

LESSON 4: Dealing with Challenging Emotions

CONCEPTS

- There are tools we can use to help us feel better when we are upset

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to identify three different tools they can use to calm down

MATERIALS

- Windmills
- Printout of emotion faces
- Printout of cat

ACTIVITIES

1. Windmill Breathing
2. What are Challenging Emotions?
3. Sensory Pressure: Hand Squeeze
4. Cat Stretch
5. Calm Corner

Windmill Breathing

Let's begin with our breathing activity, windmill breathing.



Hold your windmill in front of your face and take a big breath through your nose, filling up your belly... [demonstrate inhaling deeply], then blow gently on your windmill! [demonstrate blowing on the windmill]

Take two more deep breaths and blow on your windmill.



Potential Trauma Trigger: Talking about emotions can bring up feelings for students related to traumatic events. Take care to watch for signs of emotional distress during these activities. If you notice a student is showing any signs of distress or becoming overwhelmed with emotions (crying, becoming aggressive, becoming silent, or not responding to directions), take a moment to gather the class and take a break. You can guide the class through a few deep breaths or utilize the pinwheels. If appropriate, check in with students individually after class, offering reassurance and support as needed.

What are Challenging Emotions?

Today, we are going to talk more about our emotions.

Do you remember the emotions we learned last time?

What emotions do we learn about? [show students the emotion faces and wait for responses]

*Some emotions are **pleasant** and make us feel good, such as calm and happy.*

*Some emotions are **challenging**, such as sad and anger.*

Feeling sad or angry can be tough. It can feel like having a storm inside of our bodies.

Sometimes, it is not easy to handle these challenging emotions.

Even though some emotions are challenging, all emotions are helpful.

Why are emotions helpful? [wait for responses]

Emotions are helpful because they tell us what we need!

Sometimes, when our challenging emotions are too big, it makes it hard to think or do anything.

Is it okay to be mean to ourselves or others when we have challenging emotions? [wait for responses]

No, but just like we have tools to fix things, like a hammer, we also have tools to help us express our emotions in a healthy way.

We are going to learn about tools that we can use to help us feel better.

We learned that taking deep breaths can help us feel calm.

When we feel challenging emotions such as angry or sad, we can take deep breaths to help make us feel better.

Sensory Pressure: Hand Squeezes

Sometimes, when we are feeling upset, our bodies can feel tight.

Squeezing our hands can help us relax and feel calmer.

Let's try it together!

Hold one of your hands out in front of you. [demonstrate holding one hand out]

Using your other hand, rub your palm. [demonstrate rubbing your palm in a small, circular motion with your other hand]

Next, we are going to squeeze each of our fingers from the bottom to the top. **[walk around the classroom to show students how to squeeze each of their fingers using their other hand, starting at the base of the finger and moving up with each squeeze]**

Nice job! Squeezing our hands can help us feel better.

Now, let's switch hands.

Hold the other hand out in front of you. **[demonstrate holding the other hand out]**

First, let's rub our palms. **[demonstrate rubbing your palm in a small, circular motion with your other hand]**

Now, let's squeeze each of our fingers.

Remember to start at the bottom and squeeze to the top. **[walk around the classroom helping students as needed]**

You squeeze your hands anytime you feel upset to help you feel better.

Cat Stretch

Now that we've practiced squeezing our hands, we are going to move our bodies.

We can stretch our bodies to help us feel calm.

Today, we are going to stretch our bodies like a cat does.

Are you ready to practice stretching your body like a cat?

Note: In the appendix, you will find a picture of a cat. Print and laminate (if possible) to use in class for student reference. If able, have students stand in a circle during this activity. Demonstrate for students while providing instructions.



Let's pretend we are **cats!**

Get down on your hands and knees like a cat, ready to stretch.

Arch your back, drop your head, and stretch your arms forward like a cat waking up from a nap. Can you feel your muscles working?

Now, let's add a meow! Lift your tail up to the sky and bring your head up as you make a "meowww" sound.

Let's do it again. **[repeat one to two more times]**

Feel your muscles relax as you pretend to be a cat. Great job, cats!

Remember that you can use your body to relax and help you feel calm!

Calm Corner

Note: Take this opportunity to pick a quiet place in the room, maybe some with cushions or a blanket that can be the “calm corner.” This will be a space where students can go when they are experiencing challenging emotions or need a break. You can guide students to sit quietly, read, or practice breathing with one another. Ensure that you give the students clear directions for using this area.

Going to a quiet space and breathing can help us be calm and feel better when we are having challenging emotions.

Breathing and relaxing our bodies can help us be calm so we can think clearly and be strong.

Let's make a space in the classroom where we can go if we need to calm down and take care of our feelings.

When you are in the calm corner, you can do something calming.

This is a quiet space where you can look at a book, practice deep breathing, or squeeze your hands.

You can go to this space when you need to take a break and relax.

It's important to remember that it is okay to feel pleasant emotions, and it is okay to feel challenging emotions.

When we feel challenging emotions such as angry or sad, we can use our tools to help us feel better.

Remember, you can always come back to your breath.