



Emotional Resilience Lesson for Years 5 and 6

Sample lesson from Partnership for Children's Skills for Life Programme 'Passport'.



Objective

To identify stress and how it feels inside, and to identify coping skills for dealing with stress to improve our emotional resilience.



You need

- Whiteboard/large piece of paper on the wall
- Golden Rules Activity Sheet
- Coping Toolbox Activity Sheet

Starter



- What is good for you today? In pairs, pupils ask what is good for their partner today, something that has made them happy or something they are looking forward to. Ask the pupils whether any of them want to tell the class what is good for them today.

Introduction and agreement



- Tell the pupils that we will be talking about the feeling stress what we can do to help ourselves feel better when we feel stressed.
- Refer to your schools PSHE agreement or other relevant rules for running open and confidential lessons. Alternatively ask the pupils to suggest some rules for the session that will support everyone to feel comfortable e.g. you only have to speak if you want to, one person speaks at a time, we only see nice and positive things to each other. Talk about why these are helpful rules to have in this session.

Activity 1 – Stress: The message from my body



- Ask pupils what they know about stress. Listen to a few answers and then explain that feeling stress means:
 - Experiencing an uncomfortable or unpleasant feeling
 - Being afraid of a problem or situation
 - Feeling worried or concerned, or thinking often about a problem or situation
- Ask the class to describe situations in which they have felt stressed and offer suggestions e.g. taking a test, talking to people we don't know, being in the dark...
- Tell the pupils that some emotions, like stress, can trigger all kinds of reactions or messages in our bodies, and that these reactions can help us to realise when we are feeling these emotions.
- Draw a body silhouette image and explain to the class that we are going to write down the messages that our bodies send when we are feeling stressed. These could include:
 - Things that we feel in our body, like our heart beating faster, OR
 - Things that we do with our bodies, like biting our nails.
- Ask the class to suggest some messages which our bodies might send when we are feeling stressed and draw or write each suggestion inside the silhouette. For example, if someone suggests 'My heart beats fast', you can draw a heart or write the words.
- If the pupils do not have any ideas, you can make suggestions e.g. Feeling hot, feeling sick to our stomach, having clammy hands, having shaky legs or hands.

- Explain that:
 - It is not always easy to realise that we are feeling stressed.
 - Recognising the messages our bodies send will help us to realise when we feel stress.
 - We can then find coping strategies for feeling better, which is what we will be talking about today.

20m



Activity 2 – Coping with stress

- Tell the class that we are going to share all of the coping strategies we can think of for dealing with stress which help us to build our resilience, and then learn a technique for reducing stress.
- Ask what we can do to relax when we are feeling stressed. You can make suggestions such as talking about it with an adult or friend, playing a sport or doing something fun. Explain that the coping strategies should follow the Golden Rules.
- Ask pupils to write or draw their coping strategies in their Coping Toolbox.
- Ask children to share their coping toolboxes with a classmate to see if their friend can find a coping strategy in their toolbox they would like to try and add to their own.
- Point out that:
 - When we are feeling stressed, we can look for ways to feel better. We can also try to improve the situation that is worrying us. For example, we can invite someone to play with us if we are afraid of being alone at break time.
 - Everyone is different. While some people need to do a quiet activity to feel better, others need to move around to calm down.

5m



Activity 3 – Athletic arms and legs

- We are going to experiment with a coping strategy that some professional athletes use for dealing with stress before competitions.
- Whilst demonstrating, ask the pupils to:
 - Sit comfortably on their chairs. Their backs should be straight and supported by the chair, their arms either at their sides or with their hands on their laps, and their feet flat on the floor.
- Explain that we are going to pretend to be athletes who are strong enough to break stone and concrete - though it still takes a lot of effort!
- Tell the pupils to close their eyes if they want, but remind them to keep breathing during the exercise!

Athletic arms

- In a soothing tone, ask the class to:
 - Take a deep breath and then breathe out completely.
 - Imagine they have a small rock in each of their hands.
 - Squeeze their hands and arms to try to break the rocks.
 - Keep squeezing the rocks for ten seconds.

- Imagine that they have successfully broken the rocks. Even though they are strong, their arms are very tired now. Leave them very loose, like a rag doll, to rest them
- Pay attention for ten seconds so that they can feel their arms begin to relax and rest.
- Repeat this sequence two more time.

Athletic legs

- Ask the pupils to remain seated on their chairs with their feet flat on the ground. In a soothing tone, ask the class to:
 - Take a deep breath and then breathe out completely.
 - Imagine that someone has trapped their feet wide apart in blocks of cement!
 - Contract their leg muscles to try (unsuccessfully) to bring their feet together, in spite of the blocks.
 - Hold on for ten seconds.
 - Imagine that they have managed to break the cement and free their feet. Even though they are strong, their legs are very tired. Leave them slack, like a rag doll, to rest them.
 - Pay attention for ten seconds so that they can feel their legs begin to relax and rest.
- Repeat this sequence two more times
- Ask the class:
 - How they felt after contracting their muscles and then how they felt when they let them rest.
 - How they feel now after contracting and relaxing their muscles.
- Explain that when our bodies send us signs of stress, we can use these tricks discreetly at any time and in any place – on our chair in class, on the bus, at home. We can reduce stress using this new athletes' trick!

5m



Reflection

- In pairs, ask the pupils to briefly tell their classmate whether they enjoyed the session and how they are feeling at the end of it.

For more information about Partnership for Children's *Passport* programme please visit www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk