

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

We are starting a new literacy and mental health series called *Well Aware*! We will be reading interesting books written by exemplary Canadian authors. As we work with these books, we hope to come to understand more about how to be happy and healthy, make good choices, and reduce stress and anxiety. We also expect to improve our literacy skills.

The intent of this series is to use the skills of language, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, to address important ideas about positive mental health. The mental health of all of our children is critical to their social and emotional development, but it also plays an important role in their success at school.

Exploring ideas through literature is not new and it is not meant as an “add-on” to an already full curriculum. It is simply a way to use the strength of communication skills as a vehicle to help children not only manage and cope with their everyday lives, but also to “be the best they can be,” physically, socially, intellectually, and emotionally.

As with all curriculum initiatives, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this exciting new resource.

Thank you for your interest!

Sincerely,

Name: _____

Reread *My Best Friend ... NOT!* and look for the different sources of stress that Rina experiences. You can also note stressors that you have experienced. Make brief notes about how you felt or reacted in those situations.

Source of Stress	For Rina	For Me	Feeling or Reaction
Starting school			
Starting a new activity (club, team, arts program, etc.)			
Moving to a new house or school			
Making new friends			
Wondering if I will be accepted by other kids			
Fighting with my parents			
Fighting with my brother or sister			
Fighting with a friend			
Wearing the right clothes, shoes, etc.			
Being left out or not chosen			
Not being good enough at a subject or activity			
Adults not listening to me			
Having to make difficult decisions for myself or others			
Ending an important relationship with a friend			
Bullying in person			
Cyberbullying			
Doing something that I was not comfortable with because of peer pressure			
Parents giving me too many jobs and responsibilities			
Death of a pet			
Personal injury or health issue			
Speaking up in class (public speaking)			
Threat of violence in school or community			
Dealing with a big change in my schedule			
Not getting enough sleep			

Name:

The way a writer or speaker describes someone can help you understand the underlying message. With a partner or group, choose a character or person in the selection.

1. Write down at least five different words and phrases in the chart below that describe or tell about this character or person.
2. Think about each word or phrase. Decide if it shows something good (+), bad (-), or neutral (=) about the character. Circle the symbol you choose.

Descriptive Word or Phrase	+	-	=
	+	-	=
	+	-	=
	+	-	=
	+	-	=
	+	-	=

3. Look at the words and your ratings. How do you think the writer wants you to feel about this character or person? Give evidence for your answer.

4. What message do you think the writer wants you to get? Explain your reasoning.

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

We have been learning about ways that we can recognize and address everyday stress. As an important connection to our learning in this area, we have included some ideas for you to help your child develop skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to communicate effectively and to nurture good relationships with peers, friends, and family. Please think of this as a “Post-it” note that can be a helpful tool for promoting positive family discussions.

Conversation Starters:

- *What was the highlight of your day? Why?*
- *Teach me something you learned today that you think I might not know.*
- *What word would you use to describe how you are feeling right this minute?*
- *How can you tell if someone in our family is stressed?*
- *Tell me some things you’ve learned about how to react responsibly when something is bothering you.*

Tips to Help Your Family De-stress Together:

- Go to the park.
- Play charades or a board game together.
- Hike, bike, picnic, drive Just get out for a while!
- Have a one-on-one chat to air a concern.
- Put notes for discussion in an anonymous suggestion box and address them at the time that is right for you.

Tips for Recognizing When a Family Member is Stressed:

- Changes in behaviour, such as not wanting to participate
- Too much “alone time” in another room
- Crying, moping, lack of eye contact
- Too many excuses not to talk
- Lack of contact with friends
- Not wanting to go to school
- Acting out—unusual behaviours

Thank you for your interest!

Sincerely,