assertive "I" statements as described in the introduction. Invite students to give assertive "I" messages to other situations.

5. Invite students to work in small groups as needed to develop a role-play situation and plan of active coping that is meaningful to them.

6. These will be presented next session or started this session if time permits.

7. A similar process can be utilized to focus on problem solving with peers or others as well. This discussion may move into the realm of dating and relationships as well, depending on the maturity levels of the group members.

8. It is important to offer constructive feedback to participants as they practice their role-plays and when the scenes are presented to the whole group. Ask participants how they feel when they are using these ways of coping, and would they be willing to practice
these methods outside the group. Also ask the "receivers" of the coping methods what they think and feel. Was there a degree of feeling discomfort? Explanations and discussion are encouraged.

Closing Time

1. Encourage students to use some form of problem- and emotion-focused coping at least twice before you meet next week. Remind students that the group will be ending soon and that we will use the role-play situations as a review of learned skills for stress management. Invite students to start thinking about one or two goals they want to set for themselves regarding managing their stressors. These goals will be recorded in the final session.

Session Ten

Summary and Closing

Goals

1. To encourage students to practice a variety of stress management ideas in their lives outside the group;
2. To debrief with students some thoughts and feelings that may be elicited with the finish of the group and to model the importance of closure;
3. To give students an opportunity to affirm each other's efforts and to plan one or two goals for their stress management in the future.
4. To have students evaluate this group experience.

Process

Introduction

1. Spend a brief time going through a summary of session topics. Invite general feedback from the students such as "What was most meaningful to you?" and "What ideas are you using?"
2. Have the students complete an evaluation form about the group experience and hand it to the facilitator (see Appendix H for an example).

**Working Time**

1. Termination of the group can be stressful for some students. Encourage members to talk about this and ways they can deal with those feelings.

2. It is important to say "good-bye," and this can help us deal with the sadness of ending the group as well as looking forward to new experiences. Apply this idea to relationships in general.

3. Invite students to say good bye to each other by giving each other a "pat" on the back. Have students draw their hand on a piece of paper and put their name at the top. Rotate the hands in a clockwise rotation and give each member an opportunity to write an affirming thought about every other person in the group--facilitator(s) included. Or tape the paper with the hand on each participant's back and every one contributes to their "pat-on-the-back" by writing a positive comment about the person. Once the hands are back to their owner invite students to read comments. Encourage discussion about this process and invite the participants to share one or two comments from their "hands." Encourage students to keep their "hands," and when they may need a "pat-on-the-back," to pull out their personal affirmations. Consider this a form of positive coping statements.

4. Distribute a form letter and envelope to students that requires them to fill in one or two stress management goals they want to work on in the next two months. These will be sealed, collected and opened at the post group session which will be planned for six weeks to two months later.

**Closing Time**

1. Thank students for participating and remind them of confidentiality. Make sure you mention that you and other school counselors are available to them if needed. The post-group session will be announced in a few weeks.

2. Share some snacks and casual conversation before the group time ends.
Some Additional Thoughts

The group counseling experience can be a valuable asset in helping youth deal with many personal and interpersonal needs. Training in stress management skills is really about training in basic life management skills. The school setting can offer prevention and intervention efforts to help students. This proposed group program for young adolescent girls, although structured and goal-directed, leaves some flexibility to adapt the material so it will fit the variety of unique situations groups and schools present. For example, participants may require more assistance with managing school related stressors like surviving tests and successful studying. If it becomes apparent that more in-depth help is needed, individuals may be invited to seek other resources. As well, there is a wealth of stress management material for youth available through publishers of educational material. The potential for specific special-concern groups may grow from a group experience such as proposed here. Remaining cognizant of the needs of your group members—indeed, of the students in your school—is essential.

Future Research Considerations and Practical Applications

If prevention and intervention programs are to be effective in assisting young people to manage stress, they need to account for the types of stress that are significant for the age group targeted by the program. When considering early adolescence, input from students in grades 6 and 7 would be valuable. Extending the focus group interviews into the elementary school setting would broaden the potential new information base regarding girls' stressors and how they cope. What new insights are provided from girls who are 11 and 12? This data could then be used for program adaptation before implementation with girls in grades 6 and 7. Perhaps offering a stress management program before a major school transition and supplementing the effort with "booster" sessions in secondary school would have more utility for young adolescent girls.
Comparing delivery and efficacy at different times could produce some valuable knowledge in working with these students.

It would be helpful to employ other data collection techniques and to survey a larger number of young adolescent girls. Questionnaires and coping inventories would provide a quantitative data base to supplement the focus group methodology. Parental perceptions of their children's stressors and coping strategies could be useful. Seiffge-Krenke (1995e) contends that future research endeavors could include direct observations of adolescents in natural settings. For example, observing young adolescent girls interacting with friends over a lunch break at school may provide additional information about their stress and coping patterns. This may provide a more objective check on the validity of the information supplied from self-report measures. A multi-method approach to data collection would enhance this research work.

Just as data collection is strengthened by a multifaceted approach, so too would stress intervention efforts be augmented by a girls' social support system. For example, increased participation of the adolescent in family problem solving and discussions could foster development of coping repertoires. A concurrent group for parents of participants may be a promising opportunity to enhance the communication processes and the stress buffering effects that parents provide. The interactions within families are complex and would provide a rich opportunity for parents and teens to practice coping and communication skills.

In addition, adolescent peer and friendship connections can be used as positive social support and coping assistance. For example, older female peer leaders may be trained to help facilitate some aspects of this stress management program's delivery. This would increase the social network of contacts for the participants and encourage more student ownership for what could become a longer term process (e.g., regular training on a yearly basis and the extension of an established peer tutoring network within the school setting).
Within the school context, teachers and support staff could also be facilitators, perhaps more indirectly. Workshops provided to staff could reinforce stress management methods like problem solving. Weissberg et al. (1989) make the suggestion that "good news" and "problem" boxes in the classroom could encourage students to share achievements and promote the continual usage of the problem solving model for dealing with concerns that might arise. Caution is noted for certain circumstances where a problem would require more appropriate assistance by other resource people. The importance of commitment by school personnel and students is evident and would aid implementation effectiveness.

Another consideration with this group experience proposal is the diversity of ethnic, racial and economic groups within a school setting. Groups may prefer certain coping strategies because of different values and family backgrounds. Empathy and sensitivity, along with additional education regarding cultural values, are important. Students with a history of "at risk" behaviors may need more support because of a higher number of stressors. Perhaps specific intervention groups for high risk groups would be warranted after a general stress management group such as the one proposed (Compas et al. 1989).

Conclusion

Adolescence is considered a time of transition as changes take place in physical and cognitive areas as well as social contexts. These numerous changes can provide challenges and new opportunities or they can become overwhelming and stressful. Both boys and girls experience distress throughout adolescence and both need support. Some potential risk and protective factors that influence adolescent mental health include social support such as family and peers, contextual situations like school, and internal resources of the individual such as locus of control. In particular, increased awareness of girls' needs in the school setting is necessary. Although research varies concerning gender differences and stress, early adolescent girls may experience a greater number of
stressors. The coincidence of pubertal change, school transition and role transition has been contributed to higher stress in young adolescent girls. What is positive is that adolescents are generally active copers. Gilligan (1982) contends that females have a stronger dependency on connection and relationships. This could be a real strength in developing programs to help girls manage their stressors more effectively.

Any intervention effort should be in touch with the real needs of those it is intended to benefit, so this research project utilized focus group methodology to investigate the stressors and coping methods of young adolescent girls. From the richness of the girls' responses emerged themes that emphasized the significance of family, school and peer stressors in their lives. Also, the participants provided evidence of action-based coping and a willingness to build their coping skills in relation to others. The resulting group stress management program proposal is intended to be flexible, with a scope for adaptation to honor the needs of different groups in various school settings. Additional research is required to monitor the efficacy of such a group experience for positive short- and long-term effects on stress management. It is hoped that this innovative program will supplement present work and experiences that focus attention on helping our young people grow up healthier. Specifically, with the intensity of pressures that young adolescent girls meet, it is imperative to support their efforts and to encourage their responsibility in keeping their sense of self authentic through strengthened connection.
References


Appendix A

Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent(s),

A research project focused on proposing a stress management program for young adolescent girls is being developed by Candace Koziski, a school counsellor at Prince Rupert Secondary School. Your daughter is being asked to participate in a group discussion aimed at identifying stressful events and how girls handle different stressors. As well, participants will be asked to provide feedback on what things could be helpful to them in managing their stress. This input from the students is important.

The interview will be audiotaped so that we don’t miss any of the responses. The tapes will be erased after they are reviewed. Your child’s participation in this interview will not affect her school grades in any way as the interview will take place in a 40 minute session over lunch (pizza and juice will be provided- please let me know of any food allergies if applicable).

The information from the interview will be used for my research project. ONLY my supervisor and myself will have access to this information. I will keep information shared by group members confidential except in certain situations in which there is an ethical responsibility to limit confidentiality. These circumstances include your child revealing information about hurting herself or another person, about child abuse or about criminal activity. You would be notified in accordance with school district protocol and appropriate counselling and/or legal resources recommended. In no way will the identification of participants be used in writing my paper. A short summary of my project will be available for those who wish to obtain a copy.

Please direct any questions to either myself or my university research project supervisor. The phone numbers are listed below.

Parental Consent Form

I, __________________________, have read the above information and I understand that my daughter’s participation in this group discussion is purely voluntary and that she may withdraw at any time. My signature below certifies that I consent to my daughter’s participation in this interview. A copy of this consent form is available to me at my request and by contacting Mrs. Koziski at the school.

Name of student: ___________________________ Date: ________________

Signature of student: ___________________________

Signature: __________________________ Parent/Guardian (circle one)

Thank you for your cooperation.

Candace Koziski, school counsellor
phone: 624-6757

Dr. Colleen Haney, UNBC supervisor
phone: (604)822-5259 (for messages)
The purpose of this focus group is to talk about what things make you feel stressed and what kinds of things you do to handle stress.

1. We are going to talk about stress and anxiety. How do you feel when you are stressed or anxious?

2. a. What are some of the things that might make you feel stressed? At home? At school?

   b. What are some of the things that might make your close friends feel anxious or stressed?

3. What kinds of things help you to deal with your stress?

4. What sorts of things do young people do to handle stress? (this might include specific probes about exercise, relaxation, distractions, talking to others and to whom?)

5. We all feel stressed sometimes. Let's brainstorm for any other ideas that may come to your mind when you think about being stressed or anxious.

6. Our goal has been to identify things that make you feel stressed and what would help you deal with stress. Have we missed anything?

7. Thank you for participation.
Appendix C

Life's Circle

Community/Social

Peers

School

Family

Spiritual

Health/Physical

YOU
Month, Year

Dear Parent or Guardian:

During this school year, your school counselling staff will be offering students interested in our services the opportunity to participate in group counselling. About 8 - 10 youths are selected to be in the group.

Group counselling is an excellent way for some students to learn new skills, develop self-confidence, become more aware of how others see them, practice new behaviours, and better understand how to deal with the many problems life presents.

Your child has expressed interest in participating in a group that will be starting soon. Attached is a form that asks you to give your consent for your child to participate. She has not been selected yet and will not be considered until you give your permission. Only a few students will be able to have this opportunity at this time. There will be an interview process that occurs next week. If your child is not selected but is an appropriate candidate for future services, she will have other opportunities to participate. Participation in the group is completely voluntary and will not affect your child's grades in any way.

Please read the Parent/Guardian Consent Form thoroughly and return it by ______. If you have questions, concerns, or comments, please call us at the numbers and time listed below. Thank you very much for considering this opportunity for your child.

Sincerely,

Candace Koziski
School Counsellor- P.R.S.S.

Telephone number - 624-6757

Joyce Dundas
District Elementary Counsellor

Telephone number- 624-1536

Best time to call - any time from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.- Leave a message with the office staff if we are busy and we will get back to you as soon as we can.
Appendix E

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Your permission is requested for your daughter, ______________, to participate in group counselling activities at Prince Rupert Secondary School. The group counselling will run for 10 weeks, from __________ to __________. A total of 10 sessions of 50 minutes each has been scheduled on Tuesdays from 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. This will be cleared with your daughter's teacher as it would mean missing 20 minutes of block B each week. Again, participation is voluntary and your daughter's grades will not be affected. If a teacher is hesitant to allow release time for this group because of course work, I will contact both your daughter and yourself to explain this. The group is entitled Improving Stress Management Skills and will include discussion of ideas, behaviours, feelings, attitudes and opinions. Some of the subjects to be covered in the group are as follows:

a. "get-to-know" each other activities;
b. understanding more about stress in life's circle / identifying stressors / managing feelings, problem solving, assertive responses / relaxation methods;
c. coping styles and managing daily hassles.

Participants will have the opportunity to learn new skills and behaviours that may help their personal development and adjustment. The group will be co-led by Joyce Dundas, a District Elementary Counsellor, and Candace Koziski, a P.R.S.S. Counsellor. Jean Clerihue, a counsellor in private practice, will drop by on two or three occasions for the purpose of offering "process" feedback to the co-leaders.

Because counselling is based on a trusting relationship between counsellor and client, the group leaders will keep the information shared by group members confidential except in certain situations in which there is an ethical responsibility to limit confidentiality. In the following circumstances, you will be notified.

1. If the child reveals information about hurting herself or another person.
2. If the child reveals information about child abuse.
3. If the child reveals information about criminal activity.

By signing this form I give my informed consent for my child to participate in group counselling. I understand that

1. The group will provide an opportunity for members to learn and practice interpersonal skills, discuss feelings, share ideas, practice new behaviours, and make new friends.
2. Anything group members share in group will be kept confidential by the group leaders except in the above-mentioned cases.

Parent/Guardian signature ___________________________ Date __________

Student signature ___________________________ Date __________
Appendix F

Name ___________________________ Date _____________

Keeping Your Cool:

Stress Management Skills

Instructions: Each of the statements below concerns your ideas, beliefs, attitudes, or feelings about stress and stressful situations. After each statement is a response you could choose. **Circle the response** that is how you think or feel now.

Rating 1 = never
2 = hardly ever
3 = sometimes
4 = most of the time
5 = always

Example: I like to watch TV in the evenings.
(You like to watch TV in the evenings most of the time.)

1. I feel as though I am in control of my life. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I understand what causes me stress. 1 2 3 4 5
3. There is too much going on in my life. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I know how I react to stress. 1 2 3 4 5
5. When things get too much for me, I do something I regret. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I know how to relax. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I don't know what to do when I get stressed out. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I feel anxious at school. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I feel anxious at home. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I feel anxious when I am with my friends. 1 2 3 4 5

Note: From Skills for Living: Activities for Young Adolescents (Appendix 3), by R. Morganett, 1990, Champaign, IL: Research Press. Permission to reproduce granted.
Appendix G

Find a Friend

Find someone who matches the following descriptions and write her name in the blank. Try to have a different person for each statement.

Find someone who wears a size 7 shoe. ______

Find someone with the same name as a relative of yours. ______

Find someone who has a dog. What is the dog’s name? ______

Find a person who was NOT born in Prince Rupert. Name the place. ______

Find someone who likes to dance. What type of dance? ______

Find a person who has a brother and a sister. ______

Find a person who likes to sing. Name one song. ______

Find someone who enjoys science. ______

Find a person who likes pizza. ______

Find out the middle name of someone. Write it down. ______

Find someone who can say "hello" in another language. ______ language? ______

Find a person who feels happy today. ______

Let us know when you have filled in your blanks.
Appendix H

Evaluation Form

Improving Stress Management Skills Group

Your group leaders rely on your feedback to help improve this group counselling activity. The information you give the leaders can help to enhance the presentation in the future.

**How** clearly did your leaders present the material? Circle your response.

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<tr>
<td>Hard to understand</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Very clearly</td>
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**This** group involves 1) the leaders teaching some material, and 2) encouraging the participation of group members. How did you like the balance in your group?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not enough teaching,</td>
<td>Just right</td>
<td>Too much teaching,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Too much participation</td>
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<td>Not enough participation</td>
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**What** did you like most about the group activities?

________________________________________

________________________________________

**What** would improve this group in the future?

________________________________________

________________________________________

**Think** back to what you wanted to accomplish in this group. To what extent has this group counselling experience helped you with that goal?

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<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
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**Overall**, are you glad you attended this group?

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<td>Not at all</td>
<td>More or less</td>
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**Thank you** for taking the time to give us some feedback! Return these to your group leaders.