

## RING A BELL for Kids' Mental Health! Lesson Plan (6-8)

### *How Laughter Helps Our Mental Health*

- Description:** Students will learn more about how laughter is not only enjoyable it also has practical benefits for our physical and mental health.
- Date:** Sometime in the week prior to the Dots for Kids Day - *Ring a Bell* event to be held on first Friday in December
- Time:** 45 to 60 minutes
- Theme:** **Positive mental health**
- The Public Health Agency of Canada defines positive mental health as the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity" (2006, p. 2).
- Learning outcomes:** In this lesson students will:
1. Identify the positive effect of humour on mental well being
  2. Recognize the body changes that can occur when experiencing the effects of laughter
- Resources:** A book of jokes
- Access to a website such as *America's Funniest Home Videos*

**Teacher Background:** Laughter has a positive impact on our mental and physical well-being. Laughter:

- Relaxes muscles and improves blood flow
- Exercises lungs and chest muscles
- Releases endorphins (our 'natural pain killers')
- Improves sleep quality
- Lowers pulse rate
- Increases creativity
- Improves memory/recall

**Introduction:** Brainstorm with students potential sources of humour:

- Media (movies, television, magazines, books)
- Friends & family
- Internet

Engage students in a discussion about the impact of laughter on our lives. Laughter can:

- Improve mood
- Reduce stress
- Promote healing
- Allows us to think more clearly and flexibly
- Improves sleep

### Suggested Activities

- Instruct students to stand up and assume a 'grouch or irritable' stance or posture. What do they notice about their muscles, breathing, etc.?
- Have students read jokes from an appropriate joke book, read a humorous story or watch a funny internet video clip. Ask student to discuss the differences they feel (both emotional and physical) after having laughed.
- In small groups, have students create a humorous skit to share with the class. Caution student about the appropriate use humour (i.e. no put-downs or negativity). Following each performance, discuss the impact of the laughter generated.

### Extension Activity

- Ask students to work with their parents/guardians to find an appropriate internet clip about a humorous situation to share with a friend or other family member. Invite students to discuss the experience with the class.