

Review

Teaching Primary and Secondary School Students How to Raise an SOS: Three Practical Models for Nationwide Implementation

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Abstract:

Japan's General Principles of Suicide Prevention Policy identify instruction on how to raise an SOS as education designed to equip children and young people "with the skills to cope with stress and the various difficulties they are likely to encounter in society," and regard it as a policy that contributes to suicide countermeasures by increasing the factors that enhance primary and secondary school students' lives. Moreover, in local suicide countermeasure policy packages, it is considered a Basic Package policy that it is desirable for all local governments to invariably implement, and thus it is one that must be given special priority in drawing up local suicide countermeasure plans. After explaining the background to and significance of instruction on how to raise an SOS, this paper presents three innovative models for implementing it and describes the specific nature of their educational content. These are, namely, (1) the Adachi Ward, Tokyo, model as a prototype (the one-time-only visiting lecturer model); (2) the Tokyo Metropolitan Government model aimed at encouraging general implementation (the one-time-only team-teaching model using DVDs); and (3) the Hokkaido University of Education model, which makes use of picture books as part of its Education for Life Project (the one-time-only teacher-directed model using picture books). Finally, this paper introduces efforts to teach children how to equip themselves with the skills to cope with stress and various difficulties (instruction on how to raise an SOS) by citing teachers' reference material from the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education. In these ways, interested parties will come to acquire a broad understanding of the specific nature of "instruction on how to raise an SOS."

Keywords: Instruction on how to raise an SOS, suicide countermeasures, Adachi Ward, Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Hokkaido University of Education

1. Shift from suicide prevention education for primary and secondary school students to instruction on how to raise an SOS

The problem of suicide among primary and secondary school students has aroused strong societal concern because of reports of suicides due to bullying and other factors; thus, the issue had been a focus of attention even before now in suicide countermeasures. After the Basic Law on Suicide Countermeasures came into effect in 2006, however, suicide prevention measures prioritized suicides related to the social and economic issues of the middle-aged and elderly, and provisions for public awareness campaigns, counseling systems, etc., left the strong impression that such measures were intended for the middle-aged.¹ Thereafter, Japan's suicide countermeasures had a definite effect, and since 2010, when a decline in the number of suicide deaths was observed for Japan as a whole, the

importance of measures aimed at young people once again came to be noted. On June 27, 2014, a group of Diet members promoting suicide countermeasures submitted an "urgent request for suicide countermeasures for young people" to the Chief Cabinet Secretary. This request contained a proposal for instruction on how to raise an SOS in the following words: "Teach all children 'coping skills for when they encounter stress or difficulties in life.' Because young people facing a crisis in their lives or living conditions 'don't know how to ask for help' and 'are unaware of the existence of counseling facilities or support policies,' in case after case, they are driven to suicide. In order to prevent such situations from happening, equip all children during the compulsory education process with 'the ability to respond appropriately when they encounter stress or difficulties in their daily life or may do so in the future.' Specifically, each year for all students in every school, teach coping methods 'when in distress,' 'when an unreasonable demand is made in the workplace,' 'when the victim of sexual assault,' as well as 'methods for dealing with someone at risk

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for suicide,’ etc., as ‘pre-prevention.’ In addition, improve and strengthen classes for and the training of teachers.”

On June 2, 2015, the year before the Basic Law on Suicide Countermeasures was revised, a “resolution calling for the further promotion of comprehensive suicide countermeasures” was adopted by the House of Councillors’ Committee on Health, Labour, and Welfare. The substance of the resolution was based on a written proposal submitted to an “open meeting of the House of Councillors seeking the further promotion of comprehensive suicide countermeasures,” which private sector groups took the lead in holding. The resolution proposed that suicide countermeasures be reconfigured as “support for people’s lives” through “practical initiatives at the local level,” and that plans be made to promote them even further. As a specific request item, it included the implementation of “instruction on how to raise an SOS for all primary and secondary school students.”

In the April 2016 revision of the Basic Law on Suicide Countermeasures, the need for students’ “instruction on how to raise an SOS” was incorporated in Article 17 of the revised law. To the statement in that Article about the “Promotion of Education and Awareness-Raising related to Maintaining Mental Health” were added the words, “Schools shall endeavor to offer to their pupils, students, etc., in cooperation with their parents, local communities, and other related parties, education to contribute to fostering awareness of the significance of each of them living a life as a worthwhile human being in a spirit of mutual respect. Education should also be provided so they can acquire skills to cope with difficult or psychologically stressful situations etc., and shall provide other education related to the maintenance of the mental health of their pupils, students, etc.”

In the General Principles of Suicide Prevention Policy adopted by Cabinet decision in July 2017, specific policies were again presented for the nationwide promotion of “teaching primary and secondary school students how to raise an SOS” in order to strengthen suicide countermeasures for students.² First of all, the aim of such instruction was

stated as follows, “In primary and secondary schools, in addition to attempting to give students a real sense of the preciousness of life...promote instruction related to maintaining the mental health of children and young people and to equipping them with the skills to cope with stress and the various difficulties they are likely to encounter in society (instruction on how to raise an SOS). In addition, encourage building an environment conducive to providing instruction that will contribute to suicide countermeasures by increasing the life-enhancing factors among primary and secondary school students.”

Incidentally, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) had previously endeavored to publish and circulate a “Handbook on Introducing Suicide Prevention Education in Schools: What to Tell Children about Suicide Prevention” (2014) and other such works, but there were problems with making them available nationwide. According to a survey conducted in June 2017, the nationwide rate for implementing a suicide prevention education program that explicitly addressed “death” and “suicide” was confined to around 1.8 percent; thus, it is hard to say that sufficient efforts had been made.³ Since this program expressly deals with “death” and “suicide,” it emphasized making efforts in advance to build a consensus among parents and other concerned parties, but judging from the survey results, it is understandable that such a demanding precondition would be incompatible with a school environment. Rather than providing students with instructions on a basic knowledge of depression and suicide with special consideration after gaining parental consent, it would be better to make it a priority to equip students with the skills to raise an SOS to a trusted adult nearby when facing various difficulties or stress. These were the circumstances behind the change in direction. Hard-and-fast parental consent is not deemed necessary when schoolchildren are not being taught special knowledge about suicide. In order to expand “instruction on how to raise an SOS” nationwide, instead of teaching “suicide prevention education” as a special class under the direction of experts for which parental consent is a prerequisite, it is preferable that the goal of such a class be to

enable “students facing difficulties or stress to ask a trusted adult for help” as “comprehensive support for people’s lives.”

Given the abovementioned sequence of events, it is thought to be important to position “instruction on how to raise an SOS” as an ordinary educational activity in schools and to implement it in the form of a class taught by a visiting lecturer such as a public health nurse (innovative precedent set in Tokyo’s Adachi Ward and elsewhere). In addition, instead of a lengthy teaching unit lasting three or four hours, it is desirable to learn ways to speak to a trusted adult and to raise an SOS in a single 45 to 50 minute class. In the Adachi Ward precedent, the format is a one-time-only class given by the district public health nurse, who serves as a visiting lecturer (the one-time-only visiting lecturer model). The lesson has four messages: (1) cultivate self-esteem; (2) find and speak to a trusted adult; (3) if you cannot find an adult you can trust, speak with the local counseling service; and (4) equip yourself with ways of raising an SOS. It is hoped that innovative precedents such as this will serve as useful references in promoting initiatives tailored to actual local circumstances.

Figure 1 illustrates these four key messages.



Figure 1. The 4 Key Terms for Instruction on How to Raise an SOS

A “Notification on promoting instruction on how schoolchildren can equip themselves with ways of coping with difficult situations or circumstances when they are experiencing a strong mental burden, etc., with the aim of preventing suicides among them” (January 23, 2018; 29 Elementary and Secondary

Education Bureau Notification No. 38, Social Welfare and War Victims’ Relief Bureau General Affairs Division Notification 0123 No. 1) was sent out to the heads of the prefectural Boards of Education and others under the joint signatures of the Head of the Student Affairs Division in MEXT’s Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau and the Counsellor of the Minister’s Secretariat of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (responsible for suicide countermeasures). The following five items are its key points:

1. When teaching ways to raise an SOS, in addition to the team-teaching format consisting of classroom teachers used thus far, it is also effective to involve public health nurses, social workers, district welfare commissioners, and others.
2. When implementing instruction on how to raise an SOS, it is desirable to make counseling services such as the “24-hour SOS Helpline” and “Childline” widely known.
3. In implementing instruction on how to raise an SOS, given the importance of tailoring the contents to a schoolchild’s stage of development, it is believed that educational materials and teaching methods should be devised that correspond to actual circumstances at each school.
4. It is thought to be desirable to teach schoolchildren not only how to raise an SOS but also how to listen to one (how to respond to an SOS) and to ask private sector groups and others that carry out telephone counseling programs for their cooperation.
5. Because instruction on how to raise an SOS can fall under the categories of “public awareness programs,” “programs for young people at risk,” and “specialized programs focusing on local characteristics” as defined in the “Guidelines for Implementing Programs to Strengthen Local Suicide Countermeasures,” plan to make these programs known to the municipalities so that they can make active use of them.

Finally, a comment is needed on the term “suicide prevention.” As the name of the law passed in 2006 indicates – the Basic Law on Suicide Countermeasures – a social consensus has been reached that the word “prevention” should not be expressly stated in Japan’s anti-suicide measures.

Since “prevention” is a word used primarily in the field of medicine and means devising medical approaches to ward off disease, the term “suicide prevention” contains the tacit understanding that the model being used for suicide measures is a medical one. Given the background factor that since the late twentieth century, doctors and public health specialists have taken the lead in developing the world’s anti-suicide policies, it has come to be accepted as only natural to use a medical model in suicide countermeasures as well.

Although the medical model has been somewhat effective, its many limitations have also been pointed out. In terms of policy, these limitations include the fact: that measures for family survivors of a suicide and other bereaved persons are incompatible with a medical model; that, when the word “prevention” is explicitly stated, some of the bereaved have expressed the opinion that it made them feel uncomfortable for “not having been able to prevent the self-inflicted death”; and that, because of a disease-centered clinical medicine approach, there was a tendency to look for the causes of suicide in illnesses such as depression and not give sufficient consideration to the socio-economic factors that underlay the illness. For that reason, instead of a medical model of “prevention,” emphasis came to be given to the view that suicide countermeasures should be understood in a multilayered fashion as a comprehensive model for people’s lives that fully incorporates socio-economic and other factors.⁴ In

the health care field as well, the prevailing view since the mid-1980s has been health promotion, which transcends the limitations of the preventive medicine approach as a medical model (primary, secondary and tertiary prevention). By perceiving the social determinants of health multidimensionally, the idea has been for people to achieve “well-being” by keeping in mind a multitiered structure consisting of three levels: personal support, regional cooperation and the social system as a model for living that transcends the medical model. That is the background behind the paradigm shift that was made from “suicide prevention” to “suicide countermeasures,” and from a suicide countermeasure model based on the preventive medicine model of “prevention, intervention and postvention,” to a comprehensive support model known as the Three-Level Model of Interconnecting Suicide Countermeasures.

Figure 2 applies this three-level model, as described in the General Principles of Suicide Prevention Policy, to suicide countermeasures for primary and secondary school students. One would also do well to think of the preventive medicine model of “prevention, intervention and postvention” as being included in the personal support stage of the three-level model; needless to say, the fact remains unchanged that it is important to proceed with these ideas in mind when actually dealing with suicide countermeasures.

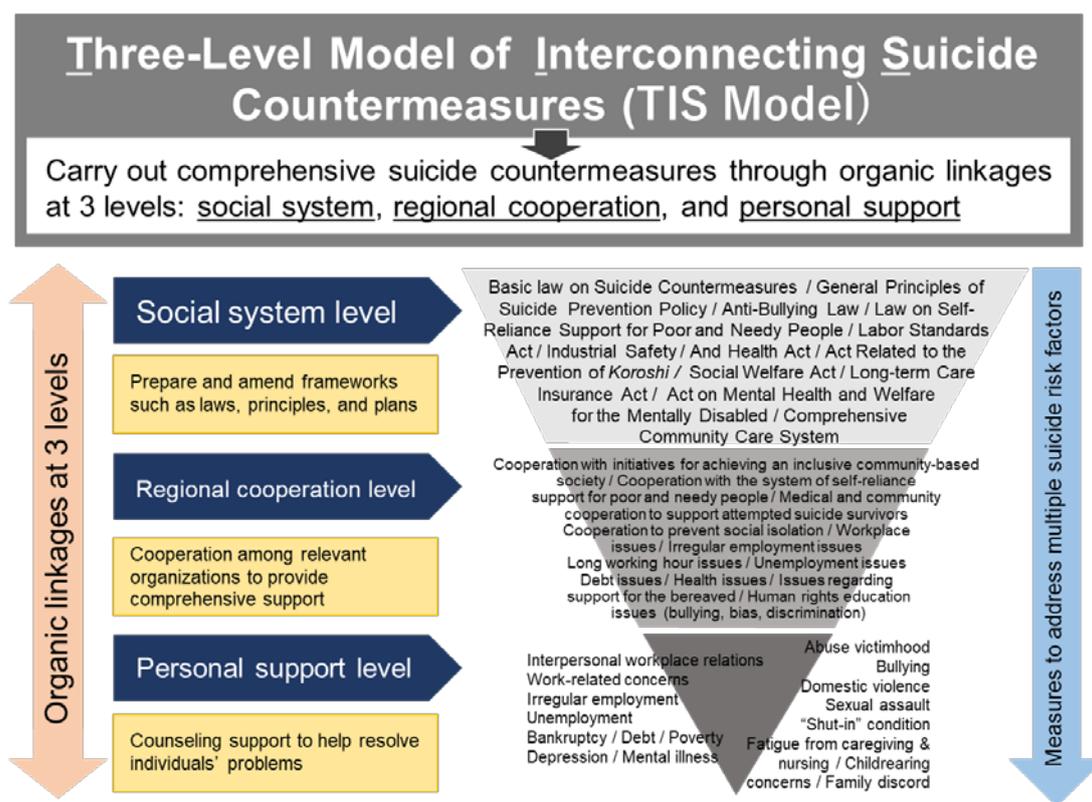


Figure 2. Three-Level Model of Interconnecting Suicide Countermeasures (TIS model): Suicide countermeasures for primary and secondary school children

2. Teaching primary and secondary school students how to raise an SOS: Three practical models

Because instruction on how to raise an SOS as described in the General Principles of Suicide Prevention Policy is conceptually different from the existing suicide prevention education, there are not many model programs to refer to. This paper introduces three practical models that the Japan Support Center for Suicide Countermeasures has been involved in.¹ As a model program to serve as a prototype, we can cite instruction on how to raise an SOS that has been in use since fiscal year 2009 in Adachi Ward, Tokyo; this is a "one-time-only visiting lecturer model," in which the class is taught by the public health nurse, who serves as a visiting lecturer. Subsequently, based on this model, the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education has developed an educational model capable of spreading this course to all public elementary, junior and senior high schools as well as special needs education schools in Tokyo with the aim of rapidly expanding the general implementation of "instruction on how to raise an SOS" (February 2018). In addition to compiling the course

content on DVDs and having teachers promote it, it is recommended that the course be given in a team-teaching format in which a visiting lecturer such as a public health nurse as well as the school nurse, school counselor, etc., are involved. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government's educational guidance plan makes it possible for teachers to be able to implement the course in all types of schools without receiving any special training. Finally, there is the practical model devised by the Hokkaido University of Education; it was developed as a priority project in the Education for Life Project that the University has been advocating. Based on its stress management courses and other programs that the University has conducted for a long time, in addition to incorporating the Adachi Ward model, it makes use of picture books as teaching materials, provides a platform for "shared experiences" to raise self-esteem and a platform for teaching ways to raise an SOS, and has developed an educational model in which the lesson can be carried out in a single class period (45 to 50 minutes).

These three models all contain the core concepts for “instruction on how to raise an SOS” that the General Principles assume: “equipping yourself with ways of raising an SOS,” “finding and speaking to a trusted adult,” and “if you cannot find an adult you can trust, speak with the local counseling service”; they also fulfill the condition of giving a one-time-only course in a single class period (45 to 50 minutes). Although there are variations in who gives the course – whether the persons in charge is/are a visiting lecturer (public health nurse), team teaching (classroom teacher, public health nurse, school nurse, school counselor, etc.) or a classroom teacher – the local public health nurse or other outsider always takes part as a visiting lecturer. Whoever is chosen to teach the class is thought to be fine as long as it is made in keeping with the actual conditions in the school and the community. At the present time, these three models can be strongly recommended as practical models for “instruction on how to raise an SOS.”

Table 1. Three practical models for teaching primary and secondary school students how to raise an SOS

<p>(1) The Adachi Ward, Tokyo, model as a prototype</p>
<p>(one-time-only visiting lecturer model)</p>
<p>Model in which the school and community cooperate, and a public health nurse conducts the class.</p>
<p>(2) The Tokyo Metropolitan Government model aimed at encouraging general implementation</p>
<p>(one-time-only team-teaching model using DVDs)</p>
<p>Model in which the classroom teacher in cooperation with the school nurse, school counselor, a public health nurse, etc., conducts the class using team teaching.</p>
<p>(3) The Hokkaido University of Education model, which makes use of picture books as part of its Education for Life Project</p>
<p>(one-time-only teacher-directed model using picture books)</p>

A teacher-directed model in which the preciousness of life and the importance of shared experience is taught using picture books. A visiting lecturer such as the public health nurse, etc., always participates.

In order to expand instruction on how to raise an SOS to primary and secondary school students nationwide, the lesson should not be regarded as a special program for imparting knowledge about suicide prevention (a special course under the direction of experts that presupposes parental consent), but rather as a school educational activity with the aim of enabling students “to ask a trusted adult for help when they are encountering difficulties or stress” as “comprehensive support for life,” and carried out in the form of class taught by a public health nurse or other visiting lecturer.

The educational model in effect in Tokyo’s Adachi Ward is a useful precedent for expanding such instruction to all communities. Specifically, the format is a one-time-only class given by the district public health nurse, who serves as a visiting lecturer (the one-time-only visiting lecturer model). The four messages included in the Adachi Ward class are: (1) cultivate self-esteem; (2) find and speak to a trusted adult; (3) if you cannot find an adult you can trust, speak with the local counseling service; and (4) equip yourself with ways to raise an SOS. It is hoped that municipalities will refer to innovative precedents such as this and promote initiatives tailored to their own actual circumstances.

(1) The Adachi Ward, Tokyo, model as a prototype (one-time-only visiting lecturer model)
 Adachi Ward, in cooperation with the Ward’s Board of Education, has been providing instruction on how to raise an SOS for elementary and junior high school students since FY2014. A number of underlying factors led up to beginning this innovative effort. Among them first of all were the facts: that at the time the plan was being formulated, the suicide rate in Adachi Ward was relatively high compared to the rest of Tokyo; that since 2009 it has pioneered a program entitled “Let’s be kind to ourselves,” a special class set up primarily by the Health and Sanitation Office; and that in February 2014, it drew up the Adachi Ward’s Basic Policy for Measures to Prevent

Bullying and recognized the importance of suicide prevention education that worked in tandem with anti-bullying measures. When creating such programs, the Adachi Ward Health and Sanitation Office planned them as part of its suicide countermeasures for young people and strengthened cooperation with the Board of Education and the schools with the aim not only of supporting children and their families but also of connecting them with mental health promotion for children centered on the school nurse.

In Adachi Ward, teaching students how to raise an SOS is regarded as a special class on the one-time-only visiting lecturer model. As a preliminary preparatory meeting, the contact person on the school side first makes arrangements with the visiting lecturer in charge (public health nurse). The goal set for the class is to convey to schoolchildren two simple messages “let’s be kind to ourselves” and “let’s speak to a trusted adult,” while avoiding elements that emphasize suicide prevention such as teaching the facts of suicide, knowing how to prevent it, or understanding the risk factors for it. Most important of all, it is not necessary to ask for prior consent from parents when giving the class. However, consideration is also given, within normal limits, to children bereaved. There is no need for the class to be taught by someone who has special knowledge of suicide prevention or psychiatric medicine (special visiting lecturer, clinical psychologist, etc.), as in the case of suicide prevention education intended for primary and secondary school students. The distinctive feature of this class, and also its main advantage, lies in the fact that the district public health nurse who learned skills through ordinary training teaches the class as a visiting lecturer. A practical example of such a class is given below.

Lesson contents

The lesson period lasts 45 to 50 minutes. A special lecturer, the district public health nurse, teaches the class using Power Point and, at the end of the session, uses a DVD to view the campaign song for the Cabinet Office’s Supporting Life (suicide countermeasure) Project.⁵

[Introduction] First, tell the children, “some of you might not have confidence in yourselves because you’ve grown up in a poor family,” “bad things may have happened to you while you were growing up in the neighborhood where you were born,” “but all of you, each and every one, from the time you were a baby right up to the present day is a very precious person.”

[Development] Teach them coping mechanisms for when they are upset. After introducing specific methods such as deep breaths, exercise, and holding on to a piece of ice, tell them, “What I recommend most is that you speak to a trusted adult.” Suggest that they talk to at least three adults before finding one they can trust. Communicate to them that a trusted adult is someone who will hear what you have to say without criticizing or contradicting you and will listen carefully to your concerns and difficulties. If they can’t find a trusted adult, teach them that it’s OK to get in touch with the local counseling services. The main purpose of the course is to make the students realize that the district public health nurse, who is teaching the class right in front of them, is one of the adults in their community whom they can trust. In addition, teach specific ways of dealing with a friend who seems to be going through a rough time or is being bullied, or if you are being bullied. Tell them, “There are adults out there that you can trust, and it’s all right to ask them for help when things are difficult or painful. If you don’t have anyone you can confide in, one solution is to telephone a counseling center; there is always a place where you can talk about emotional pain that you can’t deal with by yourself. Be kind to yourself, be kind to others, be kind to everyone,” and introduce them to the nearest counseling facilities. Then hand out cards, etc., with a list of the local counseling services.

[Conclusion] In the second half of the class, read out loud the letter “To you who always come in last in a footrace” or “To you who feels distressed at arguments between your parents.” Finally, play the DVD “Akari” (Light) by the J-POP group *Wakaba*. This DVD is the campaign song for the Cabinet Office’s Supporting Life (suicide prevention) Project, and the video that accompanies the song contains a powerful message.

(2) The Tokyo Metropolitan Government model aimed at encouraging general implementation (one-time-only team-teaching model using DVDs)

In order to expand instruction for primary and secondary school students on how to raise an SOS, the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, using the Adachi Ward precedent as a reference, set up a Committee for the Promotion of Suicide Prevention Education to prepare teaching material for such a course that classroom teachers would implement in a team-teaching format; in February 2018, that teaching material, including a DVD, was created and distributed to public schools in Tokyo.⁶ Based on the Adachi Ward initiative, it too is a one-time-only class, but its distinctive feature is that it is taught by the team-teaching method with the team consisting of the classroom teacher, the school nurse, the district public health nurse, etc. (the participation of the public health nurse is recommended). In addition, it is recommended that the class makes use of group work and watches a DVD, and the aim is to teach it to all students in elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, and special needs education schools.

The aim of instruction consists of three points: namely, to (1) see to it that children are able to understand ways of coping with stress and can initiate the appropriate help-seeking behavior (raise an SOS to a trusted adult nearby) to deal with a dangerous situation that is now occurring or that may occur in future; (2) make sure that an adult close to them is able to respond to the situation and provide them with support; and (3) when a friend or someone else close by is facing an emotional crisis, make sure that students are able to learn ways of listening (responding to an SOS) so they can grasp the other person's feelings and try to understand his or her thoughts and actions.

In terms of the implementation method, the basic point is to have the classroom teacher who is closest to the children be in charge of teaching the lesson, but it is also regarded as desirable to have other teachers who teach the same grade, the school nurse, the school counselor, etc., provide instruction in the form of team teaching. Also, in order to directly communicate the message to the children that there are number of people in the community to whom they

can turn for advice, it is thought to be effective to have welfare-related departments of the local government coordinate with the school and provide guidance through the participation of the local public health nurse, etc.

When it comes to providing guidance and conducting a class on how to raise an SOS, appropriate use should be made of the DVD teaching material (visuals, educational guidance plan, worksheets, application guide, etc.) that the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education prepared in February 2018. Moreover, the DVD teaching material corresponds to the students' stage of development, and there are three levels to choose from, an elementary/junior high/high school edition. It is regarded as necessary, through this class, to make children aware once again of the 24-hour Children's SOS Hotline operated by the Tokyo Metropolitan Education Consultation Center and the telephone numbers, etc., of the local government's counseling services, etc.

The lesson plan for the junior high school edition is given below. In addition, Figure 3 contains excerpts from the "Teaching Material for Promoting Instruction on How to Raise an SOS: Application Guide."

Lesson contents

1. Subject matter: "Be kind to yourself: Coping with stress"
2. Aim: To realize that you are a precious and irreplaceable human being; become aware of various methods for coping with stress; and be able to come up with help-seeking behaviors to deal with a dangerous situation that is presently occurring or that may occur in future.

[Introduction]

1. Get to know the subject matter.

[Development]

2. Watch a DVD (first half).
 - (1) Realize that every single person is a precious human being.
 - (2) Have a general awareness of stress.
3. Discuss with one another what to do to cope when you are going through a hard time.

Question 1: When you are going through a hard time, what do you do to feel better?

Question 2: If a friend seems to be going through a hard time, what would you do to help him or her feel better?

- Write in your worksheet.
- In a group discuss different coping methods.
- Write other people's ways of coping in your worksheet and broaden your range of coping methods.

4. Watch a DVD (second half).

Think about types of help-seeking behavior to deal with a dangerous situation (major stress).

[Summary]

5. Listen to what your teacher, school counselor, public health nurse, etc., has to say.
6. Think back over the class period and write your comments about the lesson in your worksheet.

Points to keep in mind, etc., when teaching

- Do not use suicide-related jargon.
- Because there may be students who might recall painful past events of their own while watching the video, it is desirable to use team teaching so that there will be several teachers observing the students' behavior.
- It is important for the students to realize that friends other than themselves also may go through hard times. It is not necessary for them

to tell the whole class or to summarize their coping methods, etc.

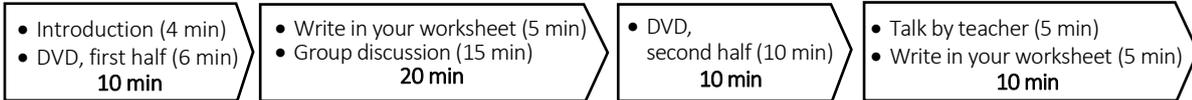
- Please refer to the reference material (CD) because it contains "examples of words to use when requesting advice or responding to such a request, etc." It is better to say, "I want to help you" or something to that effect rather than "do your best" or "don't give up."
- Pass out materials so that students can learn the location of counseling facilities.
- It would be good to have someone like the school nurse or school counselor talk about ways of using counseling facilities, etc.
- When the public health nurse or other visiting lecturer takes part, have that person tell the students directly that they can come to him or her for advice.
- Because a teacher will respond sympathetically when students ask for advice, communicate the message that you want them to tell you about it when they are going through a difficult time and not to suffer alone.

A. Subject matter: “Be kind to yourself: Coping with stress”

B. Aims:

To realize that you are a precious and irreplaceable human being, become aware of various methods for coping with stress; and be able to come up with help-seeking behaviors to deal with a dangerous situation that is presently occurring or that may occur in future.

C. Allocation of class time.



Here we are assuming that the lesson is to be given as a class activity with this as its subject matter.

D. Development of the class period

	Learning activities/content	Points to keep in mind, etc., while teaching
Introduction (4)	1. Get to know the subject matter. (Be kind to yourself: Coping with stress)	<input type="checkbox"/> The teacher writes the subject matter of the class on the blackboard and explains how the lesson period will proceed. <div style="border: 1px dashed red; padding: 2px;">Does not use suicide-related terms.</div>
Development (36)	2. Watch a DVD (first half) (1) Have each student realize he or she is a precious human being. (2) Have a general awareness of stress.	<input type="checkbox"/> Make use of a large-screen television, projector, etc. to play the DVD (first half). <div style="border: 1px dashed red; padding: 2px;">There may be students who might recall painful events in their past while watching the DVD. It is desirable to use team teaching so that there are several teachers, etc., observing the students' behavior.</div>
	3. Discuss with one another what to do to cope when you are going through a hard time.	
	Question 1 When you are going through a hard time, what do you do to feel better?	
	Question 2 If a friend seems to be going through a hard time, what would you do to help him or her feel better?	
Development (36)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Write in your worksheet. o In a group, discuss different ways of coping. o Write other people's ways of coping in your worksheet and broaden your range of coping methods. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass out worksheets. <input type="checkbox"/> The teacher asks questions and provides instructions on activities. <div style="border: 1px dashed red; padding: 2px;">It is important for students to realize that friends other than themselves also may go through hard times. It is not necessary for them to tell the whole class or to summarize their coping methods, etc.</div>
	4. Watch the DVD (second half). (1) Think about types of help-seeking behaviors in order to deal with a dangerous situation (major stress).	<input type="checkbox"/> Play the DVD (second half) <div style="border: 1px dashed red; padding: 2px;">Please refer to the reference materials (CD) because it contains "examples of words to use when requesting advise or responding to such a request, etc." It is better to say "I want to help you" rather than "do your best" or "don't give up."</div>
Summary (10)	5. Listen to what your teacher, school counselor, public health nurse, etc., has to say. 6. Think back over the class period and write your comments about the lesson in your worksheet.	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass out materials so that students can learn the location of counseling facilities. <input type="checkbox"/> It would be good to have someone like the school nurse or school counselor talk about ways of using counseling facilities. <input type="checkbox"/> When the public health nurse or other visiting lecturer takes part, have that person tell the students directly that they can come to him or her for advice. <input type="checkbox"/> Because a teacher will respond sympathetically when students ask for advice, communicate the message that you want them to tell you about it when they are going through a difficult time and not to suffer alone.

Figure 3. From “Teaching Material for Promoting Instruction on How to Raise an SOS: Application Guide” (Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education)

(3) Hokkaido University of Education model, which makes use of picture books as part of its Education for Life Project (one-time-only teacher-directed model using picture books)

Since FY2016, the University's Graduate School of Education has led the way in developing methods for "teaching primary and secondary school students how to raise an SOS."⁷ This program was carried out as part of two studies funded by a Health and Labour Sciences Research Grant, "Study to develop new policies for comprehensive suicide countermeasures using an interdisciplinary and international approach" (chief researcher, Yutaka Motohashi, FY2014–2016) and "Study of policies for formulating and developing a comprehensive support model to promote suicide countermeasures tailored to actual local circumstances" (chief researcher, Yutaka Motohashi, FY 2017–). Thus, in addition to developing methods for "teaching primary and secondary school students how to raise an SOS," it has as its aim the formation of a human resource training system whereby all teachers can understand the basics of suicide countermeasures by incorporating a course on such measures into the regular graduate school of education curriculum and into the classes given at the time teachers renew their licenses.

For its practical model the University used as reference the course, etc., for "teaching primary and secondary school students how to raise an SOS" in Adachi Ward, Tokyo, and came to develop teaching methods and educational guidance plans that take into consideration the contributions of classroom teachers and keep them motivated. Its Graduate School of Education launched the "Education for Life Project" and has drawn up and is comprehensively promoting a six-pillar model for learning how to protect one's life. The distinctive feature of this project is that it regards "instruction on how to raise an SOS" as an urgent task for suicide countermeasures and implements it accordingly. Furthermore, the results of the University's research and practical activities are published on its website. The University has also created a page entitled "Education for Life: Yes/No Study Cards" on its website, which makes it possible to learn about Education for Life and instruction on how to raise an SOS on the Internet.

For its "Education for Life Project," the University has set up bookshelves and filled them with picture books about life. Even in "teaching primary and secondary school students how to raise an SOS," in order to arouse the students' interest, the contents of picture books are introduced in the lesson's introductory section to make the students think about topics like the preciousness of life, and the lesson includes techniques for getting them to write down their impressions. In planning the flow of the class, as in the case of the Adachi Ward and Tokyo Metropolitan Government models, lesson development is based on the central tenets of STARS (cultivating self-esteem, raising an SOS to a trusted adult, talking to the local counseling service, equipping yourself with ways of raising an SOS).

A guidance plan for Hokkaido University of Education's lesson on how to raise an SOS is given in Figure 4.

3. Efforts to teach students how to equip themselves with methods to deal with stress and various difficulties (instruction on how to raise an SOS): from the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education's teaching material

The Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education's "Teaching Material for Promoting Instruction on How to Raise an SOS (Application Guide)," published in February 2018, provides an easy to understand description of the course and its relation to Japan's curriculum guidelines (the Course of Study). This makes it extremely useful for the future implementation of "instruction on how to raise an SOS" on a practical level in schools throughout Japan. For that reason we would like to provide information to the reader by quoting the following.⁶

"The aim of instruction on how to raise an SOS is to see to it that children are able to initiate the appropriate help-seeking behavior (raise an SOS to a trusted adult nearby) in order to deal with a dangerous situation that is currently occurring or that may occur in future, and to see to it that the adult close by is able to respond to the SOS and provide support.

The government's curriculum guidelines indicate that coping with anxiety, problems, or stress is the kind of

content that should be taught in physical education or health and physical education classes from the upper grades of elementary school to the high school level.

In addition to enabling children to understand methods for coping with stress in its health class or other classes, every school needs to equip them with activities that will help them deal with the various issues they face, and with help-seeking behaviors through hands-on activities, etc., aimed at trying to solve problems in their daily lives.

Moreover, through instruction on how to raise an SOS,

it is also important to teach children how to relate to a friend who is experiencing an emotional crisis. Teach students not only how to raise an SOS, but also how to react to that friend's emotions and listen to and try and understand his or her thoughts and actions (how to respond to an SOS).

Based on the curriculum guidelines, relevant contents of instruction on maintaining one's mental health should be taught in courses on physical education and health and physical education, and in extra-curricular activities.”

Guidance plan for Hokkaido University of Education, Graduate School of Education's "Let's learn how to raise an SOS"

"Education for Life Project" team

Intended participants: students in the upper grades of elementary school to high school

Objectives:

- Learn ways of sending an SOS to a trusted adult when you are troubled or are going through a difficult time.
- Learn how to cultivate self-esteem, the belief that you are important, by sharing your experiences*¹ with family, friends and people around you.

Preparations: personal computer, projector, DVD of "The House of Small Cubes," printed synopsis of the lesson (slide presentation)

Lesson development (50-minute example)

	Organization of contents	Lesson contents	References
Introduction	A New Year's card that is looked forward to (5 min)	<p>Talk by teacher (5 min)</p> <p>Every year, teacher T looks forward to receiving a certain New Year's card. When he was the vice-principal at a junior high school in Sapporo eleven years ago, female student A, who was doing the morning exercises, suddenly collapsed. Because the school at the time was equipped with an AED defibrillator, the teachers who had received lifesaving training responded immediately; the girl was taken to the hospital and her life was saved. The doctors praised the teachers and said that their skill and knowledge of lifesaving techniques had saved the girl's life. Later, A had an organ transplant in the United States and regained her health. The New Year's card was from A's family, and this year the attached note said, "This is her first year as an adult."</p> <p>Communicate the message that this story symbolizes the importance of acquiring the "knowledge and skill to save another person's life." Also tell them that another important thing is having the "knowledge and skill to protect our own life," and today we are learning "how to raise an SOS" as a way of doing so.</p>	<p>Distribute printouts of the lesson.</p> <p>In the introductory speech, talk about the importance of the "knowledge and skill to save another person's life" as well as the importance of the "knowledge and skill to protect our own life." It is also all right to use other materials.</p>
Development	<p>Development 1</p> <p>Watch the DVD, "The House of Small Cubes"*² (25 min)</p>	<p>When having students watch only part of "The House of Small Cubes"</p> <p>(1) Summarize the first half of the story by including still pictures of scenes from it in a slide presentation. Summary (2 min)</p> <p>A city that is sinking as the sea level rises. But the hero, an old man living alone, is committed to the land and continues to live there by stacking one house on top of another. Only the top floor of his house is above sea level. One day he dropped his pipe in a hole in the floor, and it sank into the sea.</p> <p>(2) Watch the DVD (8 min) *Afterwards tell the students to write down their comments. (Summary of the viewing contents)</p> <p>The old man puts on a diving suit and dives into the sunken house below sea level to fetch his pipe. Then he remembers the past. Scenes of his wife who died three years earlier, of him and his wife playing with their child, of telling his wife he loves her, of talking with the wife of a childhood friend. As he dives deeper, he relives memories that go further and further back into the past. At the end of the story, the old man has returned to the topmost house and places a photograph of his dead wife on the table. The scene ends as he pours wine into two glasses lined up side by side with a peaceful expression on his face.</p>	<p>The film lasts 24 minutes. If it is shortened due to time constraints, give an outline of the story up to the scene where the old man goes to pick up the pipe he has dropped and have them watch the scenes after that.</p> <p>After watching the film, have them write down a number of comments in the lesson printout.</p> <p>Try to have discussions in an empathetic and interactive way.</p>

Figure 4-1. Guidance plan for Hokkaido University of Education's lesson on how to raise an SOS (Hokkaido University of Education, Graduate School of Education)

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Development</p>		<p>(3)Tell the students to write down their comments after viewing the DVD and read them out loud (13 min). After having the students write down their comments, have them talk about them. The teacher responds sympathetically to what they say.</p> <p>(4)Talk by the teacher about “shared experiences” (2 min) “Shared experiences” are events and feelings that you share with family and friends; they are said to strengthen feelings of self-esteem and self-affirmation that you are an irreplaceable human being. Because the hero of the story recalled the experiences he shared with his dead wife and family, he regained his joy in living and his purpose in life. Make an appeal to the students to treasure the experiences they share with family and friends.</p>	<p>Explain “shared experiences” and get them to understand the importance of raising feelings of self-esteem.</p>
	<p>Development 2</p> <p>How to raise an SOS (15 min)</p>	<p>How to raise an SOS (15 min)</p> <p>(1)Everyone has times when they feel bad – a case study (5 min) “It’s hard to wake up in the morning; I’m always tired,” “Lot of things are going wrong; it’s no fun,” “I’ve lost confidence,” etc. – Tell the students that everyone has times when they feel bad. If ordinary stress conditions are 50, and they rise to 58 points when “you have a test,” ask the students what it would be if “you had an argument with a friend,” you were taking a “college entrance exam,” you were “broken-hearted,” or “seriously injured or sick”? After having them make their predictions, tell them the answers are “59,” “65,” “68,” and “69” points, respectively, and tell them that everyone has times when they “feel bad” in their daily life.</p> <p>(2)Strategies for coping when you’re feeling bad (10 min)</p> <p>1)“Taking deep breaths,” “exercising” or “doing something you enjoy” Tell them that moving their bodies and being absorbed in something they like to do are also ways of relieving stress.</p> <p>2)Sending an SOS Tell them that the best method and important thing is to “send an SOS” and “tell a person you can trust or someone you’re close to” and not keep it to yourself or brood over it or be distressed by it. Convey the importance of confiding in parents, teachers, the school counselor, friends or a trusted adult nearby. Tell them they can also get counseling at public facilities over the telephone or through social networking services and show them a list of counseling services. Also mention situations in which they might be asked for advice; tell them that it is essential to respond, first, by listening carefully to what the other person has to say, sympathizing with that person’s feelings, worrying about them, and then be sure to refer them to the appropriate counseling services. In particular, when it is difficult for them to talk to a teacher or parent, tell them there is a public health nurse nearby.</p>	<p>Emphasize that everyone has times when they feel bad</p> <p>Introduce a case study. If there is not enough time, omit the question.</p> <p>Stress management</p> <p>Do not suffer alone; speak to a trusted person. Urge them to seek counseling at a public facility they can trust, especially their nearby public health nurse.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Conclusion</p>	<p>Summing up what has been learned</p> <p>(5 min)</p>	<p>Summing up what has been learned (5 min) On the review card at the end of the lesson printout, have the students write a summary of the lesson. *If there is time, have someone read their summary.</p>	<p>Confirmation of what has been learned</p>

Figure 4-2. Guidance plan for Hokkaido University of Education’s lesson on how to raise an SOS (Hokkaido University of Education, Graduate School of Education)

*1 Shared experiences are what form identity through experiences engaged in with other people that produce the same positive feelings.

*2 Director Kunio Kato’s animated short film (2008) received an Academy Award in 2009. When showing this film, care needs to be taken from the standpoint of “reminders of tsunami” and “smoking and second-hand smoke.” If these points are matters of concern, another method is to use as a substitute the DVD “The Elephant’s Back,” which is recorded on “The Day I Depart – complete version” (JULEPS, UNIVERSAL J).

Additional remarks:

There are no conflicts of interest that should be disclosed.

Received July 20, 2018

Accepted August 28, 2018

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