

Lesson Plan: **"Understanding Meltdowns and Coping Mechanisms with Buster Finds His Beat"**

Age Group: **5-7 years old**

Setting: **Mainstream School**

Duration: **60 minutes**

Lesson Title: **"Meltdowns and Finding Your Beat: Coping Strategies with Buster"**

Objective:

- To help students understand what meltdowns are and why they happen.
- To introduce simple coping mechanisms that students can use when they feel overwhelmed.
- To provide a creative outlet for students to express their emotions by making their own sensory drum.

Materials Needed:

- [Buster Finds His Beat book](#)
- Art supplies (e.g., paper, markers, crayons, paint, stickers)
- Simple materials for the "My Drum" activity (e.g., plastic containers, fabric, ribbons, rubber bands)
- Sensory tools (e.g., stress balls, fidget toys, soft cushions)
- Visual aids of coping mechanisms (deep breathing, counting to 10, squeezing a stress ball)
- Music or sound effects (optional)
- Timer

Lesson Outline:

1. Introduction to Meltdowns and Emotions (10 minutes)

- Discussion Starter: Begin by asking students how they feel when they are happy, sad, or angry. Use visual emotion cards to help younger children identify their feelings. Explain that sometimes when we feel

too many things at once, it can feel overwhelming, and we may have a “meltdown.”

- Simple Explanation of Meltdowns: Explain meltdowns in simple terms: "A meltdown is when all our feelings get too big to handle, and our bodies react. This can happen when we're tired, frustrated, or our senses (like noise or light) get too strong."
- Ask for Examples: Encourage students to share moments when they felt overwhelmed or upset. Keep this light and supportive, ensuring they feel safe to share their experiences.

2. Story Time: *Buster Finds His Beat* (15 minutes)

- Either read 'Buster Finds His Beat' or [watch the reading narrated by actor Will Poulter](#):
- Stop at key moments in the story where Buster starts to feel overwhelmed by sounds and rhythms around him. Ask the students, "How do you think Buster is feeling right now?"
- Buster: Ask students, "What are some things that make you feel like Buster? How do you think Buster could calm down?"

3. Coping Mechanisms Discussion (10 minutes)

- Introduce Coping Strategies: Explain that just like Buster, we can all feel overwhelmed, but there are things we can do to help calm down when we're upset. Introduce simple coping mechanisms using visual aids, such as:

1. Deep Breathing: "Let's practice breathing slowly. Take a deep breath in... and out." (Guide the students through this exercise).
2. Counting to 10: "When you're upset, counting slowly can help calm your mind. Let's try it together."
3. Using a Sensory Tool: Show examples of sensory tools like stress balls or soft cushions, and explain how squeezing or hugging these can help when emotions feel too big.

Interactive Demonstration: Ask students to try these coping strategies. Use a fun, interactive approach:

- “Let’s all pretend we’re a bit like Buster, feeling a little loud inside. Now, let’s try one of these strategies together. Ready? Deep breath in... now count to 10.”

4. Activity: ‘My Drum’ – Channeling Emotions (15 minutes)

- Introduction to ‘My Drum’: Explain that Buster finds his beat by creating rhythms with drums and sounds. Just like Buster, the students will create their own sensory drum to help express their emotions.
- Instructions for Drum Creation:
 1. Step 1: Hand out simple materials for making drums—plastic containers, fabric, ribbons, and rubber bands. Let students wrap the containers with fabric or paper and decorate their drums with stickers or crayons.
 2. Step 2: Guide students in stretching the fabric over the top of the container to make a drum surface and securing it with rubber bands.
 3. Step 3: Allow them to personalize their drum, encouraging them to use colors or designs that make them feel happy or calm.
- Sensory Exploration: Once the drums are made, encourage students to gently tap or drum to create a rhythm, connecting the sound with their emotions.
- “If you’re feeling a bit overwhelmed, you can play your drum to let out your feelings. It’s like having your own beat, just like Buster!”

5. Reflect and Practice Coping with ‘My Drum’ (10 minutes)

- Calming Drumming: Guide students through a simple rhythm exercise. Ask them to play their drum quietly at first, then louder, and then back to a soft beat. This helps them learn control over their emotions and expressions.
- “When we’re feeling upset, we can use our drum to express our feelings, just like how Buster found his beat. Let’s try calming our feelings by playing softly.”

- Group Reflection: After playing their drums, bring the class together to talk about how drumming made them feel. Did it help them feel more in control or calm?
- "How did it feel to play your drum? Did it help you feel better, like it helped Buster?"

6. Closing and Takeaway (5 minutes)

- Coping Strategy Reinforcement: End by reviewing the coping mechanisms they learned:
- "Remember, when you're feeling like everything's too loud or too big inside, you can take deep breaths, count to 10, or play your drum to help yourself feel better."
- Take Home Drums: Encourage students to take their drums home and use them whenever they feel overwhelmed.
- "Your drum is a special tool to help you find your beat, just like Buster did. You can play it anytime you feel upset and need to calm down."

Assessment:

- Observation: Throughout the lesson, observe how students engage with the discussion about emotions and meltdowns. Watch how they participate in the drum-making activity and whether they understand how to use it as a coping mechanism.
- Understanding Coping Strategies: Ask students to demonstrate the coping strategies discussed (e.g., deep breathing, counting to 10), ensuring they grasp how to use them when needed.
- Reflection Participation: Pay attention to how students reflect on their experiences with their drums and coping mechanisms, looking for signs of understanding and emotional growth.

Activity: My Drum – Sensory Tool for Coping with Emotions

- Objective: Create a sensory tool that students can use to express their emotions, offering a physical outlet when they feel overwhelmed, similar to how Buster uses rhythm to find his beat.

- **Materials:** Small plastic containers, fabric or paper to cover the drum, stickers, crayons, rubber bands.
- **Process:** Students decorate and assemble their own sensory drum. They can use it as a creative way to channel their emotions when they feel overwhelmed, learning to regulate their feelings through rhythm.
- **Purpose:** This activity provides a tangible way for students to self-regulate, offering them a creative, physical outlet to express emotions when words aren't enough.

Coping Strategies:

- **Deep Breathing:** Slow, deep breaths to calm the body and mind.
Just Like Me Calming Cards
- **Counting to 10:** Giving time for the emotions to settle before reacting.
- **Sensory Tools:** Using fidget toys, stress balls, or their own drum to focus their feelings in a healthy way.

This lesson integrates social-emotional learning, sensory engagement, and creativity, giving young students tools to understand their feelings and ways to manage them effectively.