



Supporting Transition Resilience of Newcomer Groups (STRONG)

An Overview for Parents and Guardians

Moving to a new country causes many significant changes in the lives of children and youth. They are faced with many changes; a new language, school, friends, culture and communities. Newcomer children and youth have many strengths to help them thrive and succeed as they adjust to their life in Canada.

However, at times, being a newcomer child or youth can be difficult as it takes time to adjust to the transition. All these changes can impact their learning, participation, and experiences at schools. It can also influence their relationships with peers as well as their sense of belonging and overall well-being.

During their transition, children and youth may benefit from additional supports and programs. These programs and supports are intended to build on their existing strengths and improve their well-being as they navigate these new environments and experiences. The STRONG program was created to provide this support.

What is STRONG?

STRONG is a program created to increase the resilience of newcomer children and youth and help them develop skills and strategies to ease their transition in their new surroundings. STRONG promotes their unique strengths, teaches them skills to make positive choices, and promotes a sense of belonging.

What does STRONG teach?

Participants will learn:



How to identify emotions and stress, how they can impact children/youth and how to manage them well



How to use healthy coping skills (i.e. using relaxation activities; using helpful thoughts in stressful situations)



How to build goals, plan and take steps to achieve them



How to understand and solve problems, whether at school or with friends and family

What are the benefits of STRONG?

We expect that participation in STRONG will help children and youth to:

Increase resilience

Learn important coping & problem-solving skills

Build connections and strengthen relationships

"I think the coping skills are the most important. OK, we liked the exercises, we liked the program, but the coping skills is what will stay with you forever. Whenever you are in a stressful situation, you will always remember what to do, and what's the word, and what advice they gave to you on how to handle situations, look at it from a different point of view, and how to make yourself stronger." - Youth participant

What is the structure of STRONG?



The program has 10 sessions. Each session is one hour. Each session focuses on different topics to help participants build new skills.



The group is facilitated by mental health professionals (i.e., social workers or psychologists) and/or facilitators with mental health backgrounds.



Each participant will also have an individual session with the STRONG program facilitator. During this session, the participant identifies their strengths and supports during their migration journey to Canada.

What can parents and guardians do to support a child/youth participating in STRONG?

Parents/guardians can be a source of great support and influence for their children. We recognize this. For this reason, it is important to have you, as the parent/guardian, interested and engaged throughout the STRONG program.

Here are some ways we encourage you to be involved:



Show curiosity about what your child is learning in the STRONG program. For example, after each session, ask them if they are willing to share something new that they learned



Help your child **identify situations where they can practice** some of their STRONG skills. Each week, your child will be introduced to a new relaxation activity. These relaxation activities can help your child to destress during frustrating or upsetting situations.



Invite your child to teach you, and other family members relaxation activities learned from the STRONG program.



Celebrate your child's successes, especially if they demonstrate a new skill at home or outside that they have learned from the STRONG program

- A new **coping skill** (appropriate labelling of emotions) to deal with stressful situations such as studying for or taking a big test
- A new **problem-solving skills** such as brainstorming solutions to resolve conflicts, identifying steps to achieve an important goal



Remain connected with the program facilitator, and **share updates** about your child's successes and challenges for which your child may need additional supports for

STRONG can provide helpful skills and strategies for your child as they adjust to life in Canada. At the same time, we know that programs like STRONG are most effective when important adults can help reinforce the children's learning. We encourage you learn more about what your child is learning in STRONG and help them use their new skills!



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