

New program available to reduce stress among teenagers

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Families with a child completing elementary school this year are now preparing their registration for high school, a transition that is often stressful for children. A new program has demonstrated that it is possible to significantly reduce stress in some of these children thanks to a new educational tool designed under the leadership of Sonia Lupien, Director of the Centre for Studies on Human Stress (CSHS) and professor at the University of Montreal.

A study published in February in *Neuroscience* confirms the benefits of the DeStress for Success Program among youth completing their first year of high school. "In 2000, our team showed that during the transition from elementary to secondary school, many young people produce high [levels of stress](#) hormones. Following this discovery, we wanted to test whether an educational program based on our current knowledge of stress would decrease the level of stress hormones and depressive symptoms in teenagers and help facilitate this transition," said Sonia Lupien, lead author of the study.

The DeStress for Success Program was presented to 504 students aged 11 to 13 years from two private schools in the Montreal area. Students from one school were exposed to the program, while those of the other school served as the [control group](#). Before starting the project, cortisol levels (the stress hormone) in saliva and depressive symptoms were measured to determine whether adolescents beginning secondary school with specific depressive symptoms responded differently to the program. Markers were also measured during and after the program as well as

three months following participation in the project to validate whether improvement was maintained.

The study showed that adolescents starting [secondary school](#) with high levels of anger had, through the program, significantly lowered levels of [stress hormones](#). These adolescents were in fact 2.45 times less likely to suffer from depression compared to the other adolescents. "This study provides the first evidence that a stress education program is effective in reducing stress hormone levels and [depressive symptoms](#) among adolescents making the transition to high school," says Pierrich Plusquellec, co-author of the study. The program also helped identify a certain profile of adolescent responding more to the [educational tool](#).

More than a hundred professionals from all regions of Québec have been trained in the DeStress for Success Program. In addition, the program has been adapted to the clientele of the Centre Jeunesse de Montréal – Institut Universitaire. This adaptation has recently won a prestigious award from the Child Welfare League of Canada.

More information: The study is published in the journal *Neuroscience* under the title The DeStress for Success Program: Effects of a stress education program on cortisol levels and depressive symptomatology in adolescents making the transition to high school:

www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../ii/S0306452213001012

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