



# I COPE

*Finding Your Direction...*

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Psychological Services Center

Children face many challenges during the school years. These stresses can come in the form of changing classes for the first time or difficulties with homework, peer-relationships, and family relationships. It is sometimes difficult for kids to know how to handle these situations, which can sometimes make the problem worse. The I COPE program helps children identify the areas in their lives that are stressful. The children learn skills that they can use to combat the stress and negative emotions that they may experience in their everyday life. This group includes nine sessions and is held during the school day. I COPE groups consists of six to eight students. The group leaders create a fun and interesting environment to learn about problem-solving. There are worksheets, role-playing, games, and other creative activities. All of these activities help children to learn more about how they are feeling and how to handle emotions. Life is full of stressful situations, and learning how to handle them early on can be very beneficial.

We asked over 600 kids in elementary schools across central Illinois about what type of stressful experiences they had at school. These are the "Top 10 Hassles" that they reported:

1. School has too many rules
2. Too much homework
3. Physical changes
4. Getting up for school in the morning
5. Cafeteria food
6. School is large and crowded
7. Not enough time between classes
8. Friends from previous year are at different schools
9. Looking younger or older than others in your grade
10. Teachers expect too much



# Commonly asked questions concerning I COPE...

*What does I COPE stand for?*

I COPE stands for **I Can Overcome Problems Effectively** and is a program sponsored by the University of Illinois Psychological Services Center.

*What does the program help kids with?*

This program was designed to help children learn strategies to deal with stress more effectively.

*What are the goals of I COPE?*

- To assist children in developing problem-solving and communication skills and in developing their ability to identify their needs, feelings, and problems.
- To alleviate depressive symptoms by helping children improve their ability to cope with daily stressors.

*What are some of the topics discussed in I COPE?*

- Recognizing problems
- Thinking about alternative solutions
- Learning how to make a decision
- Evaluating how you feel about the decision

*What are some of the exercises done in I COPE?*

- Role-playing
- Positive thinking
- Relaxation
- Positive feedback

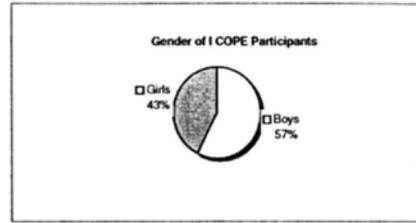
## What you can do if you get stressed out...

- \*Do something fun
- \*Relax
- \*Meditate
- \*Close your eyes and think about something that makes you happy
- \*Think about ways to deal with the problem
- \*Do something to take your mind off your trouble
- \*Think positive - two positive thoughts for every negative one
- \*Let someone know how you are feeling
- \*Express how you are feeling in a journal, poetry, painting, or a story

# I CAN OVERCOME PROBLEMS EFFECTIVELY

## Children's feelings about I COPE

There were a variety of activities that were taught in each I COPE group to help kids relieve stress. The most popular activities included relaxation exercises, planning fun activities, and setting personal goals.



## Results of I COPE

In addition to being an enjoyable experience, the I COPE program also lowered the level of depression of the participating children. The greatest benefits were derived by children who had reported high levels of depression prior to the start of the program. (See Figure 1 and 2.) Additionally, parents reported that the group was both educational and useful for their child and that they would highly recommend I COPE to other parents.

Participating Schools

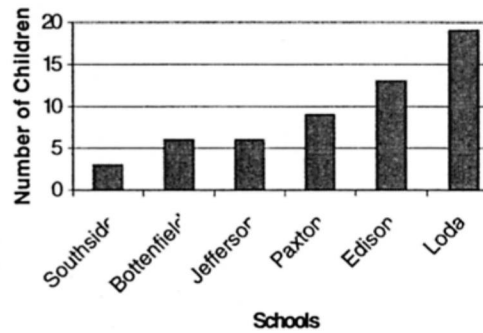


Figure 1

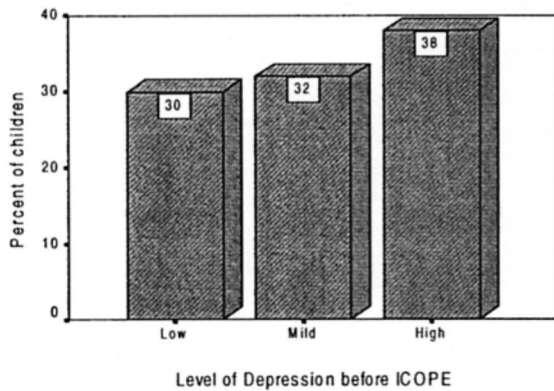


Figure 2

