

PREVENTING SUICIDES IN FUTURE GENERATIONS BY TEACHING CHILDREN COPING SKILLS

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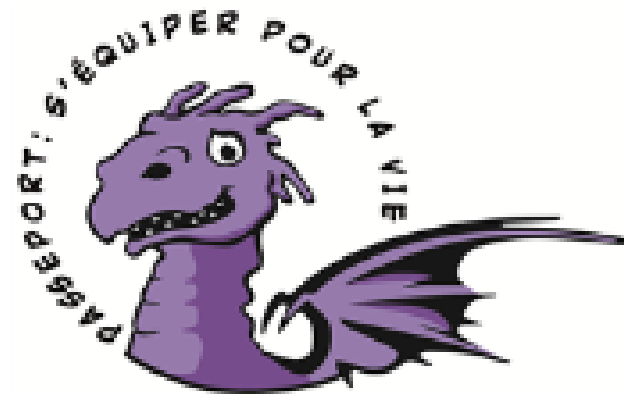
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Centre de recherche et d'intervention
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Understanding Suicide

- Suicide is a way of coping with problems that are ***experienced*** as being:
 - *Interminable* - « *my suffering will never end* »
 - *Inevitable* – « *there is no way of stopping the suffering* »
- and*
- *Insupportable* « *I cannot continue to live with this pain* »

Suicide Prevention Involves

- *Interminable* - « *my suffering will never end* » **fostering HOPE that the suffering can/will end**
- *Inevitable* – « *there is no way of stopping the suffering* »

and

- *Insupportable* « *I cannot continue to live with this suffering* »

Suicide Prevention Involves

- *Interminable* - « my suffering will never end » **fostering HOPE that the suffering can/will end**
- *Inevitable* – « there is no way of stopping the suffering » **developing alternative COPING STRATEGIES to deal with the problem**

and

- *Insupportable* « I cannot continue to live with this suffering »

Suicide Prevention Involves

- *Interminable* - « my suffering will never end » **fostering HOPE that the suffering can/will end**
- *Inevitable* – « there is no way of stopping the suffering » **developing alternative COPING STRATEGIES to deal with the problem**

and/OR

- *Insupportable* « I cannot continue to live with this suffering » **developing alternative COPING STRATEGIES to reduce the suffering**

Copings strategies are

What we do to
improve a
situation or to
make us feel
better about a
difficult
circumstance



Play board
games with
my family

Spend some
time with
other friends

Write a song
about my
friend

Create a
photo
album

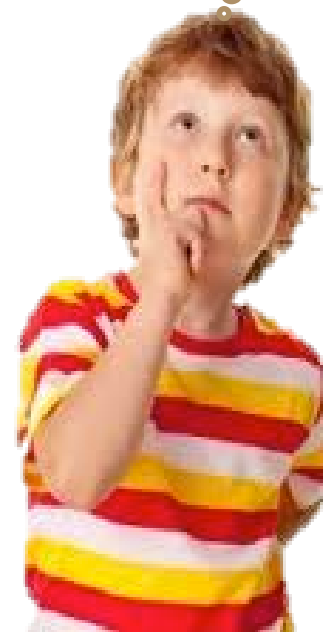
Read a book

Open a Skype
account

Plan a
summer
trip to my
friend's
house

Play a
video
game

Invite a new
friend over to
watch a movie
with me



Coping strategies should....

**Improve the situation or help me feel
better – or both**

and

Not harm me nor others

Adolescents and Young Adults who Attempted Suicide (Spirito and others)

- Can imagine fewer ways to cope with problem situations.
- Use fewer and less helpful ways of coping when faced with problematic situations.

Hypothesis:

- If we can increase coping skills at an early age, children will cope better throughout their lives, and better avoid severe stressful situations associated with suicide as well as seeking and accepting help when experiencing great difficulties.



Passport: Skills for life

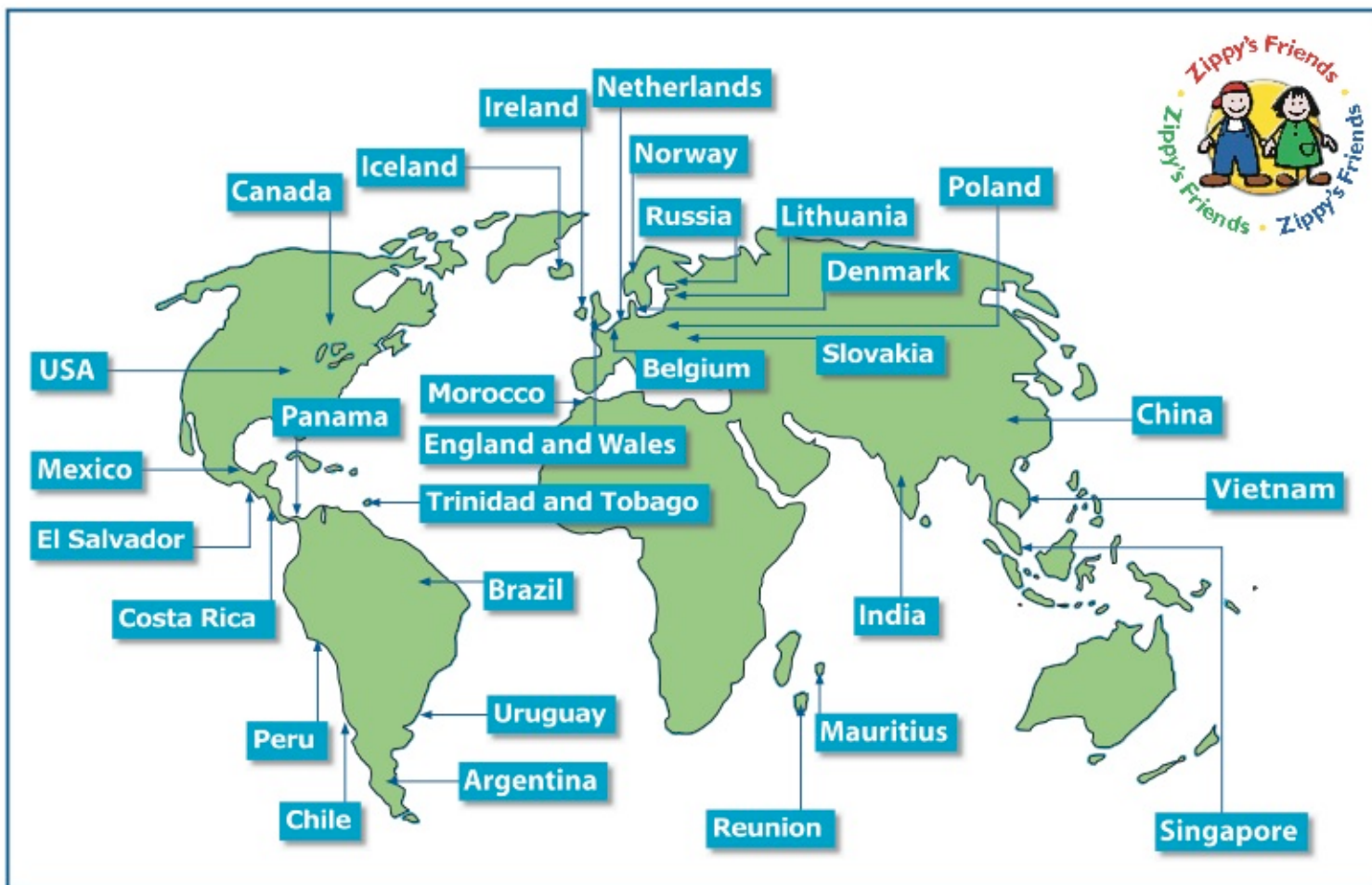
NEW programme created in Canada (2015)
to improve children's coping skills



Inspired by the international programme
Zippy's Friends

for children age 5-7 (first grade)
Over 1.3 Million children in 30 countries





- The development of *Passport: Skills for Life* was financed by the Public Health Agency of Canada as part of a competition on « innovation strategies »:
 - To develop a mental health promotion programme for older primary school children;
 - that can be used in diverse sites and environments,
 - with scientific evaluation of the implementation and effects.

Stages in the Development of the Programme

➤ Phase 1- pilot : 2009 – 2010

- Needs assessment – focus groups and consultations with stakeholders (planners, administrators, teachers, parents, children)
- Creation of short 4 session pilot programme;
- Implementation and evaluation of pilot programme.

➤ Phase 2 - version 1 : 2011-2012 school year

- Creation of all activities
- Test activities in summer camps, then revisions;
- Implemented in schools
- Evaluation, including comparaisons with control groups (pretest & posttest).

Stages in the Development of the Programme

➤ **Phase 2 – version 2: 2012-2014**

- Revisions of version 1, ajustements & validation of new activities in summer camps;
- Implementation of version 2 in schools;
- Evaluation, including comparaisons with control groups (pretest, posttest, 1 year follow-up).

➤ **Phase 2 – final version: 2014-2015**

- Revision et ajustements of activities;
- Linguistic corrections for international French and translation to English;
- Printing of English and French versions of all material

Stages in the Development of the Programme

➤ Dissemination begins 2015-2016

- Development of web site for teachers, parents, children, general public, decision makers (available in French April 2016, in English July 2016);
- Development of « motion comics » electronic version of comic strips;
- Promotion and distribution of the programme in English and French in Canada
- Pilot test in Brazil of programme in Portuguese
- Presentations of evaluation results at international conferences
- Collaborations with Partnership for Children to test programme in other countries (and languages?)

PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Universal programme for all 9 to 11 year olds
- 17 sessions, approximately 55 minutes/one per week
- Conducted by specially trained teachers (1 day prior training and half day mid-programme training)
- Comics distributed to children each week, about Olya, Milo, Elly and their friends dealing with everyday challenges
- Varied activities: Group discussions, role plays, giant board game, etc.
- Parent information sheets and at-home (optional) activities that are fun and well appreciated
- All material provided to teachers – turnkey approach
- Plans for electronic version, seeking funding for programming (but “motion comics” near completion)



The Meeting

MOSO Page 1





MOSO Page 2



PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Module 1 Emotions
 - Session 1- Strange creature: Valuing our differences and similarities
 - Session 2 - A Dinner with dragons: Understanding and expressing our emotions
 - Session 3 - The sculptors: Recognizing other people's feelings





Pressure: Skills for Life
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2023



HAPPY





DISCOURAGED



SURPRISED



PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Module 2 Relationships and Helping Each Other
 - Session 1: Life in the village: Helping each other and coping skills
 - Session 2: Friendships
 - Session 3: Highs and lows: Challenges in friendships



Friendship tree

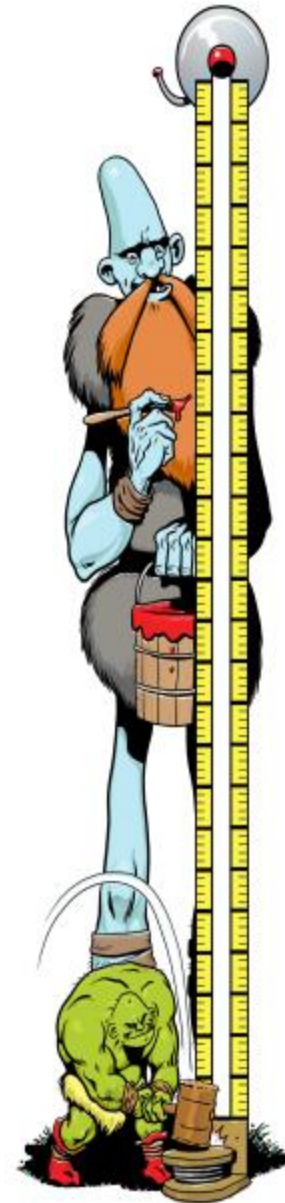


PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Module 3 Difficult situations
 - Session 1 - Things are heating up: Dealing with frustration
 - Session 2 - The heat is on: Dealing with stress
 - Session 3 - Quarrels in the village: Dealing with conflict



Help Thermometer



PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Module 4 Fairness, justice and what is right
 - Session 1 - Not fair: Unfair situations around me
 - Session 2 - Not funny: Dealing with bullying
 - Session 3 - An imperfect world: Dealing with unfair and unjust situations







PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Module 5 Changes and loss
 - Session 1 - Big news: Coping skills for dealing with change
 - Session 2 - The balancing act: Dealing with loss
 - Session 3 - Entire village: Helping each other in difficult situations
- Final session
 - The coping kit - Let's review
- Party session
 - Let's celebrate!



Parent involvement



In order to bridge the gap between home life and school, the programme provides:

- Parent-child home activities
- A parent workshop

Evaluation

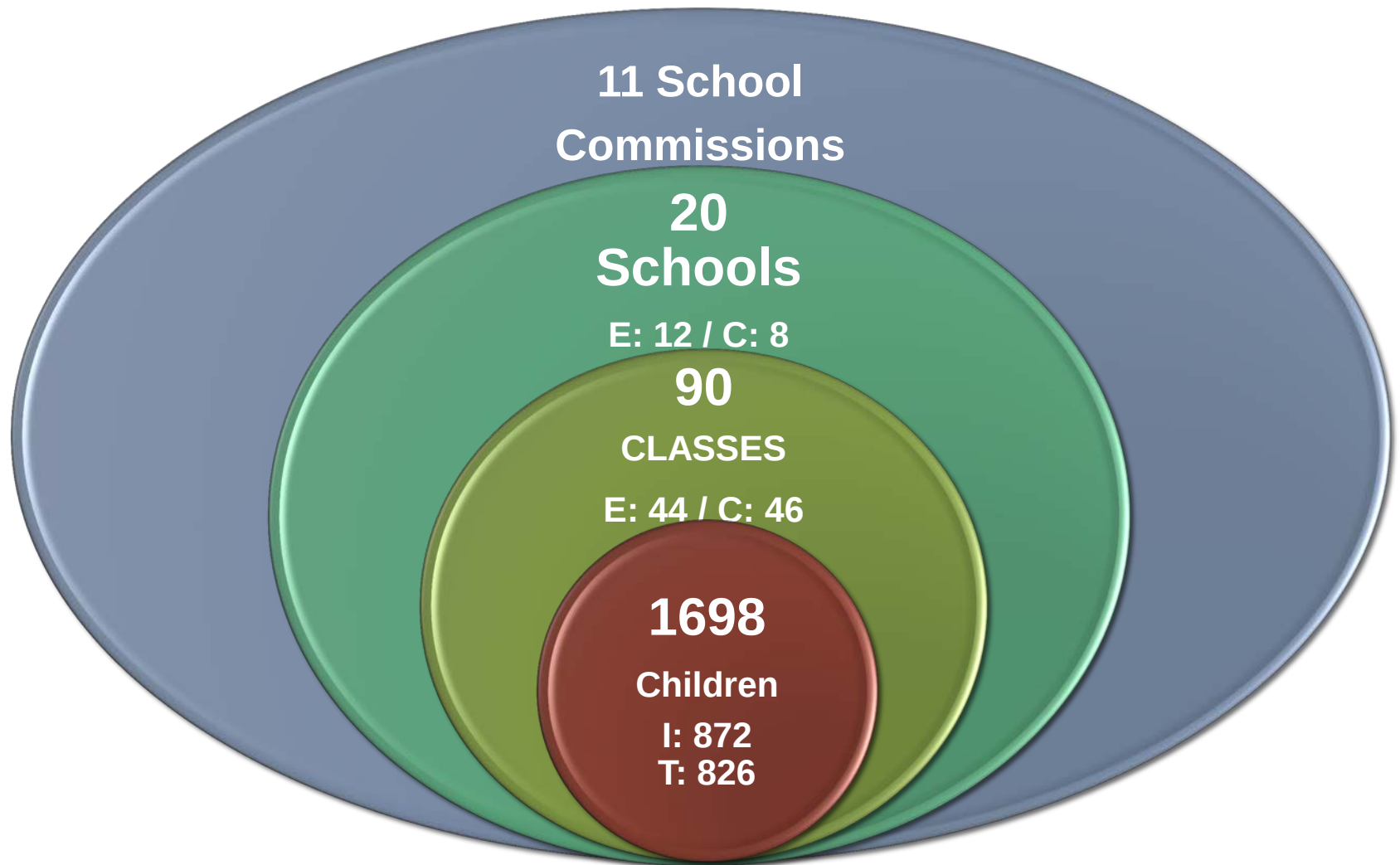
Two Questions

- Was the programme implemented successfully?
- Did it have any effects on the children and, if so, what were those effects?

Design

- Stratified random assignment to experimental and control groups
- Pre-test; post-test; one year follow-up

Participants



Overall conclusions

- The programme is well liked by children, teachers and parents; it can be effectively conducted as planned.
- The programme works best in 4th and 5th Grades (about age 9-11)

Overall conclusions

- Research shows increases in the use of coping skills, increased recognition of feelings (emotional awareness) and improved classroom behaviours in children.
- Teachers report that the programme facilitates their management of the class and they report increases in the use of helpful coping skills in their personal lives.

Challenges

- It will take at least 8 years before we can assess the impact on suicidal behaviours
- Schools are reluctant to spend money and teacher time on « non-academic » activities (budget reductions are rampant)
- Treatment mentality: suicide prevention underfunded, so reluctance to use funds on mental health promotion

Challenges

- 1. It will take at least 8 years before we can assess the impact on suicidal behaviours
- 2. Schools are reluctant to spend money and teacher time on « non-academic » activities (budget reductions are rampant)
- 3. Treatment mentality: suicide prevention is underfunded, so reluctance to use funds on mental health promotion

Solutions:

1. There are enough short-term benefits for children, parents and teachers to justify using the programme, regardless of the future impact on suicide.
2. Evidence that the programme also improves academic behaviours can justify its use in schools.
3. Suicide prevention and MH promotion are complementary actions; one does not exclude the other.

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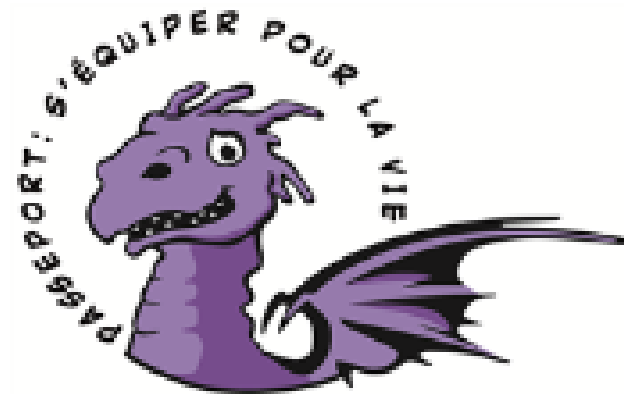
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