



School Resources to Support Military-Connected Students

Coping Skills Lesson Plans

Instructor Scripts and Teaching Materials



CLEARINGHOUSE
FOR MILITARY FAMILY READINESS

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About the Coping Skills Lesson Plans

Why should we teach students coping skills?

Having and using coping skills are important behaviors for students to learn. The effective implementation of coping strategies has been shown to [reduce the development of more severe health problems in the face of stress](#).

Who should deliver this instruction?

A school counselor or school psychologist should deliver the coping skills lessons as some students may need additional instruction as they practice the skills.

What students should receive this instruction?

These lessons should be delivered at the Tier 2 level of a Multi Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework. Tier 2 interventions should be delivered to students who have demonstrated a need for additional support beyond Tier 1 instruction.

Are there any strategies that can be implemented universally (i.e., with all students) at the Tier 1 level of an MTSS framework?

The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State has created [a series of free online learning modules](#) that teach classroom teachers how to integrate socioemotional learning into their existing instruction and deliver basic socioemotional instruction to their students.

How many lessons are there and how long are they?

There are three versions of the lesson plans. The first set should be delivered to students who are in grades kindergarten (K)-2, the second set should be delivered to students who are in 3-6, and the third set should be delivered to students who are in 7-12. If you are working with older students who are at lower social- or emotional-development levels, you may want to use the K-2 version of the lesson plans initially.

How long are the lessons and do I need to do them in order?

Each version of the lesson plans contains six lessons. Each lesson will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Most of the lessons contain an activity that can be completed as part of the lesson or as homework. The activity is not included in the 20-minute estimate. The lessons should be used in order as the skills taught build on one another.

What is covered in the lesson plans?

The same set of skills is covered in the K-2, 3-6, and 7-12 lesson plans:

- *Lesson 1 – Positive self-concept*
- *Lesson 2 – Emotion identification*
- *Lesson 3 – Emotion regulation*
- *Lesson 4 – Cognitive reframing, part 1*
- *Lesson 5 – Cognitive reframing, part 2*
- *Lesson 6 – Social skills*



Grade K-2 Lesson Plans

Lesson 1: All About Me

Skill: Positive Self-Concept

By having a positive self-concept, students can benefit in the following ways:

- Identify positive and unique aspects of themselves.
- Recognize that personal value is not necessarily related to competition with others.
- Learn about and normalize the concept that all people make mistakes, and these mistakes are separate from the person's intrinsic value.
- Understand how to integrate personal values and strengths, and realize there are always areas for improvement and growth.

Student Lesson Plan

One of the most common reasons for children and adults to seek therapy is due to problems with their self-concept. During typical development, children will acquire core beliefs about their strengths, weaknesses, and value as a person. The ways in which these occur can either support resilience or lead to long-term problems like anxiety, depression, and specific phobias. In times of increased stress, children may develop ideas related to how they are coping such as “I’m not good enough” (because of comparisons to peers or older siblings) or “I’m not that important” (because of misinterpreting parents’ actions while trying to work full-time from home). **Positive asset searching** is one way that we can give students a foundation for recognizing their own value and, thus, build resilience in times of stress. Research has indicated that when people are able to have healthy, realistic views of their own capabilities, they are better able to manage challenges in their lives. Of course, none of this information is surprising or new to you as a trained expert in working with children! We encourage you to use the lesson plan below flexibly as the script is just a suggestion to get you started. Use your own examples, materials, and judgment to expand or alter the content as you desire. Given children’s limited attention spans, we would recommend keeping your lesson to about 15 minutes. We suggest that students should use a dedicated notebook for these sessions but feel free to adjust or include other ideas.

1. Introduction to All About Me.

Greeting your students and introduction to the series

“Hello everybody! Most of you have probably seen me at school. I’m <insert name here>, and I’m the <insert role here> at <insert school here>. I thought it would be a good idea for me to reach out



and teach you about some ways that you can feel better even though you may be feeling bored or sad or frustrated sometimes. I would like to start with helping you get to know YOURSELF just like you would get to know a new friend. That may sound a little silly to some of you but think of it this way, YOU are going to be with YOU every day of your life no matter what! It makes good sense to want to know yourself and remember how good you are, so you can be your best person!

2. Everybody has positive and unique characteristics that make them who they are. Recognizing them is one way of building your “muscles” of being the best version of yourself.

Identifying positive and unique aspects within yourself

Did you know that every single person on this whole planet is unique? Even identical twins are not exactly alike. People have characteristics and qualities in common and features or temperaments that are similar, but no two people are the same. People are different and have different strengths, so let's think about ways that people can be different from us and good. Some people can be good at physical activities like sports or dancing. Some people can be good at making and fixing things. There are some people who are good at math, reading, writing, or speaking different languages. Have you ever met a person who is funny and tells great jokes? Some people are very good at listening to others, making friends, and helping people when they have hurt feelings. Others are good at playing instruments or singing. So, just from those examples, I bet you could think of activities or pastimes that you are good at or interests or hobbies that make you feel happy when you do them (even if you aren't really good at them).

Everything “counts” (i.e., dispelling social comparisons)

Sometimes, when people think about what they are good at, they focus on how good they are at that activity compared to OTHER people. For example, if you love to play basketball but you are not the best on the team, you may want to say, “well, I'm not that good at basketball.” However, how good you are compared to OTHERS at something you love to do is not what makes you unique. What makes you unique is that you enjoy doing the activity, and it is an important part of how you live your life. Be sure to think of all the things that make your life fun and special.

Reframing minimizing good behavior and effort

Some people may forget that they are special or good because they believe that certain actions don't really “count.” —For example, suppose your teacher asks you to put something away or fix a mistake and you follow those directions immediately and do a good job. Some people may say “well that doesn't count because that's just what I'm supposed to do.” It does count! Consider this, there are many people who choose not to follow directions, argue with teachers or parents, or act rude when someone asks them to fix a mistake. If you CHOOSE to follow directions and be polite, your actions “count,” and they illustrate who you are as a person, and you are a good person!



Recognizing the best of who you are can help you to use those qualities to make good choices

Now that we've talked about some characteristics that can make people special, think of THREE qualities that you think make you special or unique. You may write them down or just think about them in your head. These can be activities you are good at or like to do or features that are unique to you. I'll give you a second to think about it. <Pause to allow reflection.>

3. Normalize that mistakes are part of the human experience. Mistakes are separate from intrinsic value.

Mistakes are part of everyone's life

Just like all people have qualities about them that make them special, all people make mistakes. Some mistakes are big, and some mistakes are small, but everyone, even adults, make mistakes at times. One example I like to talk about is <insert a personal story about something you're not so good at or that you must work hard at; an example is inserted here for context> I really can be forgetful! I must write tasks, appointments, ideas down, or I forget about them. Believe me, I've forgotten some things, and that has created problems—like forgetting my car keys or being late to important meeting. Now, I remind myself that, if I use a list, I forget a lot less. Remember that mistakes are just part of being a person, and if we think about them, they can be a chance for us to learn to do better. Sometimes, it is important for us to make a mistake; remember, what is important is the lessons we learn from those mistakes.

Making bad choices or mistakes is separate from intrinsic value as a person

Have you ever made a big mistake or made a bad choice, and you felt mad, guilty, or unhappy about it? Maybe you said something unkind that you didn't mean or broke an expensive piece of furniture or forgot an important assignment for school. When those kinds of mistakes happen, you become confused about the difference between your behavior (how you act) and your value (who you are as a person). When people make mistakes, they may say unkind things to themselves like, "I am so stupid!" or "I'm not a nice person!" These statements are NOT true! Making mistakes can be upsetting, but what you DID is NOT the same thing as who you are. Remember, making a mistake is a chance to learn how to do better. A mistake does not change all of the other good qualities that make you who you are!

4. Integration of positive self-concept and continual growth and change.

All people have positive qualities, and all people have areas in their lives that need to be improved

It may be tricky to remember this, but one of the best ways to get to know yourself is to remember that you have strengths. You always have areas where you could do better. For example, a person



can be good at making friends but still struggle with learning math concepts in school. Some people may be good at doing sports or schoolwork but have a difficult time with managing angry feelings. Remember that people have strengths, AND they have tasks that they need to work on at the same time. Strengths are like erasers that help us fix our mistakes!

Showing the contrast of NOT having any areas for growth

Consider this, what if you didn't have any new information to learn or new challenges to overcome? That idea may seem nice, but your life would be BORING! If people didn't have new concepts or skills to learn or trials to overcome, they would avoid the pain that comes from making mistakes, but there wouldn't be any adventures either. Sofia the First, Flat Stanley, Harry Potter, <insert other characters from children's fiction here> would not have the scary, exciting, and fun stories to share if everything was always perfect, right? So, we must remember that mistakes, activities, and tasks we're not good at and other challenges can present opportunities for us to learn the most!

5. Getting to know the entirety of yourself is a strength.

When we know what we are not so good at, we can practice getting better

Understanding that we are not good at doing everything, can help us determine when to ask for help, what we need to work on, and practice what we need to do differently. If we didn't know our mistakes, we would make the same ones repeatedly and not learn and not grow as a person! So, when we recognize our mistakes, we should see them as a chance to improve ourselves. We should not feel ashamed because everyone makes mistakes!

When we remember what makes us special and strong, we can use those skills to make our lives better

While we all have areas in our lives where we could do better, we must remember that we are good at some things and that makes us special and strong. The activities that we enjoy, the accomplishments we are proud of, the characteristics that make us special—these are the qualities to remember because they can help us overcome difficult times. Be sure to remember what makes you good and special! Your mistakes don't erase all of your positive abilities.

6. Closing and Practice.

Provide an ending that includes a positive message

Remind students about ways to continue practicing skills: I've really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you! I want you to think of ONE task or quality each day that you did or that you remembered about yourself that's good or unique. I want you to write it down in your notebook and bring it back next time. I'm looking forward to working with you!



Lesson 2: Feelings Are Like Antennae

Skill: Emotion Identification

The goal of this lesson is to help students identify emotions. By being able to identify emotions, students can benefit in the following ways:

- Understand feelings and feeling words.
- Identify bodily awareness of emotions.
- Differentiate between emotions and behaviors.

Student Lesson Plan

Behind every behavior is a feeling, and children who can accurately identify their feelings are better able to express themselves appropriately. The purpose of this lesson is to introduce children to **emotion identification and recognition** through the “4 colors” of feelings (blue for sad, green for happy, yellow for worried or irritated, and red for angry) and to help them learn how to identify these feelings in themselves and others with a fun visual (feelings as antennae). Children will also understand how feelings prompt behavior and will learn that, while all feelings are acceptable, some behaviors are unacceptable. When delivering this lesson, there are many opportunities for you to think about your own examples, use your own stories and analogies, and utilize your pre-existing resources. The content below includes basic scripting that you can use; however, you should use your own judgment on wording and extending the content. Remember, this lesson should only take about 15 minutes as children have short attention spans.

1. Introduction to Feelings Are Like Antennae.

Greeting your students

Hello everybody! Thanks for coming today! I hope you've been doing some fun stuff. <Ask students what was good about their days/ weeks.>

Review of between-session work.

Did any of you remember to write down ONE good/special quality about yourself in your notebooks from last week? Who feels like they want to share one of the ideas they thought of/wrote down? <If students do not share, share an example from this past week.>

Transition to new topic.

I'm so glad you had a chance to remember how good you are! I was thinking a little bit about bugs lately. I know that sounds weird, but have you seen any interesting bugs recently? <Insert an example of a bug or insect that you saw.> Today, we are going to become like bugs and use our



antennae to sense different emotions. So, picture your favorite bug, put on your antennae, and let's get buzzing!

2. Think of feelings as different colors.

Identify four color “groups” of feelings

Kids and adults may have a lot of different feelings during the day. I like to think about feelings as being different colors.

Blue Feelings.

- Look at the bug in this picture. How do you think it is feeling? Sad? Disappointed? If this bug is feeling sad because it is missing its friend, it is having a blue feeling. Blue feelings make us feel slow, sad, or tired. When we have blue feelings, we may feel like we need more energy to get back to feeling good.

Green Feelings.

- Now, look at this bug. How is it feeling? It looks happy to me! Happy, good, and calm are “green” feelings. If this bug feels focused and ready to do its job, it is having a green feeling. Green feelings mean we have just the right amount of energy—not too little, and not too much.

Yellow Feelings.

- Now, let's look at this bug. Wow, it looks kind of “antsy” to me (get it?). Maybe it is feeling nervous or worked up because it has too many flowers to pollinate and not enough time. If that is the case, this bug is having a “yellow” feeling. Yellow feelings mean that we are getting a little worked up, like feeling excited; nervous; worried; or silly. With yellow feelings, we might have a little bit too much energy and need to calm down to feel better.

Red Feelings.

- Let's look at the last bug. Oh my, it is feeling angry because someone tried to swat it with a flyswatter! It is having a red feeling, which means that it feels out of control. Other red feelings can be big feelings and those might be terrified; mean; or aggressive, like hitting. With red feelings, we feel like we have too much energy in our bodies and may need to do something, like take some deep breaths, to feel calmer.

Later, you will do an activity to help you sort feeling words into the right color. For example, you'll put “calm” and “happy” in the green box and “nervous” or “silly” in the yellow box. This “Feelings Word Bank” will be a tool that you can use to pick which word best describes how you feel at a certain time.



3. Use Your Antenna to Know How You're Feeling.

Label feelings accurately using internal (bodily) and external (situational) clues

Sometimes, it's hard to explain exactly how we feel. So, our antennae can be tools that we can use to help us decide what feelings we are having. Our antennae can help us search for clues about how we feel in two places—*inside* our bodies and *outside* our bodies. Let's practice with an example. Pretend you just got a math assignment from school but forget how to do the problems. First, do a quick scan of your body. How does it feel? If your heart was beating a little faster than normal and your tummy was starting to feel sick, your antennae might sense that you were having a yellow feeling, and you might need to slow down to feel better. If your body was starting to feel out of control, like if your heart was really racing or you were crying, your antennae would get a clue that you were having a red feeling. If your body feels normal, your antennae would help you sense that you were having a green feeling. The other place your antennae can look for clues to know how you are feeling is on the outside. Sometimes, you might want to describe what just happened to help you understand how you feel. For example, you might say to yourself, "I just got homework that I don't know how to do." When you understand what just happened, your antennae will have a clearer picture of the situation. Other times, someone else may ask about how you're acting or how you are feeling. That's another "outside" clue you can use to know how you're feeling. With those two clues—what's going on inside and outside your body—your antennae may be able to sense what "color" feeling you are having. Then, you can use your Feeling Word Bank to pick which word best describes how you feel.

4. Feelings Are Different from Behaviors.

Feelings are different from behaviors

Here is a tricky question: Is it ok to have "red" feelings? In other words, is it ok to feel angry or mean? The answer is YES! Although all feelings don't necessarily feel good in your body, all feelings are ok. Sometimes, red feelings are helpful because they let us to know that we need to ask for help! Is it ok to hurt someone because you have a red feeling? Of course, that answer is NO. Remember, feelings are different from behaviors. Feelings are what is happening in your body or brain. Behaviors are what you do WITH your body. While all feelings are ok, behaviors can be ok or not ok. Let's pretend your brother or sister cheated at a game you are playing together. You might feel a red feeling, like angry. What happens after that is the behavior. You could choose to take a deep breath and tell your sibling about why you are angry, or you might choose to hit them. Being angry is okay, but hitting is not. Remember, all feelings are ok, and you are in control of what you do about your feelings.

People can feel differently; feelings can be big or small

People may act differently than you would act in a certain situation even though they may have the same feeling. Think about a surprise birthday party. One person might feel excited and happy about having a surprise party. Another person might feel upset or nervous about a surprise party because they prefer to know what is going on ahead of time. Is one of those feelings about a surprise party better than the others? You guessed it; they're both ok! Because everybody has



different antennae, everyone's feelings will be different even if they go through the same event or circumstance. No one can ever tell you how you "should" feel about something; the way you feel inside yourself is always right.

5. Closing and Practice.

Provide an ending that includes positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills

Today, we talked about how feelings can belong to different color groups and how feelings are different from behaviors. Great job using your antennae to practice picking up clues about complicated feelings! For practice this week, I want you to try this activity <introduce Feelings Word Bank Activity>. Later, we'll talk about tricks for handling strong or big feelings. The first step to handling feelings—big or small—is always naming the feeling. Practice using your antennae to pick up clues about feelings this week, and I'll see you again soon!



Blue Feelings

Slow, sad, or tired

Need more energy!



“Rest area”

Green Feelings

Happy, good, or calm

Have **just enough** energy!



“Go”

Yellow Feelings

Excited, nervous, silly

A little **too much** energy



“Slow”

Red Feelings

Feeling out of control

Need to **“stop”** and calm down



“Stop”

Feelings Word Bank Activity

Directions: Read about feelings below and answer the questions. Caregivers are encouraged to provide support to students who need help reading or completing the activity.

Feelings can be described in different color groups.

Blue Feelings make us feel slow or sad. When we have blue feelings, we need more energy to get back to feeling good.

Green Feelings make us feel calm and good. When we have green feelings, we're focused and feeling good.

Yellow Feelings make us feel a little worked up, like feeling worried or silly. When we have yellow feelings, we have a little more energy than usual and may need to use a strategy to get back to calm.





Red Feelings make us feel out of control. When we have red feelings, we need to "stop," and use a strategy to feel better.

1. Think of example feeling words for each of the four color groups.
2. Write the words within the correct group on the next page.
3. For more examples, use the words/pictures on the Feelings Wheel.
4. Use your personal Feelings Word Bank whenever you need help explaining how you feel!

Information adapted from Kuypers, L. M., & Winner, M. G. (2011). *The zones of regulation: A curriculum designed to foster self-regulation and emotional control*. Think Social Publishing Incorporated.



's Feelings Word Bank

<u>Blue Feelings</u>	<u>Green Feelings</u>	<u>Yellow Feelings</u>	<u>Red Feelings</u>
 <p><u>Examples:</u> Sad, Slow</p>	 <p><u>Examples:</u> Happy, Calm</p>	 <p><u>Examples:</u> Nervous, Silly</p>	 <p><u>Examples:</u> Angry, Mean</p>

Information adapted from Kuypers, L. M., & Winner, M. G. (2011). *The zones of regulation: A curriculum designed to foster self-regulation and emotional control*. Think Social Publishing Incorporated.



Feelings Wheel



This image can be found at <https://feelingswheel.com/>



Lesson 3: Calming Down

Skill: Emotion Regulation

The goal of this lesson is to help students learn how to regulate their emotions. By being able to regulate their emotions, students can benefit in the following ways:

- Learn about the importance of managing strong feelings, and understand how to minimize making poor choices.
- Learn how to use strategies for immediate self-soothing including grounding (Find-Your-Feet), diaphragmatic breathing (Belly Breathing), and muscle relaxation (Squeeze Out Stress).
- Understand and explain the importance of practicing strategies when they are calm.

Student Lesson Plan

Given the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, including lack of enough exercise, jarring changes in routines, increased parental stress, and social isolation, many students may need help learning to calm down. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic shut-down and resulting challenges have become “part of the norm” in our lives, there are lingering effects and students who need extra help. There are many methods students can use to center themselves, calm down, and feel better. For this learning activity, presenting simple coping skills may be beneficial. You may want to emphasize to students that using **calm-down strategies** is like exercising any other muscle, and waiting until “game day” to practice a critical skill is ineffective. The same is true for using coping skills; we need to practice. The present lesson will cover three simple strategies that students should be encouraged to practice daily, and handouts and worksheets are provided to assist with reminding students how to use the techniques. You likely have learned many of these strategies and others as part of your early childhood-development training, so use the lesson plan flexibly as the script is just a suggestion to get you started. Use your own examples, materials, and judgment to expand on or alter the content as you desire. Given children’s limited attention spans, we recommend keeping your lesson to about 15 minutes.

1. Introduction to Calming Down.

Introduce yourself and the topic

Hello everybody! Glad to see you back here!

Review of between-session work

Did any of you get a chance to do your Feeling Wordbank Worksheet? Let’s talk about how some of these feeling words connect to our colors. <Discuss with students or if they did not complete it, review the four colors, and talk about how feeling words relate to the colors.>



Transition to new topic

Since we've been talking about feelings, today I thought we could talk about how to calm down. Sometimes, life can be tough. Being a kid is not easy! It's important for you to learn how to calm your feelings, so you can feel better and make good choices!

2. Normalizing having strong feelings that are uncomfortable.

Connecting feeling identification to feeling modulation and regulation

We've talked about naming our feelings and using our antennae to understand how we're feeling. We've also talked about the difference between how we feel and how we choose to act. But, we haven't talked about what to do when our feelings get big. Our feeling antennae give us clues about when our feelings are starting to get so big and strong that we feel like we're out of control. When we feel like we're starting to get a too-big feeling, we need to use a calm-down strategy, so we don't make unhealthy or dangerous choices. Using our feeling antennae is the first step to being able to calm down.

Normalizing strong feelings and emotional arousal

Sometimes, when we have strong feelings, we feel like we're all alone—like nobody could understand how bad we are feeling or how hard it is for us to feel better. Even though you may feel like that, that is really just your antennae being OUT OF CONTROL! Everyone experiences times when feelings get big or scary. Even adults, who seem to have a lot of things figured out, need help with big feelings. So, when you have a big feeling, remember you are not alone, and you can find ways to feel better. No feelings last forever, even the very strongest ones. If you have been feeling sad or mad for a long time, you may want to talk to your parents, teacher, counselor, school psychologist, or other trusted adult for help.

3. Emphasizing that strong feelings can sometimes lead to poor choices and inappropriate behavior.

Connection between hyperarousal and poor decision-making

When our feelings are in the red zone, our feeling antennae are really shaking and buzzing. One time, I had a disagreement with a friend at work, and I was so mad that I didn't even know what to say. My heart was racing, my stomach felt sick, and I also wanted to cry. <Insert another appropriate example if you prefer.> It was tough! When feelings are that strong, your antennae can get in the way of making good choices. With all of those feelings buzzing around, how can you think clearly? If I had let my antennae tell me what to do when I was mad, I might have said mean words to my friend! I don't want to do that because, no matter how mad I feel, that person is my friend, and I want to solve the problem and not fight! So, we must figure out a way to get our antennae to stop buzzing, so we can use our brain to make good choices.



4. Learning to calm down is like any other skill; it requires practice when you are already feeling good.

Emphasizing the connection between skills and agency (e.g., being able to make good choices)

Calming down our antennae requires some practice because, when our antennae are loud and buzzing, it might be hard to get them to quiet down. Learning to calm down is just like anything else you need to practice to get good at, like learning how to play soccer or an instrument or learning your math facts. It may seem strange to think of calming down as something that you need to practice, like your trumpet or piano, but, if we don't practice our calming-down strategies, we won't be able to quiet down those antennae. When our feelings get too big, we might make poor choices that may not feel good and that may get us into trouble. So, learning how to calm down doesn't erase sad, mad, angry, or uncomfortable feelings, but it can help you gain control, so you can think and talk about your feelings and get help from others.

5. Three ways to calm down.

There are many ways to calm down; that's the good news. I'm going to talk about a few tricks that I use to calm down, and it's important that you think about and pick your favorite or a couple of favorites. Can you already think of some methods that have helped you calm down in the past? Maybe you went outside for a walk, spent time alone in your room, or talked to a friend. If those ways worked for you, those are good calm-down methods. What's most important is to choose calm-down strategies that do not allow you to hurt yourself, someone else, or property.

Find-Your-Feet (grounding/ mindfulness strategy)

When our antennae are buzzing, we can use our feet to help calm them down. Your brain can't pay attention to your feet and your antennae at the same time, so, if you focus on your feet, your antennae must get a little quieter. When you start noticing a big feeling, maybe being scared or mad, you need to STOP and look down at your feet. When you look at your feet, you will notice some things: where are your feet (where are you standing or are your feet even on the ground)? Are you standing on carpet, grass, wood, tile? What is on your feet? Do you have shoes, socks, bare feet, toenail polish? How do your feet feel? Do they feel sweaty, cold, itchy, tingly? Let's practice that right now together. Answer out loud or quietly to yourself. Remember, it might feel silly if you don't have a big feeling right now, but we must practice our calm-down strategies when we're feeling calm, so we can use these to help us feel better when we're having big feelings!

Belly Breathing (diaphragmatic breathing)

Did you know that, sometimes, when people are upset, they hold their breath, and they don't even know they are doing that? When people's antennae are buzzing, it is important that they are getting enough air. When people take the right kind of deep breath—a belly breath—they notice that their heartbeat slows down, they feel less sick to their stomach, and they start to feel a little



better. Belly breathing is special, though, and it takes some practice. Let's get started. Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Take a slow breath through your nose, and feel your belly fill with air. When you're breathing in, imagine that you're smelling a cup of hot chocolate or some other smell you like (e.g., roses, chocolate chip cookies). I'm going to count to four while we smell that good smell slowly. Now breathe out, and feel your belly and your chest go empty. Let's imagine that we are blowing the steam from the hot chocolate or blowing out birthday candles. I'm going to count to five while we do this. Great! Let's try that again. Slowly, smell and blow. Good job!

Squeeze Out Stress (muscle relaxation)

Another way for us to calm down our antennae is to squeeze out those strong feelings. When we are upset, our muscles can get tense especially in our shoulders, tummy, arms, and legs. Those tight muscles are our body's way of trying to get us ready for an emergency. But, a strong feeling isn't always a real emergency, so having that tension can make us tired! It can be tricky to relax our muscles by thinking "relax" to ourselves, so a better way to get that tension out is to SQUEEZE it out. Let's try it together! I want you to make fists with both hands and imagine that you are squeezing a sponge that is full of all of your big feelings. We're going to squeeze that sponge super hard. When you have a big feeling, your whole body is a sponge, and you need to squeeze it super tight to get all of the feeling out. Even your face and your toes and your tummy and your shoulders. Keep squeezing! How much feeling can we squeeze out? Okay, now we're going to let go of the sponge, and you can feel your hands and shoulders and tummy and legs and face relax. Do you feel more relaxed? Let's try it again. When you are feeling a big feeling and you notice you are tense, squeezing that sponge can help you let go of some of your feelings! You can even try doing it with belly breathing!

6. Encouragement to practice.

Help students understand that using relaxation and calm-down techniques is a skill that should be practiced before they experience distress. Hopefully, their calm-down strategies will become behaviors that they can build on

That was a lot of practice! Did you know that calming down is just like building muscles? If you only exercise one time, do you expect that you'll have big strong muscles? Probably not, right? Doing exercises will help you become strong, so the same thing is true for your calm-down muscles. You can't learn to play baseball by just watching games on TV or playing it one or two times. You must play baseball a lot and get help from people who know a lot about baseball. To build your calm-down muscles, you need to practice EVERY DAY. When you need help with using your calm-down muscles, ask a grown-up to help breathe with you or squeeze the sponge. Be sure to practice so that when you're feeling your antennae are really buzzing, your strong muscles can help you to feel better faster!

7. Closing.



Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills

I've really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you today! I want you to practice building your calm-down muscles before next time <introduce Additional Relaxation Techniques handout>. I hope to see you back here for our next chat!



Additional Relaxation Strategies

Practice using the additional relaxation strategies that are listed below. Find a strategy or strategies that work for you!

- **Stairway:** Imagine yourself standing on the top of a 10-step stairway, any kind you want. With each breath, count backwards from 10 to 1 as you visualize yourself walking down the stairs and becoming more relaxed with each step. *Optional: You can continue this exercise by imagining that you have arrived at a special, personal place; then explore this place in your mind.
- **Filling Your Room:** Close your eyes and relax. Imagine yourself sitting quietly in an empty room. Notice how you feel. Now imagine adding a person or object that you would especially like to have with you in your room. Observe how you feel. Now add someone or something else and observe how you feel. Continue adding people and special objects or decorations to your room until you have filled it to your satisfaction. Pay attention to how full, satisfied, and safe you feel.
- **Blackboard Technique:** Sit quietly and take several deep, relaxing breaths. Imagine yourself traveling to a private place where you notice a blackboard. Written on the blackboard are three mean statements that others have made about you in the past. Notice how you feel when you read these. Walk up to the blackboard, erase the statements, and write three positive statements about yourself in response. Notice how you feel when you read them. Take a deep breath, and remind yourself that you can make these positive statements to yourself whenever you need to.
- **Feelings fan.** Breathe in and imagine your chest and stomach are filling up with your big feeling instead of air. Breathe out and imagine you are blowing the big feeling out of your body.
- **Breath painting.** Breathe in and imagine you are dipping a brush in paint. Breathe out and use your breath as your paintbrush. Imagine your breaths out are blowing out colored paint. Try to paint the whole room.
- **Beach Breathing.** Breathe in and pretend that you are using your breath in to draw a wave toward the shore. Let it come in and wash over your feet. Breathe out and pretend that your breath is pushing the wave back into the ocean, and that wave is taking away tension as it washes back over your feet.
- **Infinity breaths.** Draw an infinity sign, or a number 8, on a piece of paper. Use a finger to trace one side of the figure while breathing in, and trace the other side while breathing out. You can also try using a finger, hand, or even foot to draw the figure 8 in the air while you practice breathing.
- **Wave breathing.** Lay down and place a small toy on your belly. Take deep, slow breaths, and pretend that your belly is the ocean, and the toy is riding the waves up and down. Prop your head up so you can watch the toy rise and fall with your breath.
- **Breathing and movement.** Combine simple movements with deep breathing. For example, breathe in and slowly raise your arms over your head. Breathe out and slowly lower your arms.



Lesson 4: Stop That Stinking Thinking!

Skill: Cognitive Reframing

The goal of this lesson is to help students adjust negative thoughts. By being able to adjust their negative thoughts, students can benefit in the following ways:

- Acknowledge how thought patterns can encourage self-soothing or increase negative emotions.
- Use positive self-talk to help strong feelings or painful feelings better.
- Adjust negative self-talk (“Stinking Thinking”) to decrease distress.
- Use basic cognitive reframing including the use of “and” or “but” to change unhelpful or irrational thoughts.
 - Adding an “and”: “I feel scared right now, AND I have a mom who will hug me.”
 - Adding a “but”: “I didn’t do so well on that, BUT I’m learning to do better.”

Student Lesson Plan

Helping students learn how to manage emotions can be a two-pronged approach. Using calming-down strategies (covered in the previous lesson) can help students decrease physiological arousal; however, making additional adjustments to thought patterns can also be useful for students. As educational professionals, you know how adults can sometimes “miss the mark” on helping students feel better! Shouting at a panicked student to “take deep breaths” or sternly telling them that “there’s nothing to worry about, just calm down” is largely unhelpful but often used. People who use ongoing negative self-talk, limit beliefs, focus on “what’s wrong,” and constantly think about the worst-case scenario may not be helped by simply using mindfulness and deep breathing. Students must also learn ways to challenge the thoughts that contribute to, sustain, and amplify their feelings of distress. **Cognitive reframing** is an advanced skill that not all students can attain right away, but, in this lesson, ideas for ways that even young students can begin to practice reframing thoughts are offered. Specifically, the lesson covers understanding how to adjust or quiet negative self-talk and unhelpful thoughts and examines how to boost positive or more helpful thoughts in the process. This script is just a suggestion to get you started. Use your own examples, materials, and judgment to expand on or alter the content as you desire. Given children’s limited attention spans, we would recommend keeping your lesson to about 15 minutes.

1. Introduction to Stop That Stinking Thinking.

Greeting your students and introducing cognitive reframing lesson.

Hi everyone! It’s good to be with you again!



Review of between-session work

What kinds of calming-down practice were you able to do since last time we met? <Discuss with students or if they did not practice, review one of the calm-down strategies, and review why it is important to practice.>

Transition to new topic

Today, I want to talk with you about more strategies you can use to help you feel better! Last time we talked about ways to flex your calm-down muscles, but, today, we are going to talk about another way to help us feel better. We are going to learn about how to stop our Stinking Thinking thoughts. These are the thoughts that make situations or events seem worse than they are and the thoughts that make us have unkind and untrue thoughts about ourselves. Remember all that talk about how GOOD you are? You need to remember that. Many people sometimes struggle with thoughts that make them feel yucky, so, today, we'll talk about how to stop that Stinking Thinking!

2. How thoughts affect our feelings for better or for worse.

Introduce the idea that thoughts have an impact on how we feel. We can use our thoughts to feel better, but some of our thoughts can make us feel worse

Did you know that people think THOUSANDS of thoughts every day? That is a lot of thinking! Did you know that what we think makes a big difference in how we feel? Let's pretend that our thoughts are like words that we hear from someone else. If you heard someone say to you, "You tried hard on that! Good work!" you would feel pretty good. If you heard someone say to you, "I can't believe you DID that! What's the matter with you?" you would feel hurt and sad. Inside of our brains are thousands of thoughts that use a lot of words. Those words can help us, like a supportive friend, or those words can hurt us. When we think mean thoughts to ourselves, we are doing Stinking Thinking. All of those stinking thoughts can make us feel sad, mad, or even scared, and they all come from inside of us! Everyone has positive thoughts and stinky thoughts. It's up to us to decide what kinds of thoughts we are going to have! When we think thoughts that we would like to hear from a kind friend, we feel strong, safe, and happy. Many people, even grown-ups, can struggle with Stinking Thinking, and it can be hard to learn how to stop having those thoughts. Some grown-ups have a lot of trouble learning how to stop their Stinking Thinking because they didn't learn about and practice doing this when they were kids. You can learn how to stop that stinking thinking RIGHT NOW! Let's practice because we know that the more we practice, the easier it will be!

3. Choosing our thoughts to decrease distress and increase resilience.

Help students understand that thoughts can be adjusted or changed to help them feel better and manage their strong feelings



We talked about how we think THOUSANDS of thoughts every day. Sometimes, it can feel like those thoughts are all over the place, but we can learn how to spot the Stinking Thinking before we start feeling bad! We can also learn how to use helpful thoughts, like from a friend, to calm down, make better choices, and remember how good we are!

4. Identifying unhelpful thoughts to shift to self-soothing.

Using calm-down strategies to minimize physiological arousal, and learning to identify helpful or unhelpful thoughts to support positive self-talk

When our feeling antennae are buzzing super loud, we almost always know that the Stinking Thinking is creeping in. When we use our calm-down muscles to let some of those strong feelings go, we can use positive self-talk to help us feel EVEN better. Let's use an example. One time, I was having a crummy day, and I was walking my dog, and a bee flew in my face and stung me! It hurt a lot, and I started to cry right in front of everyone, and I'm a grown-up! I kept thinking, "Ouch! Ouch! I can't believe this happened! Why does this stuff always happen to me! This day is terrible, and it's never going to get any better!" I realized my feelings were getting too big, so I took some deep breaths and got some ice for my bee sting. <Insert another example if you prefer.> After my feeling antennae had calmed down, I asked myself "Who is talking to me right now? Stinking Thinking or my positive self-talk?" Well, I realized fast that my positive self-talk would never say things like "it'll never be better" or "this stuff always happens to me." That's not nice! I realized that my Stinking Thinking was doing the talking, and I didn't like it.

5. Adjusting negative self-talk to calm down.

Teach students to shift from negative thoughts to thoughts that are soothing and emphasize calm and reasonable positive ideas

When our Stinking Thinking is loud and frequent we should use our positive self-talk. Sometimes, this is hard to do! When I had my bee sting and was feeling angry and sad, I needed to say a few things to myself OUT LOUD to help get my positive self-talk working. I said, "This bee sting really hurts, but the ice is helping a little." Then I said to myself, "Everyone has tough days, but it won't always be this way." After I said those things to myself, out loud, my positive self-talk could take over. My positive self-talk was helping me remember that pain (even bee stings) doesn't last forever. It helped me remember that I have people around me who care about me, like my brother helped me get the ice pack, and he sat with me on the couch. You can do the same thing, but you must know some tricks first!

6. Basic cognitive reframing.

Introduce ideas of "and" and "but" to help soften difficult situations, and brainstorm soothing and positive self-talk with students

The Stinking Thinking is really a pain! These thoughts want you to focus on how HARD or BAD a situation is. Sometimes, the situation is not good! Bee stings, not getting to take your turn, a friend



who hurts your feelings, and not being able to do a special activity you want to do can be examples of times that are frustrating or disappointing. However, your positive self-talk knows that when you add the word “and” or “but,” you can help yourself feel better. Remember, feelings and difficult situations can’t last forever. So, when your Stinking Thinking says, “It’s not fair,” your positive self-talk would say, “It’s not fair this time, BUT sometimes things are fair!” When your Stinking Thinking says, “I never get what I want,” your positive self-talk would say, “I didn’t get what I want this time, but next time I will!” No matter what Stinking Thinking thoughts you have, you can remember what your positive self-talk would say. Here are some examples:

- I can calm down and feel better!
- I can ask for help from someone who cares about me!
- Nothing bad lasts forever!
- It’s going to be okay even if it hurts right now! If you can’t decide what your positive self-talk would say, you can try imagining what a friend, teacher, parent, counselor, or another person who loves you would say to make you feel better. Then, you can say that to yourself.

7. Review and summarize.

Review with your students that their thoughts can make them feel better or worse, and review that they can calm down, identify the thoughts, and use their positive self-talk

Remember that our feeling antennae can get noisy sometimes, but we can use our calm-down muscles to feel better. The thoughts in our heads can come from our Stinking Thinking or from our positive self-talk, and we get to choose which one we will listen to! We can make choices about what we want to focus on to help us feel even better. Your positive self-talk wants you to remember how good you are and that you can deal with situations and events that aren’t great and that you can ask for help when you need it. Don’t let Stinking Thinking take over, and be sure to practice listening to your positive self-talk as often as you can!

8. Closing and Practice.

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills

I’ve really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you! <Introduce Challenging Thoughts Worksheet or Bully and Coach Self-Statements Worksheet.> I hope to see you back here soon for our next chat!



Bully or Coach?

Read about your brain bully and brain coach below and answer the questions. Your brain bully is a voice in your head that tells you negative things. Your brain coach is a voice in your head that encourages you. Place a “B” next to the statements that a brain bully would make. Place a “C” next to the statements that a brain coach would make. Circle the thoughts that you have.

- _____ 1. You can do it!
- _____ 2. You will fail at this.
- _____ 3. Don't even try.
- _____ 4. Try your hardest!
- _____ 5. I am proud of you.
- _____ 6. This is too hard for me.
- _____ 7. I can't do this.
- _____ 8. This is going to last forever.
- _____ 9. This is hard, and I can get through it.
- _____ 10. I don't have to be perfect.
- _____ 11. No one likes me.
- _____ 12. I can always ask for help.
- _____ 13. Things will never go back to normal.
- _____ 14. I'm not alone in this.
- _____ 15. This is just for now, not forever.

Your own statements:

- _____ 16. _____
- _____ 17. _____
- _____ 18. _____
- _____ 19. _____
- _____ 20. _____

Material adapted from "Closet Counselor" at <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Brain-Bully-and-Brain-Coach-A-Childs-Guide-to-Positive-and-Negative-Self-Talk-1519046>.



Lesson 5: Be a Solution Seeker

Skill: Cognitive Reframing

The goal of this lesson is to help students respond appropriately to problems that they may encounter. By being able to respond appropriately to potential problems, students can benefit in the following ways:

- Normalize problems in everyday life.
- Review and integrate the use of calm-down strategies and emotion identification.
- Learn about strategies for identifying the relative seriousness of a problem and find solutions (i.e., help-seeking behavior and independent resolution).
- Normalize ongoing and severe stressors, and use emotion regulation and social support in that context.

Student Lesson Plan

Children in your school may find themselves struggling with problems of all kinds. Some of those problems may be serious, and some may be small. Some may get blown out of proportion or catastrophized. This lesson is designed to help students with **problem-solving** by asking them to stop and think about the size of their problem, match their reactions to the problem by using their calm-down skills as needed, and determine when to ask an adult for help. The lesson also attempts to deal with those real-world problems that do not have simple solutions, like the outcomes from the COVID-19 pandemic. This lesson intends to teach children how to recognize that there are ways to find positive outcomes in negative experiences and normalize that some events and situations in life are very hard, but there is always hope. When delivering this lesson, feel free to think of your own examples, use your own stories and analogies, and utilize your pre-existing resources.

The content below includes basic scripting that you can use; however, you should use your own judgment on wording and extending the content. Remember, this lesson should only take about 15 minutes as children have short attention spans.

1. Introduction to Be a Solution-Seeker.

Greeting your students.

Welcome back!

Review of between-session work.

Did you have a chance to practice changing your Stinking Thinking thoughts this past week (or however long it has been since the last meeting)? <Review shifting thoughts and offer examples.>



Transition to new topic.

So far, we've talked about getting to know ourselves and learning how to identify our feelings and manage ourselves when we have strong feelings. Today, we will talk about how to solve problems. Sometimes, events or situations happen, and we are involved in them, and they may be scary or annoying or make us mad or sad. No one can tell us how to feel. You can be mad or sad, and that is ok! However, we need to think about how we handle the circumstances. You do not want to hold on to anger or sadness forever. That would be no fun, so what we want to learn today is how to find ways to solve those problems that make us feel bad or scared! Today we are going to learn how to be a Solution Seeker! Get out your magnifying glass because we are going to find clues to help us look for and solve problems.

2. Everyone has problems.

Normalizing problematic situations in life, emphasizing opportunities for growth, and normalizing help-seeking behavior

Everyone has problems. Problems are just a normal part of life, and asking for help is okay! You have probably faced some difficult problems before, and you will again, but, as a Solution Seeker, you will be better equipped to work through problems on your own. However, before you can decide whether you can do something on your own or whether you need a grown-up to help you, you need to know what clues to look for! Let's talk about clues for deciding how BIG your problem is.

3. Stop and breathe first!

Differentiating initial emotional reactions from the actual problem, and using a “stop and breathe” technique to begin problem-solving (stop, take a breath, name the problem, and name how you feel).

Remember, your feeling antennae help you to know things about yourself, the people around you, and your environment. But, sometimes, when things happen suddenly, or our feelings are big, our antennae can get a little too active. It may make us think that a problem is big when maybe it's not! So, to use our feeling antennae in the best way, we need to get them into a good position. To do that, when a problem pops up, we need to STOP. TAKE A DEEP BREATH. SAY THE PROBLEM, AND SAY HOW YOU FEEL. (Mime your antennae popping up). After you get your feeling antennae into that better position, they can give you better clues about what kind of problem you have and what steps you should take next. <Use an example here of a time someone might have over-reacted like a small problem that feels really overwhelming at first.>

4. How BIG is your problem?

Help students understand that there are different levels of seriousness or severity of problems, and help them identify their problems appropriately.



Small Problems

- You need to get your feeling antennae in a good place to find your clues! They are your FIRST clue about the size of your problem. If you have a small feeling in your body, you might just have a small problem. For example, you've probably already had a small problem happen today! A small problem is a situation that you can solve on your own and that doesn't hurt anybody. An example of a small problem could be spilling your crayons all over the floor. Nobody is hurt and you can pick those up all by yourself!

Medium Problems

- Maybe you have experienced a time when you have had a medium-sized problem. Your feeling antennae create a bigger feeling in your body. You may be picking up bigger waves of feelings. Maybe the problem is something that you're not sure how to fix, or maybe your feelings or your body is hurt. An example of a medium problem might be fighting with your brother or sister. You may have bigger feelings, you may have hurt feelings, and you might not know if you should tell a grown-up. For something like a medium problem, you could try to solve the problem on your own. You could try your calm-down strategies on your own and even decide to take a break from the problem for a while. If those strategies don't help, it's time to ask an adult to help you with your problem.

Big Problems

- When your feeling antennae are really buzzing fast because the feeling is big and you don't know what to do on your own to fix it, then you have a big problem. Anytime someone is hurt, like they are bleeding or they have really hurt feelings, then it's always time to ask a grown-up for help!

5. Match Your Solution to the Size of the Problem.

Help students match their strategy (what to do), regulate their emotional reaction appropriately, and know when to get help from an adult

First, we must figure how big our problem is. Remember, small problems are those that you can solve on your own and that did not hurt anyone. You should be able to easily fix those problems and feel better pretty fast. For medium problems, you may need help from an adult, but you can first try to fix it on your own and ask for help if you have trouble. These problems may create bigger feelings inside of you than when you have a small problem, but, if you don't start Stinking Thinking, you should feel better soon! What about those big problems? Anytime someone is hurt, or you can't fix the problem on your own, you need to ask a grown-up for help. In these situations, your feelings may be big, and using your calm-down skills should help you. It's okay to ask for help; even grown-ups need a hug or a friend to talk to, sometimes, when they have a big problem.

6. Super Big Problems – Maybe No Easy Answers.



Relate content to the COVID-19 pandemic and other serious challenges that do not lend themselves to answers, and normalize and reframe how serious situations can be managed

When there are big problems that are tough for everyone, like when people are sick or get injured or when situations are confusing, you need to KEEP practicing your calm-down strategies because letting the Stinking Thinking in will never help you solve the problem, and those thoughts could make everything feel BIGGER and WORSE. Big problems may not have easy fixes, but even big problems offer opportunities for us to learn things, reach out to people we care about, and remember what really matters to us. When you get good at being a Solution Seeker, you can even help other people determine the size of their problem and figure out what to do about it!

7. Closing and Practice

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills.

I've really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you! <Introduce Stop-Think-Find a Solution Worksheet> Can't wait to see you next time!



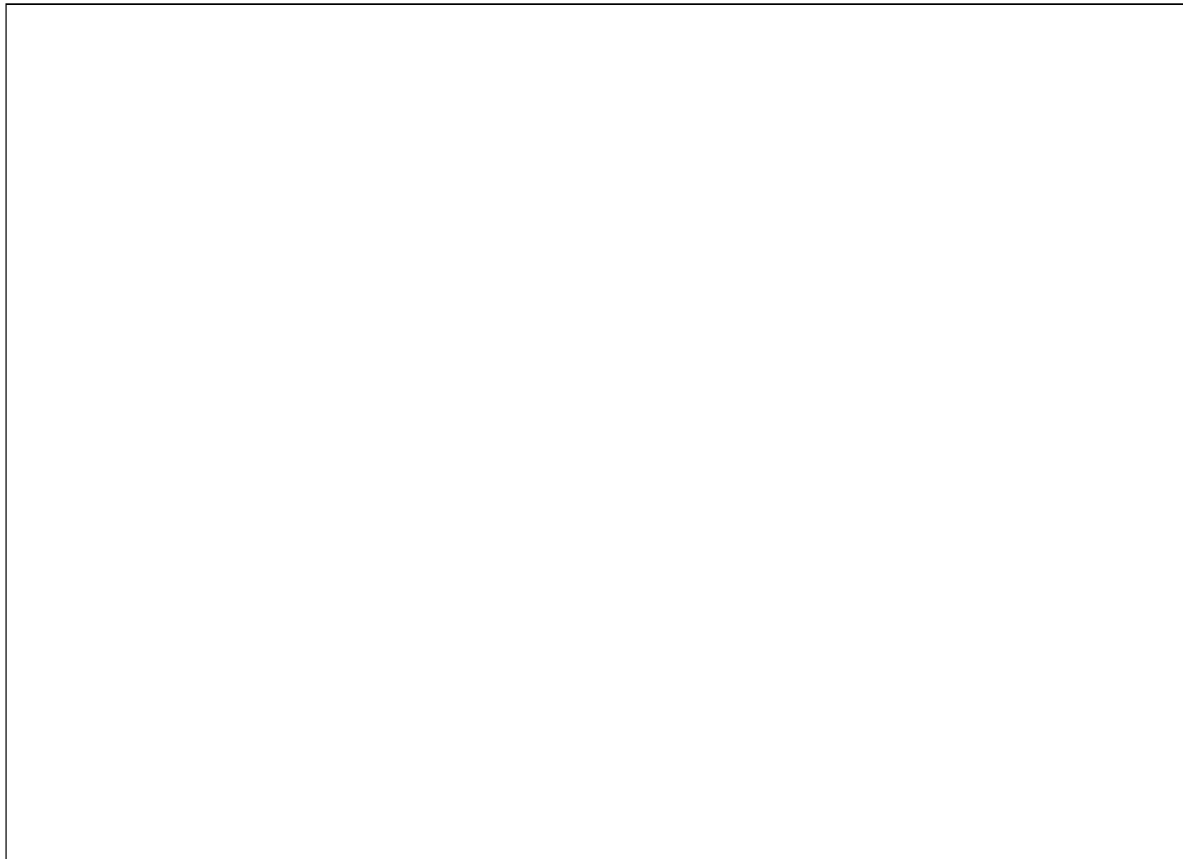
Stop – Think – Find a Solution!

When feelings get big, it can be hard to make the right choice. Use this worksheet at least ONCE this week!

1. STOP. Use a calm-down strategy. Circle the calm-down strategy you used.

Find Your Feet	Belly Breath	Squeeze the Sponge

2. Say the problem and how you feel out loud. Draw a picture of the problem and how it makes you feel.



3. How BIG or small is your problem? Circle one of the choices below.

BIG – Someone is hurt, and you do not know what to do, so you need to ask a grown-up for help.	Medium – You are not sure what to do; nobody is hurt, but you might need a grown-up to help you.	Small – You can fix it yourself, everyone is safe, and you do not need a grown-up's help.
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4. What do I do? Match the size of the problem you circled with a plan to help fix your problem.

BIG – Someone is hurt, and you do not know what to do, so you need to ask a grown-up for help.	Medium – You are not sure what to do; nobody is hurt, but you might need a grown-up to help you.	Small – You can fix it yourself, everyone is safe, and you do not need a grown-up's help
PLAN: ASK A GROWN-UP FOR HELP RIGHT AWAY!	PLAN: Try to fix the problem. If you get stuck, get a grown-up to help.	PLAN: Fix the problem.

5. How did it go? How do you feel now? Find a feeling word for how you feel.



Lesson 6: Be a Friend!

Skill: Social Skills

The goal of this lesson is to help students develop healthy friendships with peers, even when social distancing is necessary. Students will benefit in the following ways:

- Describe qualities of positive friends.
- Learn how to self-reflect when thinking about friendship qualities.
- Identify ways to engage with friends.

Student Lesson Plan

This lesson focuses on bolstering friendship skills. While relationships are important during every season of life, it can be especially complicated to make or maintain friendships when routines are disrupted, emotions are out of control, or students are new to a school. The purpose of this lesson is to describe the qualities of a friend.

When delivering this lesson, feel free to think of your own examples, use your own stories and analogies, and utilize your pre-existing resources.

The content below includes basic scripting that you can use; however, you should use your own judgment on wording and extending the content. Remember, this lesson should only take about 15 minutes as children have short attention spans.

1. Introduction to Be a Friend!

Greeting your students

Hi everyone! This is our last session together – I'm so glad I've had the chance to get to know you better!

Review of between-session work

Did you have a chance to practice problem-solving last week? <Review problem solving and offer examples.>

Transition to new topic

Today we're going to talk about friendships and what it means to be a friend. Let's get started!

2. What makes a good friend?



Describe qualities of positive friends

What is a friend? It's probably easy to think of an example of a friend you have, but it's a little harder to describe how you know someone is a good friend.

Why are friends important?

Most often, friends are people with whom we get along. Friends support one another, listen to each other, do activities together, and give each other advice. When you and your friend listen to each other talk, you can learn from each other and explore what you have in common and celebrate what makes you different. Friends can teach us so much, like how to play a game or how to make a craft.

<INSERT STORY ABOUT HOW A FRIEND TAUGHT YOU SOMETHING- EXAMPLE: Can you believe I had never tried a Reece's peanut butter cup until a friend offered to share one with me? Now that's a true friend!> Friends can introduce us to delicious new foods or interesting customs or celebrations. You can also learn to be accepting by appreciating the different qualities that make us unique. Remember what we discussed in our "All About Me" lesson the first time we met. When you accept people for who they are, you are being a respectful friend.

What makes a good friend

It is not always easy to be friends with everyone. Sometimes, you may want to be friends with a person, but you don't feel good when you're around them. Let's talk about friendship using these descriptions: warm fuzzy friendships and cold prickly friendships. When you have a warm fuzzy friendship, you usually feel happy when you are around this person. This friend also shows you respect by caring about how you're feeling. In a warm fuzzy friendship, you enjoy being with each other but also feel that it's ok if you both have other friends. Warm fuzzy friendships are great!

Now let's talk about cold prickly friendships. In a cold prickly friendship, you may feel sad or angry most of the time when you're around this person. This friend might make fun of you, threaten to hurt you, or tell other people your secrets. They might encourage you to make bad choices. If your friend tells you you're not allowed to be friends with anyone else but them, that is an example of a cold prickly friendship. If you have a cold prickly friendship, you probably need to talk to an adult to get some advice about how to handle that friendship. Remember, there is a difference between a friendship that has some pricklies and a friendship that is always cold and prickly. Everybody has struggles with their friends sometimes! It's ok for friends to disagree or even be upset with each other occasionally, and even some fuzzy friendships may, at times, need help from an adult. A cold prickly friendship happens what you feel bad most of the time while you are with this person. You can think of it like this: some pricklies are ok, but if you have pricklies all the time, it might not be the right friendship for you.

3. Be the kind of friend you'd like to have!

Learn how to self-reflect when thinking about friendship qualities

Now, we're going to talk about how to know if you're being a good friend. In other words, are you a prickly friend or a fuzzy friend? Fuzzy friends are mostly kind and respectful. They care about their friend's feelings and how their friend is doing. They are good at compromising, which means



they do some of what they want and some of what the friend wants. For example, if the friends want to play different games, a fuzzy friend might agree to play the game they want to play for 10 minutes and then switch to the game their friend wants to play for 10 minutes. Fuzzy friends usually can make and keep friends easily because other people enjoy being around them. You have probably heard of the saying, “treat people how you want to be treated.” In friendships, we say, “be the kind of friend you’d like to have.” Fuzzy friends think about how they’re acting and if they are treating others in a way in which they want to be treated. Can you think of ways to show that you are a good friend?

<Discuss positive friendship qualities and ideas to make friends.>

4. How to cope when friendships are challenging.

Learn positive coping skills to use when friends do not want to play

Have you ever really wanted to play with a friend, and they say “no”? <Tell an example or ask students to share an example.> If a friend does not want to play on a certain day or play a game you want to play, does that mean that they don’t like you? It may feel that way, but, sometimes, friends don’t feel well; they are bored of a game; they want to play with someone else; or they have other reasons for why they don’t want to play, and those reasons may not be about you. However, some situations can feel scary or sad when a friend doesn’t want to play with you, and you may feel like they don’t want to be your friend. When you start feeling worried about your friendship, your feelings antennae may start really buzzing! You may notice that Stinking Thinking again where you think things like “they don’t like me anymore” or “I never get to play what I want.” How can we use our calm-down skills and positive self-talk to help? <Discuss ways to calm down the feeling, use calm down skills.>

Learn positive coping skills to use during conflicts with friends

Sometimes, everyone has trouble getting along with their friends. Friends may not agree on how to play a game, may like different rules or toys, or may say things that hurt each other’s feelings. One time, I was in a bad mood, and a friend asked me something, and I kind of snapped at her. I didn’t mean to, but my feelings antennae were super loud, and I didn’t even realize until afterwards that I had hurt her feelings. <Or insert some other examples about unintentional conflict with friends here. Remind students to NOT use the names of other students in their example.> Have you had times when you made a mistake, or a friend hurt your feelings? <Allow children to share if they are comfortable. Emphasize that they should not name specific students in their examples.> See? It is normal for friends to have trouble getting along sometimes. The important thing for being a good friend is to solve the problem and get back to having fun together! Fuzzy friends are there for each other no matter what, and they can still be friends even if they don’t always agree. So, let’s talk about what to do when we have trouble getting along with friends. The FIRST step is to CALM DOWN. Remember, we don’t make good choices when we are too upset. Who can tell me ways to calm down? <Review calm down strategies.> The SECOND step is to say the problem and how you feel. So, suppose a friend wanted to take the first turn during your UNO game, and you don’t think it’s fair. You could say, “I feel upset that you got to take the first turn. I would like to have turns to go first too.” The last step is to LISTEN to what your friend says and decide if you can work it out together (by taking turns or talking about it) or if you need to ask



a grown-up for help. You don't have to tattletale on your friends! You can just say, "I think we need help because we're not solving our problem on our own. Let's ask <insert name here> if they have any ideas."

Now, let's review those steps again. What do we do FIRST? <Review problem solving steps with a new example.>

When to ask for help with social problems

Some problems with friends are easy to solve, like taking turns or listening to each other's ideas. Other problems need a grown-up's help to solve the issue. Sometimes, a person in our class or a person we think is a friend hurts us, is hurting themselves, or is being hurt. If you know a friend is saying mean things about other people or is hitting or putting their hands on other people, or they say someone is being mean or hurting them, we need to find help RIGHT AWAY. Can you think of a time when it's a good idea to get help right away? <Get examples from students, help them decide if they need an adult, or offer examples and have students identify the best way to get help.>

Everybody needs help once in a while. Being a good friend means getting HELP right away from a grown-up when someone is being hurt or is hurting others with words, actions, or hands.

5. Closing and Practice

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills

We've spent a lot of time together talking about feelings, solving problems, and being a good friend. I've enjoyed spending time with you! What was your favorite part about our time together? <Allow students to share examples.> Remember that you can always ask for help!



Grade 3-6 Lesson Plans

Lesson 1: All About Me

Skill: Positive Self-Concept

By having a positive self-concept, students can benefit in the following ways:

- Identify positive and unique aspects of themselves.
- Recognize that personal value is not necessarily related to competition with others.
- Learn about and normalize the concept that all people make mistakes, and these mistakes are separate from the person's intrinsic value.
- Understand how to integrate personal values and strengths, and realize there are areas for improvement and growth.

Student Lesson Plan

One of the most common reasons for children and adults to seek therapy is due to problems with their self-concept. During typical development, children will develop core beliefs about their strengths, weaknesses, and value as a person. The ways in which these occur can either support resilience or lead to long-term problems like anxiety, depression, and specific phobias. In times of increased stress, children may develop ideas related to how they are coping such as “I’m not good enough” (because of comparisons to peers or older siblings) or “I’m not that important” (because of misinterpreting parents’ actions while trying to work full-time from home). **Positive asset searching** is one way that we can give students a foundation for recognizing their own value and, thus, build resilience in times of stress. Research has indicated that when people are able to have healthy, realistic views of their own capabilities, they are better able to manage challenges in their lives. Of course, none of this information is surprising or new to you as a trained expert in working with children! We encourage you to use the lesson plan below flexibly as the script is just a suggestion to get you started. Use your own examples, materials, and judgment to expand on or alter the content as you desire. Given children’s limited attention spans, we would recommend keeping your lesson to about 15 minutes. We suggest having students use a dedicated notebook for these sessions but feel free to adjust or include other ideas as appropriate.

1. Introduction to All About Me.

Greeting your students and introduction to the series

“Hello everybody! Most of you have probably seen me at school. I’m <insert name here>, and I’m the <insert role here> at <insert school here>. Like we talked about last time we met, we’re getting



together so we can talk about skills and tricks that you can use to help yourselves be the best person you can be and feel good. I would like to start with helping you get to know YOURSELF just like you would get to know a new friend. That may sound a little weird to some of you, but think of it this way, YOU are going to be with YOU every day of your life! It makes good sense to want to know yourself and remember your strengths!

2. Everybody has positive and unique characteristics that make them who they are. Recognizing them is one way of building your “muscles” of being the best version of yourself.

Identifying positive and unique aspects within yourself.

You’ve probably heard about how “everyone is unique.” You may feel like that’s not true because many people have qualities and characteristics in common, but think of it like this, even identical twins, who have the EXACT same genes, are not exactly alike. People have characteristics and qualities in common and features or temperaments that are similar, but no two people are the same. People are different and have different strengths, so let’s think about ways that people can be different from us and good. We can think about strengths in different categories or types. For example, <go through and discuss examples of each with students>

- Brain/ Cognitive Strengths – doing schoolwork (reading, math, writing, science), playing video games, solving problems, remembering and learning things
- Social/ Friendship Strengths – making and keeping friends, understanding other people’s ideas, listening to others, speaking to others in ways they understand
- Artistic/ Creative Strengths – making things, painting, drawing, writing stories, appreciating/ enjoying art
- Character Strengths – honesty, integrity, curiosity, eagerness, helping others, loyalty
- Physicality/ Athletic Strengths – watching and understanding sports, exercising, playing sports or games, riding horses
- Others...

Everything “counts” (i.e., dispelling social comparisons).

Sometimes, when people think about what they are good at, they focus on how good they are at that activity compared to OTHER people. For example, if you love to play basketball but you are not the best on the team, you may want to say, “well, I’m not that good at basketball.” However, how good you are compared to OTHERS at something you love to do is not what makes you unique. What makes you unique is that you enjoy doing the activity, and it is an important part of how you live your life. Be sure to think of all of the things that make your life fun and special!

Reframing minimizing good behavior and effort

Some people may forget that they are special or good because they believe that certain actions don’t really “count.” For example, suppose your teacher asks you to put something away or fix a mistake and you follow those directions immediately and do a good job. Some people may say “well that doesn’t count because that’s just what I’m supposed to do.” It does count! Consider this,



there are many people who choose not to follow directions, argue with teachers or parents, or act rude when someone asks them to fix a mistake. If you CHOOSE to follow directions and be polite, your actions “count,” and they illustrate who you are as a person, and you are a good person!

Recognizing the best of who you are can help you to use those qualities to make good choices.

Now that we’ve talked about some characteristics that can make people special, think of THREE qualities that you think make you special or unique. You may write them down or just think about them in your head. These can be activities you are good at or like to do or features that are unique to you. I’ll give you a second to think about it. <Pause to allow reflection.>

3. Normalizing mistakes is part of the human experience. Mistakes are separate from intrinsic value.

Mistakes are part of everyone’s life

Just like all people have strengths and talents, all people make mistakes. Mistakes may be big or small, but everyone, even adults, makes mistakes at times. One example I like to talk about is <insert a personal story about something you’re not so good at or that you must work hard at; an example is inserted here for context> I really can be forgetful! I must write tasks, appointments, ideas down or I forget them. Believe me, I’ve forgotten some things, and that has created problems—like forgetting my car keys or being late to important meeting. Now, I remind myself that, if I use a list, I forget a lot less. Remember that mistakes are just part of being a person, and if we think about them, they can be a chance for us to learn to do better. Sometimes, it is important for us to make a mistake; remember, what is important is the lessons we learn from those mistakes.

Making bad choices or mistakes is separate from intrinsic value as a person.

Have you ever made a big mistake or made a bad choice, and you felt mad, guilty, or unhappy about it? Maybe you said something unkind that you didn’t mean or broke an expensive piece of furniture or forgot an important assignment for school. When those kinds of mistakes happen, you become confused about the difference between your behavior (how you act) and your value (who you are as a person). When people make mistakes, they may say unkind things to themselves like, “I am so stupid!” or “I’m not a nice person!” These statements are NOT true! Making mistakes can be upsetting, but what you DID is NOT the same thing as who you are. Remember, making a mistake is a chance to learn how to do better. A mistake does not change all of the other good qualities that make you who you are!

4. Integration of positive self-concept and continual growth and change.

All people have positive qualities, and all people have areas in their lives that need to be improved

It may be tricky to remember this, but one of the best ways to get to know yourself is to remember



that you have strengths and you always have areas where you could do better. For example, a person can be good at making friends but still struggle with learning math concepts in school. Some people may be good at doing sports or schoolwork but have a difficult time with managing angry feelings. Remember that people have strengths, AND they have tasks that they need to work on at the same time. Strengths are like erasers that help us fix our mistakes!

Showing the contrast of NOT having any areas for growth.

Consider this, what if you didn't have any new information to learn or new challenges to overcome? That idea may seem nice, but your life would be BORING! If people didn't have new concepts or skills to learn or trials to overcome, they would avoid the pain that comes from making mistakes, but there wouldn't be any adventures either. Harry Potter, <insert other characters from children's fiction here> would not have the scary, exciting, and fun stories to share if everything was always perfect, right? So, we must remember that mistakes, activities, and tasks that we're not good at and other challenges can present opportunities when we learn the most!

5. Getting to know the entirety of yourself is a strength.

When we know our weaknesses and challenges, we can practice getting better

Understanding that we are not good at doing everything, can help us determine when to ask for help, what we need to work on, and practice what we need to do differently. If we didn't know our mistakes, we would make the same ones repeatedly and not learn and not grow as a person! So, when we recognize our mistakes, we should see them as a chance to improve ourselves. We should not feel ashamed because everyone makes mistakes!

When we remember what makes us special and strong, we can use those skills to make our lives better

While we all have areas in our lives where we could do better, we must remember that we are good at some things and that makes us special and strong. The activities that we enjoy, the accomplishments we are proud of, the characteristics that make us special—these are the qualities to remember because they can help us overcome difficult times. Be sure to remember what makes you good and special! Your mistakes don't erase all of your positive abilities!

6. Closing and Practice.

Provide an ending that includes a positive message

Remind students about ways to continue practicing skills: I've really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you! I think it would be a good idea if you would make a Strengths Chain before the next time, I see you.

[Directions for creating a strengths chain.](#)

I'm looking forward to working with you!



Lesson 2: Feelings Can Be Heavy

Skill: Emotion Identification

The goal of this lesson is to help students identify emotions. By being able to identify emotions, students can benefit in the following ways:

- Understand feelings and feeling words.
- Identify bodily awareness of emotions.
- Differentiate between emotions and behaviors.

Student Lesson Plan

Behind every behavior is a feeling, and children who can accurately identify their feelings are better able to express themselves appropriately. The purpose of this lesson is to introduce children to **emotion identification and recognition** through the analogy of carrying the “weight” of feelings (heaviest for sad; less heavy for anger; lighter for worries or irritation; lightest for happy). Using this analogy can help students learn how to identify these feelings in themselves and others. Children will also understand how feelings prompt behavior and will learn that, while all feelings are acceptable, some behaviors are unacceptable.

When delivering this lesson, feel free to think of your own examples, use your own stories and analogies, and utilize your pre-existing resources.

The content below includes basic scripting that you can use; however, you should use your own judgment on wording and extending the content. Remember, this lesson should only take about 15 minutes as children have short attention spans.

1. Introduction to Feelings Can be Heavy.

Greeting your students.

Hello everybody! Thanks for coming today! I hope you’ve been doing some fun stuff. <Ask students what was good about their days/ weeks.>

Review of between-session work.

Let’s look at your Strengths Chains. What did you figure out? Who feels like they want to share? <If students do not share, share an example from your own life this past week.>

Transition to new topic.

I’m so glad you all had a chance to remember your strengths! I was thinking about how different ideas and situations can make us feel and how those feelings have a different weight on our bodies and minds. <Insert an example of times that you lifted or moved things of different weights



and how challenging or easy it can be.> Today, we are going to talk about how different feelings may feel like they have a different weight to us.

2. Think of feelings as different weights.

Identify four weight “groups” of feelings.

Kids and adults may have a lot of different feelings during the day. I like to think about feelings as being different weights.

Piano Feelings.

- Imagine you had to pick up a whole piano by yourself. How do you think that would feel? It would probably feel miserable and impossible. That’s what it’s like when we feel sad, disappointed, or powerless. We feel like we can’t do the task regardless of how hard we try. When we experience the heaviest feelings, like picking up a piano by ourselves, we may feel like we need more energy to get back to feeling good. What does sad or disappointed feel like in your body? <Discuss sad/ powerless feelings.>

Big Box Heavy Feelings.

- Sometimes we can lift an object, but it HURTS to hold it. Perhaps, you feel like you could only take a few steps while carrying it. Think about carrying a big box. You can’t see around it, so you can’t tell where you’re walking. Your arms are shaking, and your legs feel like Jello. When you lift an object like that, you may THINK you can handle it, but your face gets red, and you become frustrated. This may describe how you feel when you are angry or frustrated. How do you feel when you’re angry? What do you notice about your body? Do you ever notice how tired you get after being angry for a while? <Discuss mad/ frustrated feelings.>

Backpack Feelings.

- Have you ever picked up an object that doesn’t FEEL heavy, but, after you carry it for a while, you’re tired? Perhaps, this object could be like your backpack. Sometimes, when you feel worried or anxious, you may feel this way. At first, it doesn’t seem like a big deal, but when you’ve been worried for a long time, this emotion takes its toll on your body. What do you feel in your body when you feel anxious or worried? Do you notice that your heart is pumping hard, or do you have trouble breathing? Do you ever feel sick to your stomach or have pain in your body? <Discuss worried and anxious feelings.>

Light as a Feather Feelings.

- Other times, we just feel good—there’s nothing to pick up or carry. You feel free and light. These are feelings we have when we are happy, relaxed, or content. What do you feel in your body when you are happy or relaxed? What do you notice? <Discuss content/ peaceful/ happy feelings.> Later, you will do an activity to sort feeling words into different weights. In fact, you may notice that you have LOTS of weights going on at the same time. Some feelings (like worried or nervous) can feel heavier the longer you carry them around! We’ll talk about how feelings can shift and change over time.



3. Use Your Body to Know How You're Feeling.

Label feelings accurately using internal (bodily) and external (situational) clues.

We find that explaining or describing how we feel can be difficult. Our feelings or emotions are tools that can help us determine how we really feel. Our feelings can help us search for clues about how we feel in two places—inside our bodies and outside our bodies. Let's practice with an example. Pretend you just got a math assignment from school but forget how to do it. First, do a quick scan of your body. How does it feel? If your heart was beating a little faster than normal and your stomach was starting to feel sick, you may be feeling anxious or worried, and your body is telling you this. If your body was starting to feel out of control, like if your heart was really racing or you were crying, your feelings would get a clue that you were having a “carry a piano by yourself” feeling. If your body felt normal, you may be feeling calm or peaceful. The other place your feelings can look for clues is on the outside. Sometimes, you might want to describe what just happened to help you understand how you feel. For example, you might say to yourself, “I just got homework that I don't know how to do.” When you understand what just happened, you will have a clearer picture of the situation. Other times, someone else may ask about how you're acting or how you are feeling. That's another “outside” clue you can use to know how you're feeling. With those two clues—what's going on inside and outside your body—your feelings may be able to sense how much weight you are carrying. Then, you can use your Feeling Word Bank to pick which word best describes how you feel.

Did you know that science tells us that just by NAMING the feeling we are having, it signals our brain to start calming down? I know that sounds weird, but if you can know and name what you feel, you are on your way to feeling better!

4. Feelings Are Different from Behaviors.

Feelings are different from behaviors.

Here is a tricky question: Is it ok to have feelings that are angry or mean, or sad and powerless, or stressed and scared? The answer is YES! Although all feelings don't necessarily feel good in your body, all feelings are ok. Having heavy feelings can be helpful because they let us to know that we need to ask for help! Is it ok to hurt someone because you feel angry? Of course, that answer is NO. Remember, feelings are different from behaviors. Feelings are what is happening in your body or brain. Behaviors are what you do WITH your body, your words, and your choices. While all feelings are ok, behaviors can be ok or not ok. Let's pretend your brother or sister cheated at a game you are playing together. You might feel a feel angry. What happens after that is the behavior. You could choose to take a deep breath and tell your sibling about why you are angry, or you might choose to hit them. Being angry is okay, but hitting is not. Remember, all feelings are ok, and you are in control of what you do about your feelings.

People can feel differently; feelings can be big or small

People may act differently than you would act in a certain situation even though they may have the same feeling. Think about a surprise birthday party. One person might feel excited and happy about having a surprise party. Another person might feel upset or nervous about a surprise party



because they prefer to know what is going on ahead of time. Is one of those feelings about a surprise party better than the others? You guessed it; they're both ok! Because everybody has different reactions, everyone's feelings will be different even if they go through the same event or circumstance. No one can ever tell you how you "should" feel about something; the way you feel inside yourself is always right.

5. Closing and Practice.

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills

Today, we talked about how feelings can have different weights and how feelings are different from behaviors. Great job using your picking up clues about complicated feelings! For practice this week, I want you to try this activity <introduce Weightlifter Word Bank Activity>. Later, we'll talk about tricks for handling strong feelings. But the first step to handling feelings, big or small, is always to name the feeling. I'll see you again soon!



Weightlifter Word Bank Activity

Directions: Read about feelings below, and answer the questions. Caregivers are encouraged to provide support to students who need help reading or completing the activity.

Feelings can be described in different weightlifter groups.

Piano Feelings make us feel slow or sad. When we have Piano Feelings, we need more energy to get back to feeling good.

Light as a Feather Feelings make us feel calm and good. When we have Light as a Feather Feelings, we're focused and feeling good.

Backpack Feelings make us feel a little worked up, like feeling worried or silly. When we have Backpack Feelings, we have a little more energy than usual and may need to use a strategy to get back to calm.





Big Box Feelings make us feel out of control. When we have Big Box Feelings, we need to "stop" and use a strategy to feel better.

1. Think of example feeling words for each of the weightlifter groups.
2. Write the words within the correct group on the next page.
3. For more examples, use the Feelings Wheel.
4. Use your personal Feelings Word Bank whenever you need help explaining how you feel!

Information adapted from Kuypers, L. M., & Winner, M. G. (2011). *The zones of regulation: A curriculum designed to foster self-regulation and emotional control*. Think Social Publishing Incorporated.



's Feelings Word Bank

Piano Feelings	Big Box Feelings	Backpack Feelings	Light as a Feather Feelings
 <p><u>Examples:</u> Sad, Slow</p>	 <p><u>Examples:</u> Angry, Upset</p>	 <p><u>Examples:</u> Nervous, Silly</p>	 <p><u>Examples:</u> Peaceful, Happy</p>

Information adapted from Kuypers, L. M., & Winner, M. G. (2011). *The zones of regulation: A curriculum designed to foster self-regulation and emotional control*. Think Social Publishing Incorporated.



Feelings Wheel



This image can be found at <https://feelingswheel.com/>



Lesson 3: Calming Down Instructor Script

Skill: Emotion Regulation

The goal of this lesson is to help students learn how to regulate their emotions. By being able to regulate their emotions, students can benefit in the following ways:

- Learn about the importance of managing strong feelings, and understand how to minimize making poor choices.
- Learn how to use strategies for immediate self-soothing including grounding (Find-Your-Feet), diaphragmatic breathing (Belly Breathing), and muscle relaxation (Squeeze Out Stress).
- Understand and explain the importance of practicing strategies when they are calm.

Student Lesson Plan

Given the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, including lack of enough exercise, jarring changes in routines, increased parental stress, and social isolation, many students may need help learning to calm down. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic shut-down and resulting challenges have become “part of the norm” in our lives, there are lingering effects and students who need extra help. There are many methods students can use to center themselves, calm down, and feel better. For this learning activity, presenting simple coping skills may be beneficial. You may want to emphasize to students that the use of **calm-down strategies** is like exercising any other muscle, and waiting until “game day” to practice a critical skill is not effective. The same is true for using coping skills; we need to practice. The present lesson will cover three simple strategies that students should be encouraged to practice daily, and handouts and worksheets are provided to assist with reminding students how to use the techniques. You likely have learned many of these strategies and others as part of your early childhood-development training, so use the lesson plan flexibly as the script is just a suggestion to get you started. Use your own examples, materials, and judgment to expand on or alter the content as you desire. Given children’s limited attention spans, we recommend keeping your lesson to about 15 minutes..

1. Introduction to Calming Down.

Introduce yourself and the topic

Hello everybody! Glad to see you back here!

Review of between-session work.

Did any of you get a chance to do your Weightlifter Worksheet? Let’s talk about how some of these feeling words connect to our weights. <Discuss with students or if they did not complete it, review the weights, and talk about how feeling words may relate.>

Transition to new topic.



Since we've been talking about feelings, today, I would like to talk about how to calm down. Life can get a little tough sometimes. Being a kid is not easy! It's important for you to learn how to calm your feelings, so you can feel better and make better choices!

2. Normalizing having strong feelings that are uncomfortable.

Connecting feeling identification to feeling modulation and regulation

We've talked about naming our feelings and using our bodies and outside clues to understand how we're feeling. We've also talked about the difference between how we feel and how we choose to act. But, we haven't talked about what to do when our feelings get hard to manage. Our bodies give us clues about when our feelings are starting to get so strong that we feel like we're out of control. When we feel like we're starting to get overwhelmed, we need to use a calm-down strategy, so we don't make unhealthy or dangerous choices. Naming how we feel is the first step to being able to calm down.

Normalizing strong feelings and emotional arousal

Sometimes, when we have strong feelings, we feel like we're all alone—like nobody could understand how bad we are feeling or how hard it is for us to feel better. Even though you may feel like that, that is really just your feelings being OUT OF CONTROL! Everyone experiences times when feelings get scary or too heavy. Even adults, who seem to have a lot of things figured out, need help with feelings. So, when you have strong feelings, remember you are not alone, and you can find ways to feel better. No feelings last forever, even the very strongest ones. If you have been feeling sad or mad for a long time, you may want to talk to your parents, teacher, counselor, school psychologist, or other trusted adult for help.

3. Emphasizing that strong feelings can sometimes lead to poor choices and inappropriate behavior.

Connection between hyperarousal and poor decision-making

When our feelings are in the trying-to-lift-a-piano zone, our bodies can feel out of control. One time, I had a disagreement with a friend at work, and I was so mad that I didn't even know what to say. My heart was racing, my stomach felt sick, and I also wanted to cry. <Insert another appropriate example if you prefer.> It was tough! When feelings are that strong, your emotions can get in the way of making good choices. With all of those feelings affecting your body, how can you think clearly? If I had let my feelings tell me what to do when I was mad, I might have said mean words to my friend! I don't want to do that because, no matter how mad I feel, that person is my friend, and I want to solve the problem and not fight! So, we must figure out a way to put that piano, box, or backpack down, so we can use our brain to make good choices.

4. Learning to calm down is like any other skill; it requires practice when you are already feeling good.



Emphasizing the connection between skills and agency (e.g., being able to make good choices)

Calming our feelings requires some practice because, when our emotions get strong, it might be hard to get them to quiet down. Learning to calm down is just like anything else you need to practice to get good at, like learning how to play soccer or an instrument or learning your math facts. It may seem strange to think of calming down as something that you need to practice, like your trumpet or piano, but, if we don't practice our calming-down strategies, we won't be able to quiet down our strong emotions. When our feelings get too strong, we might make poor choices that may not feel good and that may get us into trouble. So, learning how to calm down doesn't erase sad, mad, angry, or uncomfortable feelings, but it can help you gain control, so you can think and talk about your feelings and get help from others.

5. Three ways to calm down.

There are many ways to calm down; that's the good news. I'm going to talk about a few tricks that I use to calm down, and it's important that you think about and pick your favorite or a couple of favorites. Can you already think of some methods that have helped you calm down in the past? Maybe you went outside for a walk, spent time alone in your room, or talked to a friend. If those ways worked for you, those are good calm-down methods. What's most important is to choose calm-down strategies that do not allow you to hurt yourself, someone else, or property.

Find-Your-Feet (grounding/ mindfulness strategy).

When our feelings are strong, we can use our feet to help calm them down. Your brain can't pay attention to your feet and your feelings at the same time, so if you focus on your feet, your feelings must get a little quieter. When you start noticing a big feeling, maybe being scared or mad, you need to STOP and look down at your feet. When you look at your feet, you will notice some things: where are your feet (where are you standing or are your feet even on the ground)? Are you standing on carpet, grass, wood, tile? What is on your feet? Do you have shoes, socks, bare feet, toenail polish? How do your feet feel? Do they feel sweaty, cold, itchy, tingly? Let's practice that right now together. Answer out loud or quietly to yourself. Remember, it might feel silly if you don't have a strong feeling right now, but we must practice our calm-down strategies when we're feeling calm, so we can use these to help us feel better when we're having big or strong feelings!

Belly Breathing (diaphragmatic breathing)

Did you know that, sometimes, when people are upset, they hold their breath, and they don't even know they are doing that? When people's feelings are strong, it is important that they are getting enough air. When people take the right kind of deep breath—a belly breath—they notice that their heart slows down, they feel less sick to their stomach, and they start to feel a little better. Belly breathing is special, though, and it takes some practice. Let's get started. Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Take a slow breath through your nose, and feel your belly fill up with air. When you're breathing in, imagine that you're smelling a cup of hot chocolate or some other smell you like (e.g., roses, chocolate chip cookies). I'm going to count to four while we smell



that good smell slowly. Now breathe out, and feel your belly and your chest go empty. Let's imagine that we are blowing the steam from the hot chocolate or blowing out birthday candles. I'm going to count to five while we do this. Great! Let's try that again. Slowly, smell and blow. Good job!

Squeeze Out Stress (muscle relaxation).

Another way for us to calm down is to squeeze out our strong feelings. When we are upset, our muscles can get tense especially in our shoulders, tummy, arms, and legs. Those tight muscles are our body's way of trying to get us ready for an emergency. But a strong feeling isn't always a real emergency, so having that tension can make us tired! It can be tricky to relax our muscles by thinking "relax" to ourselves, so a better way to get that tension out is to SQUEEZE it out. Let's try it together! I want you to make fists with both hands and imagine that you are squeezing a sponge that is full of all of your strong feelings. We're going to squeeze that sponge super hard. When you have a big feeling, your whole body is a sponge, and you need to squeeze it super tight to get all of the feeling out. Even your face and your toes and your tummy and your shoulders. Keep squeezing! How much feeling can we squeeze out? Okay, now we're going to let go of the sponge, and you can feel your hands and shoulders and tummy and legs and face relax. Do you feel more relaxed? Let's try it again. When you are feeling a strong feeling and you notice you are tense, squeezing that sponge can help you let go of some of your feelings! You can even try doing it with belly breathing!

6. Encouragement to practice.

Help students understand that using relaxation and calm-down techniques is a skill that should be practiced before they experience distress. Hopefully, their calm-down strategies will become behaviors that they can build on.

That was a lot of practice! Did you know that calming down is just like building muscles? If you only work out one time, do you expect that you'll be very strong? Probably not, right? Doing exercises will help your body become strong, so the same thing is true for your calm-down muscles in your brain. You can't learn to play baseball by just watching games on TV or playing it one or two times. You must play baseball a lot and get help from people who know a lot about baseball. For your calm-down muscles, you need to practice EVERY DAY. When you need help with using your calm-down muscles, ask a grown-up to help breathe with you or squeeze the sponge. Be sure to practice so, when you're having heavy feelings, your strong muscles can help you to feel better faster!

7. Closing.

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills.



I've really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you today! I want you to practice building your calm-down muscles before next time <introduce Additional Relaxation Techniques handout>. I hope to see you back here for our next chat!



Additional Relaxation Strategies

Practice using the additional relaxation strategies that are listed below. Find a strategy or strategies that work for you!

- **Stairway:** Imagine yourself standing on the top of a 10-step stairway, any kind you want. With each breath, count backwards from 10 to 1 as you visualize yourself walking down the stairs and becoming more relaxed with each step. *Optional: You can continue this exercise by imagining that you have arrived at a special, personal place; then explore this place in your mind.
- **Filling Your Room:** Close your eyes and relax. Imagine yourself sitting quietly in an empty room. Notice how you feel. Now imagine adding a person or object that you would especially like to have with you in your room. Observe how you feel. Now add someone or something else and observe how you feel. Continue adding people and special objects or decorations to your room until you have filled it to your satisfaction. Pay attention to how full, satisfied, and safe you feel.
- **Blackboard Technique:** Sit quietly and take several deep, relaxing breaths. Imagine yourself traveling to a private place where you notice a blackboard. Written on the blackboard are three mean statements that others have made about you in the past. Notice how you feel when you read these. Walk up to the blackboard, erase the statements, and write three positive statements about yourself in response. Notice how you feel when you read them. Take a deep breath and remind yourself that you can make these positive statements to yourself whenever you need to.
- **Feelings fan.** Breathe in and imagine your chest and stomach are filling up with your big feeling instead of air. Breathe out and imagine you are blowing the big feeling out of your body.
- **Breath painting.** Breathe in and imagine you are dipping a brush in paint. Breathe out and use your breath as your paintbrush. Imagine your breaths out are blowing out colored paint. Try to paint the whole room.
- **Beach Breathing.** Breathe in and pretend that you are using your breath in to draw a wave toward the shore. Let it come in and wash over your feet. Breathe out and pretend that your breath is pushing the wave back into the ocean, and that wave is taking away tension as it washes back over your feet.
- **Infinity breaths.** Draw an infinity sign, or a number 8, on a piece of paper. Use a finger to trace one side of the figure while breathing in, and trace the other side while breathing out. You can also try using a finger, hand, or even foot to draw the figure 8 in the air while you practice breathing.
- **Wave breathing.** Lay down and place a small toy on your belly. Take deep, slow breaths, and pretend that your belly is the ocean, and the toy is riding the waves up and down. Prop your head up so you can watch the toy rise and fall with your breath.
- **Breathing and movement.** Combine simple movements with deep breathing. For example, breathe in and slowly raise your arms over your head. Breathe out and slowly lower your arms.



Lesson 4: Changing Thoughts to Feel Better

Skill: Cognitive Reframing

The goal of this lesson is to help students adjust negative thoughts. By being able to adjust their negative thoughts, students can benefit in the following ways:

- Acknowledge how thought patterns can encourage self-soothing or increase negative emotions.
- Use positive self-talk to help strong feelings or painful feelings better.
- Adjust negative self-talk (“Stinking Thinking”) to decrease distress.
- Use basic cognitive reframing including the use of “and” or “but” to change unhelpful or irrational thoughts.
 - Adding an “and”: “I feel scared right now AND I have a Mom who will hug me.”
 - Adding a “but”: “I didn’t do so well on that BUT I’m learning to do better”

Student Lesson Plan

Helping students learn how to manage emotions can be a two-pronged approach. Using calming-down strategies (covered in the previous lesson) can help students decrease physiological arousal; however, making additional adjustments to thought patterns can also be useful for students. As educational professionals, you know how adults can sometimes “miss the mark” on helping students feel better! Shouting at a panicked student to “take deep breaths” or sternly telling them that “there’s nothing to worry about, just calm down” is largely unhelpful but often used. People who use ongoing negative self-talk, limit beliefs, focus on “what’s wrong,” and constantly think about the worst-case scenario may not be helped by simply using mindfulness and deep breathing. Students must also learn ways to challenge the thoughts that contribute to, sustain, and amplify their feelings of distress. **Cognitive reframing** is an advanced skill that not all students can attain right away, but, in this lesson, ideas for ways that even young students can begin to practice reframing thoughts are offered. Specifically, the lesson covers understanding how to adjust or quiet negative self-talk and unhelpful thoughts and examines how to boost positive or more helpful thoughts in the process. This script is just a suggestion to get you started. Use your own examples, materials, and judgment to expand on or alter the content as you desire. Given children’s limited attention spans, we recommend keeping your lesson to about 15 minutes.

1. Introduction to Changing Thoughts to Feel Better.

Greeting your students and introducing cognitive reframing lesson

Hi everyone! It’s good to be with you again!

Review of between-session work.



What kinds of calming-down practice were you able to do since last time we met? <Discuss with students or if they did not practice, review one of the calm-down strategies, and review why it is important to practice.>

Transition to new topic.

Today, I want to talk with you about strategies you can use to help you feel better! Last time we talked about ways to practice how to calm down, but, today, we are going to talk about another way to help us feel better. We are going to be learning about how to challenge our negative thoughts. These are the thoughts that make situations or events seem worse than they are and the thoughts that make us have unkind and untrue thoughts about ourselves. Remember all that talk about how GOOD you are? You need to remember that. Many people sometimes struggle with thoughts that make them feel worse, so, today, we'll talk about how to work through negative thoughts.

2. How thoughts affect our feelings for better or for worse.

Introduce the idea that thoughts have an impact on how we feel. We can use our thoughts to feel better, but some of our thoughts can make us feel worse

Did you know that people think THOUSANDS of thoughts every day? Did you know that what we think makes a big difference in how we feel? Our thoughts can feel like words we hear someone else say, like from teachers, friends, or other people. If you heard someone say to you, "You tried hard on that! Good work!" you would feel pretty good. If you heard someone say to you, "I can't believe you DID that! What's the matter with you?" you would feel hurt and sad. Inside of our brains are thousands of thoughts that use a lot of words. Those words can help us, like a supportive friend, or those words can hurt us, like a bully. When we think mean thoughts to ourselves, we are bullying ourselves. All of those thoughts can make us feel sad, mad, or even scared, and they come from inside of us!

Everyone has positive and negative thoughts. It's up to us to notice our thoughts, so we can decide if they are true, helpful, or kind. If they are not true, helpful, or kind, then we can shift our thoughts to help us feel better. Many people, even grown-ups, can struggle with negative thoughts, and it can be hard to learn how to stop having those thoughts. You get the chance to learn this "trick" about shifting the way you think and talk to yourself early in your life, so maybe you will be kinder to YOURSELF. Let's practice because we know that, the more we practice, the easier it will be!

3. Choosing our thoughts to decrease distress and increase resilience.

Help students understand that thoughts can be adjusted or changed to help them feel better and manage their strong feelings.



We talked about how we think THOUSANDS of thoughts every day. Sometimes, it can feel like those thoughts are all over the place, but we can learn how to spot the negative thoughts before we start feeling worse. We can also learn how to use helpful thoughts, like from a friend, to calm down, make better choices, and remember our strengths!

When you think a negative thought about yourself, you could ask yourself if it would be okay if you said these things to a best friend. For example, if your friend was really upset about a bad grade on a test, would you walk up to them and say, “I guess you’re just not smart at all, and you’re a terrible student”? Absolutely not! If your best friend was going through this situation, you might say this:

- It’s just one test, don’t worry too much about it.
- Maybe you can ask your teacher for help if you don’t understand.
- You are very smart; sometimes things just take longer to learn!

Before you start believing your negative self-talk, ask yourself: “Would it be okay if I said this to a person I cared about?” If the answer is “no,” then you need to think about what else you could say to yourself. Kindness is for yourself and others!

4. Identifying unhelpful thoughts to shift to self-soothing.

Using calm-down strategies to minimize physiological arousal, and learning to identify helpful or unhelpful thoughts to support positive self-talk

When we have heavy feelings, we almost always know that negative thoughts or self-talk are creeping in. When we use our calm-down strategies, like we learned last time, to let some of those strong feelings go, we can call on our positive self-talk to help us feel EVEN better. Let’s use an example. One time, I was having a terrible day, and I was out walking my dog, and a bee flew in my face and stung me! It hurt a lot, and I started to cry right in front of everyone, and I’m a grown-up! I kept thinking, “Ouch! Ouch! I can’t believe this happened! Why does this stuff always happen to me! This day is terrible, and it’s never going to get any better!” I realized my feelings were getting too big, so I took some deep breaths and got some ice for my bee sting. <Insert another example if you prefer.> After I had a chance to calm my body down and let some of the feelings go, I asked myself “Are these thoughts helpful? Are they true? Are they kind?” Well, I realized that my positive self-talk would never say things like “it’ll never be better” or “this stuff always happens to you.” That’s not helpful, true, or kind! I realized that my negative thoughts were really getting out of control.

5. Adjusting negative self-talk to calm down.

Teach students to shift from negative thoughts to thoughts that are more soothing and emphasize calm and reasonable positive ideas.



When our negative self-talk is loud and frequent or our thoughts are negative, we should use our positive self-talk. Sometimes, this is hard to do! When I had my bee sting and was feeling angry and sad, I needed to say a few things to myself OUT LOUD to help get my positive self-talk working. I said, “This bee sting really hurts, but the ice is helping a little.” Then I said to myself, “Everyone has tough days, but it won’t always be this way.” After I said those things to myself, out loud, my positive self-talk could take over. My positive self-talk was helping me remember that pain (even bee stings) doesn’t last forever. It helped me remember that I have people around me who care about me, like my brother helped me get the ice pack, and he sat with me on the couch. You can do the same thing, but you must know some tricks first!

6. Basic cognitive reframing.

Introduce ideas of “and” and “but” to help soften difficult situations, and rainstorm soothing and positive self-talk with students.

Negative thoughts are “sticky” because, once they start, they feel true, and they get stuck in your head. Negative thoughts seem to always focus on how HARD or BAD a situation is. Sometimes, the situation is not good! Low grades, problems with friends, your parents expressing disappointment in you, and not being able to do a special activity you want to do can be examples of times that are frustrating or disappointing. However, your positive self-talk knows that when you add the word “and” or “but,” you can help yourself feel better. Remember, feelings and difficult situations can’t last forever. So, when your negative self-talk says, “It’s not fair,” your positive self-talk would say, “It’s not fair this time, BUT sometimes things are fair!” When your negative self-talk says, “I never get what I want,” your positive self-talk would say, “I didn’t get what I want AND maybe next time I will!” No matter what negative thoughts you have, you can remember what your positive self-talk would say. Here are some examples:

- I can calm down and feel better!
- I can ask for help from someone who cares about me!
- Nothing bad lasts forever!
- It’s going to be okay even if it hurts right now! If you can’t decide what your positive self-talk would say, you can try imagining what a friend, teacher, parent, counselor, or another person who loves you would say to make you feel better. Then, you can say that to yourself.

7. Review and summarize.

Review with your students that their thoughts can make them feel better or worse, and review that they can calm down, identify the thoughts, and use their positive self-talk

Remember, our feelings can be heavy sometimes, but we can use our calm-down strategies to feel better. The thoughts in our heads can be negative, or they can come from our positive self-talk; we get to choose which one to listen to! We can make choices about what we want to focus on to help us feel even better. Your positive self-talk wants you to remember how good you are and that you can deal with situations and events that aren’t great and that you can ask for help



when you need it. Don't let negative self-talk take over, and be sure to practice listening to your positive self-talk as often as you can!

8. Closing and Practice.

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills.

I've really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you! <Introduce Challenging Thoughts Worksheet or Bully and Coach Self-Statements Worksheet.> I hope to see you back here soon for our next chat!



Challenging Thoughts Worksheet

The thoughts we have are not always “correct” just because we’re having them. For example, after a mistake, we might think “I never do anything right,” but is this thought correct? Think of a situation in which you had a negative thought about yourself, and answer the questions below.

1. Describe the situation?
2. What am I thinking or imagining?
3. How much do I believe this thought: a little, a medium, a lot? (or rate 0-100%)
4. How does that thought make me feel: angry, sad, anxious?
5. How strong is the feeling: a little, a medium, a lot?(or rate 0-100%)
6. What is the evidence that makes this thought seem true?
7. What is the evidence that makes this thought seem false?
8. For those thoughts that may have been formed based on what the other people said, are those sources (i.e., people) reliable?
9. Are you confusing a habit with a fact? For example, does the belief seem true just because you have said this to yourself so many times?
10. Are you using extreme ways of thinking by thinking in all or nothing terms or using exaggerated words or phrases like “always” or “never”?
11. Are you taking examples out of context by only considering one part of the situation instead



of considering the entire incident?

12. Are you confusing a low probability with a high probability?
13. Are your judgments based on feelings rather than facts?
14. Are you drawing conclusions in which evidence is lacking?
15. Are you exaggerating (including catastrophizing) or minimizing the meaning of an event?
16. Are you overgeneralizing from a single event (i.e. associating aspects of the event or perpetrator to other areas of your life)?
17. Are you guessing or “mind reading” other people’s thoughts or intentions?
18. What is an alternative way of thinking about this situation?
19. How much do I believe my original thought now: a little, a medium, a lot? (or rate 0- 100%)
20. What am I feeling now: angry, sad, anxious?
21. How strong is the feeling: a little, a medium, a lot? (or rate 0-100%)

Adapted from CBT+: <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/socratic-questioning.pdf>



Lesson 5: Problem-Solving

Skill: Cognitive Reframing

The goal of this lesson is to help students respond appropriately to problems that they may encounter. By being able to respond appropriately to potential problems, students can benefit in the following ways:

- Normalize problems in everyday life.
- Review and integrate the use of calm-down strategies and emotion identification.
- Learn about strategies for identifying the relative seriousness of a problem and find solutions (e.g., help-seeking behavior and independent resolution).
- Normalize ongoing and severe stressors, and use emotion regulation and social support in that context.

Student Lesson Plan

Children in your school may find themselves struggling with problems of all kinds. Some of those problems may be serious, and some may be small. Some may get blown out of proportion or catastrophized. This lesson is designed to help students with **problem-solving** by asking them to stop and think about the size of their problem, match their reactions to the problem by using their calm-down skills as needed, and determine when to ask an adult for help. The lesson also attempts to deal with those real-world problems that do not have simple solutions, like the outcomes from the COVID-19 pandemic. This lesson intends to teach children how to recognize that there are ways to find positive outcomes in negative experiences and normalize that some events and situations in life are very hard, but there is always hope. When delivering this lesson, feel free to think of your own examples, use your own stories and analogies, and utilize your pre-existing resources.

The content below includes basic scripting that you can use; however, you should use your own judgment on wording and extending the content. Remember, this lesson should only take about 20 minutes as children have short attention spans.

1. Introduction to Problem-Solving.

Greeting your students.

Welcome back!

Review of between-session work.

Did you have a chance to practice changing your negative thoughts this past week (or however long it has been since the last meeting)? <Review shifting thoughts and offer examples.>



Transition to new topic.

So far, we've talked about getting to know ourselves and learning how to identify our feelings and manage ourselves when we have strong feelings. Today, we will talk about how to solve problems. Sometimes, events or situations happen, and we are involved in them, and they may be scary or annoying or make us mad or sad. No one can tell us how to feel. You can be mad or sad, and that is ok! However, we need to think about how we handle the circumstances. You do not want to hold on to anger or sadness forever. That would be no fun, so what we want to learn today is how to find ways to solve those problems that make us feel bad or scared! Today we are going to learn how to solve problems! Some problems can be big, and some can be small, but, if you have the right tools and know how to use them, you can problem solve!.

2. Everyone has problems.

Normalizing problematic situations in life, emphasizing opportunities for growth, and normalizing help-seeking behavior.

Everyone has problems. . Problems are just a normal part of life, and asking for help is okay! You have probably faced some difficult problems before, and you will again. As you face some problems, you should feel good about yourself as you may be able to work through some of the problems on your own. However, before you can decide whether you can do something on your own or whether you need advice or help from an adult, you need to know what clues to look for! Let's talk about clues for deciding how BIG your problem is.

3. Stop and Breathe first!

Differentiating initial emotional reactions from the actual problem, and using a “stop and breathe” technique to begin problem-solving (stop, take a breath, name the problem, and name how you feel).

Remember, understanding your feelings can help you learn about yourself, the people around you, and your environment. But, sometimes, when things happen suddenly or our feelings are big, feelings can get too heavy. If this happens, we might think that a problem is big when maybe it's not! In order to not let our feelings take over, we need to get our emotions to a place where they are not so heavy to carry. To do that, when a problem pops up, we need to: STOP. TAKE A DEEP BREATH. SAY THE PROBLEM, AND SAY HOW YOU FEEL. After you get your feelings under control, they can give you clues about what kind of problem you have and what steps you should take next.

<Use an example here of a time someone might have over-reacted like a small problem that feels really overwhelming at first.>

4. How BIG is your problem?



Help students understand that there are different levels of seriousness or severity of problems, and help them identify their problems appropriately.

Small Problems

To solve problems, you need to be able to understand how you feel! Your feelings are your FIRST clue about the size of your problem. If you have a small feeling in your body, you might just have a small problem. For example, you've probably already had a small problem happen today! A small problem is something that you can solve on your own and that doesn't hurt anybody. An example of a small problem is forgetting a homework assignment or forgetting to do a chore. Nobody is hurt and you can turn in an assignment later or do the chore another time.

Medium Problems

Maybe you have experienced a time when you have had a medium-sized problem. When this happens, your feelings are maybe getting heavier in your body. Maybe the problem is something that you're not sure how to fix, or maybe your feelings or your body is hurt. An example of a medium problem might be fighting with your friend. You may have bigger feelings, you may have hurt feelings, and you might not know if you should tell a grown-up. For something like a medium problem, you could try to solve the problem on your own. You could try your calm-down strategies on your own and even decide to take a break from the problem for a while. If those strategies don't help, it's time to ask an adult to help you with your problem.

Big Problems

When your feelings are heavy and you really don't know what to do on your own to fix your feelings and situation, then you have a big problem. Anytime someone is hurt, like they are bleeding or they have really hurt feelings, then it's always time to ask a grown-up for help!

<Engage students in coming up with examples of small, medium, and big problems.>

5. Match Your Solution to the Size of the Problem.

Help students match their strategy (what to do), regulate their emotional reaction appropriately, and know when to get help from an adult

First, we must figure how big our problem is. Remember, small problems are those that you can solve on your own and that did not hurt anyone. You should be able to easily fix those problems and feel better pretty fast (unless that negative self-talk starts to creep in). For medium problems, you may need help from an adult, but you can first try to fix it on your own and ask for help if you have trouble. These problems may create bigger feelings inside of you than when you have a small problem, but, if you don't start negative self-talk, you should feel better soon! What about those big problems? Anytime someone is hurt or you can't fix the problem on your own, you need to ask a grown-up for help. In these situations, your feelings may be heavy, and using your calm-down skills should help you. It's okay to ask for help; even grown-ups need a hug or a friend to talk to, sometimes, when they have a big problem.



6. Super Big Problems – Maybe No Easy Answers.

Relate content to the COVID-19 pandemic and other serious challenges that do not lend themselves to answers, and normalize and reframe how serious situations can be managed.

When there are big problems that are tough for everyone, like when people are sick or get injured or when situations are confusing, you need to KEEP practicing your calm-down strategies because letting the negative thinking in will never help you solve the problem, and those thoughts could make everything feel BIGGER and WORSE. Big problems may not have easy fixes, but even big problems offer opportunities for us to learn things, reach out to people we care about, and remember what really matters to us. When you get better at problem-solving, you can even help other people determine the size of their problem and figure out what to do about it!

7. Closing and Practice

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills.

I've really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you! <Introduce Stop-Think-Find a Solution Activity> Can't wait to see you next time!



Stop - Think - Find a Solution!

When feelings get big, it can be hard to make the right choice. Use this worksheet at least ONCE this week!

1. STOP. Use a calm-down strategy. Circle the calm-down strategy you used.

Find Your Feet

Deep Breathing

Squeeze the Sponge

2. Say the problem and how you feel out loud. Write about how you feel and what is happening.

3. How BIG or small is your problem? Circle one and write why you think the problem is that size.

BIG – Someone is hurt, and you do not know what to do, so you need to ask a grown-up for help.

Medium – You are not sure what to do; nobody is hurt, but you might need a grown-up to help you.

Small – You can fix it yourself, everyone is safe, and you do not need a grown-up's help.

4. What do I do? Match the size of the problem you circled, and write ideas for a plan to help fix your problem.

5. How do you feel now? Write about how your situation turned out, and use FEELING words to describe your emotions.



Lesson 6: Friendships

Skill: Social Skills

The goal of this lesson is to help students develop healthy friendships with peers, even when social distancing is necessary. Students will benefit in the following ways:

- Describe qualities of positive friends.
- Learn how to self-reflect when thinking about friendship qualities.
- Identify ways to engage with friends.

Student Lesson Plan

This lesson focuses on bolstering **friendship skills**. While relationships are important during every season of life, it can be especially complicated to make or maintain friendships when routines are disrupted, emotions are out of control, or students are new to school. The purpose of this lesson is to describe the qualities of a friend.

When delivering this lesson, feel free to think of your own examples, use your own stories and analogies, and utilize your pre-existing resources.

The content below includes basic scripting that you can use; however, you should use your own judgment on wording and extending the content. Remember, this lesson should only take about 15 minutes as children have short attention spans.

1. Introduction to Friendships

Greeting your students.

Hi everyone! This is our last session together – I'm so glad I've had the chance to get to know you better!

Review of between-session work.

Did you have a chance to practice problem-solving from last week? <Review problem solving and offer examples.>

Transition to new topic.

Today we're going to talk about friendships and what it means to be a friend. Let's get started!

2. What makes a good friend?



Describe qualities of positive friends

What is a friend? It's probably easy to think of an example of a friend you have, but it's a little harder to describe how you know someone is a good friend.

Why are friends important?

Most often, friends are people with whom we get along. Friends support one another, listen to each other, do activities together, and give each other advice. When you and your friend listen to each other talk, you can learn from each other and explore what you have in common and celebrate what makes you different. Friends can teach us so much, like how to play or enjoy watching sports or introduce us to a different type of music.

<INSERT STORY ABOUT HOW A FRIEND TAUGHT YOU SOMETHING- EXAMPLE: Can you believe I had never tried a Reese's peanut butter cup until a friend offered to share one with me? Now that's a true friend!>

Friends can introduce us to new foods, different customs, ways of thinking, and new places they've visited. You can also learn to be accepting by appreciating the different qualities that make us unique. When you accept people for who they are, you are being a respectful friend.

What makes a good friend?

It is not always easy to be friends with everyone. People have different interests, personalities, and strengths, so you may or may not find certain qualities in common with other people, and you may not want to be friends with everyone—that's fine. Sometimes, you may want to be friends with a person, but you don't feel good when you're around them. Let's talk about friendship as healthy friendships and unhealthy friendships. When you have a healthy friendship, you usually feel happy, safe, and peaceful when you are around this person. This friend also shows you respect by caring about how you're feeling. In a healthy friendship, you enjoy being with each other but also feel that it's ok if you both have other friends. Healthy friendships make life more fun and the hard times easier to get through!

Now let's talk about unhealthy friendships. In an unhealthy friendship, you may feel sad, frustrated, or worried most of the time when you're around this person. This friend might make fun of you, threaten to hurt you, or threaten to tell your secrets to other people (like who you have a crush on). They might encourage you to make poor choices or do things that you are uncomfortable with or think are mean. If your friend tells you you're not allowed to be friends with anyone else but them, that is an unhealthy friendship. Unhealthy friendships can happen, and you may want to talk to an adult to get some advice about how to handle that friendship. Talking to an adult can help you get ideas about whether you can still be friends with a particular person in a healthy way or suggestions on how to handle not being friends with that person anymore. Remember, there is a difference between a friendship that has some moments of upset or disagreements, and a friendship that is always hard. Everybody has struggles with their friends sometimes. It's ok for friends to disagree or even be upset with each other occasionally, and some healthy friendships may at times need help from an adult. An unhealthy friendship happens when you feel bad most of the time while with this person. Sometimes, it takes a while to figure out whether a friendship is having a rough patch or a bump in the road or if a friendship is unhealthy



3. Be the kind of friend you'd like to have!

Learn how to self-reflect when thinking about friendship qualities.

Now, we're going to talk about how to know if you're being a good friend. Knowing that can also help you decide if your friends are being true friends to you in return. In healthy friendships you should spot most of these things most of the time:

- Kindness and caring – Healthy friends are concerned for you when you are having trouble and are happy for you when you are doing well.
- Respect – Healthy friends care about your point of view and ideas and understand that you may be different than them, and this is okay!
- Compromise – Healthy friends, because they care about you, are willing to take turns, share, and join you in activities that make you happy. As a healthy friend, you should sometimes join in activities that your friends want to do even if they are not your favorite interests.
- Trust – Healthy friends make you feel safe because you know that they will listen without laughing, will keep your secrets (the healthy secrets), and will not spread rumors or talk badly about you to others.

What other good friend qualities can you think of that we didn't mention? <Discuss positive friendship qualities and ideas to make friends.>

4. How to cope when friendships are challenging.

Learn positive coping skills to use when friends do not want to play

Have you ever really wanted to hang out with a friend, and they say "no"? <Tell an example or ask students to share an example.> If a friend does not want to hang out or chat on a certain day, does that mean that they don't like you? It may feel that way, but friends don't always feel well, they may want to hang out with someone else, or they have other reasons to not hang out that have nothing to do with you. This situation, however, can feel upsetting, and you might be thinking they don't want to be your friend anymore.

When you start feeling worried about your friendship, your feelings may get really heavy! You may notice negative thinking. You may have self-talk again when you think things like "they don't like me anymore" or "nobody wants to hang out with me." How can we use our calm-down skills and positive self-talk to help in a situation like this? <Discuss ways to calm down the feeling, use calm down skills.>

Learn positive coping skills to use during conflicts with friends

Sometimes, everyone has trouble getting along with friends. Friends may not agree on what to do when they hang out, may have different ideas about situations or other people, or maybe friends with people you are not friends with. One time, I was in a bad mood, and a friend asked me something and I kind of snapped at her. I didn't mean to, but I was just really grouchy that



day, and I didn't even realize until afterwards that I had hurt her feelings. <Or insert some other examples about unintentional conflict with friends here.> Have you had times when you made a mistake, or a friend hurt your feelings? <Allow children to share if they are comfortable.> See? It is normal for friends to have trouble getting along at times. Remember, being a good friend is solving the problem, being there for each other no matter what, and realizing you can still be friends even if they don't agree.

So, let's talk about what to do when we have trouble getting along with friends. The **FIRST** step is to **CALM DOWN**. Remember, we don't make good choices when we are too upset. Who can remind me of ways to calm down? <Review calm down strategies.> The **SECOND** step is to say the problem and how you feel. Suppose a friend said something that you thought was rude about a videogame you really like. You could say, "It kind of hurts my feelings when you say mean things about the game I like." The last step is to **LISTEN** to what your friend says and decide if you can work it out together or if you need to ask an adult for help. You don't have to tattle on your friends! You can just say something like, "I think we need help because we're not solving our problem on our own. Let's ask <insert name here> if they have any ideas."

Now, let's review those steps again. What do we do **FIRST**? <Review problem solving steps with a new example.>

When to ask for help with social problems

Some problems with friends are easy to solve, like deciding on what music to play or listening to each other's ideas. Other problems need an adult's help to solve the issue. Sometimes, a person in our class or a person we think is a friend hurts us, is hurting themselves, or is being hurt. If you know a friend is saying mean things or lying about other people or is hitting or putting their hands on other people, or they say someone is being mean or hurting them, we need help **RIGHT AWAY**. Can you think of a time when it's a good idea to get help? <Get examples from students, help them decide if they need an adult, or offer examples and have students identify the best way to get help.>

What if you knew that a friend was in trouble, but they asked you to keep their problems a secret? Isn't part of being a good friend keeping their secrets? That depends. There are healthy secrets you and a friend may share that **CAN** be kept secret. If a friend tells you about something personal that isn't dangerous, like who they like in class or about the time they threw up in the family car, those are healthy secrets. Not telling other people about these secrets is fine and can help build trust between you and your friends. <Insert examples and ask for examples from students about healthy secrets.> But, when a secret is about something that can **HURT** your friend, it's **NOT** a secret you should keep. For example, if a friend tells you someone at home is hurting them or they are going to do something that hurts themselves or someone else, this situation is **DANGEROUS**, and you **MUST** tell a trusted adult. Keeping that secret does not build trust, and your friend could be in an unsafe situation, and you need to find help, so can help them. Whenever a "secret" involves something that hurts, it is time to get help. <Ask students for examples of when to **NOT** keep a secret.>



Everybody needs help once in a while. If someone is being hurt or hurting others with words, actions, or hands, being a good friend means getting HELP right away from an adult.

5. Closing and Practice

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills

We've spent a lot of time together talking about feelings, solving problems, and being a good friend. I've enjoyed spending time with you! What was your favorite part about our time together? <Allow students to share examples.> Remember, you can always ask for help!



Grade 7-12 Lesson Plans

Lesson 1: All About Me

Skill: Positive Self-Concept

Students who have a positive self-concept can benefit in the following ways:

- Identify positive and unique aspects of themselves.
- Recognize that personal value is not necessarily related to competition with others.
- Learn about and normalize the concept that all people make mistakes, and these mistakes are separate from the person's intrinsic value.
- Understand how to integrate personal values and strengths, and identify areas for improvement and growth.

Student Lesson Plan

A common reason that children and adults seek therapy is because they have problems with their self-concept. During typical development, children will acquire core beliefs about their strengths, weaknesses, and value as a person. The ways in which these beliefs emerge and evolve can either support resilience or may lead to long-term problems like anxiety, depression, and specific phobias. In times of increased stress, children may develop ideas such as “I’m not good enough” (because of comparisons to peers or older siblings) or “I’m not that important” (because of misinterpreting parents’ actions while trying to work full-time from home). Positive asset searching is one way that we can help students recognize their own value and, thus, build their resilience in times of stress. Research indicates that when people are able to have healthy, realistic views of their own capabilities, they are better able to manage challenges in their lives. Of course, none of this information is surprising or new to you as a trained expert in working with children! We encourage you to use the lesson plan below flexibly as the script is just a suggestion to get you started. Use your own examples, materials, and judgment to expand on or alter the content as you desire. Given students’ limited attention spans, we would recommend keeping your lesson to about 15 minutes. We suggest having students use a dedicated notebook for these sessions but feel free to adjust or include other ideas you feel are appropriate.

1. Introduction to All About Me.

Greeting your students and introduction to the series



“Hello everybody! Most of you have probably seen me at school. I’m <insert name here>, and I’m the <insert role here> at <insert school here>. I thought it would be a good idea for me to reach out to you and teach you about some coping skills that you can use to feel better when your feelings get overwhelming. I would like to start with helping you get to know YOURSELF just like you would get to know a friend. That may sound a little weird to some of you but think of it this way: YOU are going to be with YOU every day of your life! It makes good sense to want to know yourself and remember your strengths!

2. Everybody has positive and unique characteristics that make them who they are. Recognizing these, and taking time to reflect on them often, is one way to train your “emotional muscles” to help you be the best version of yourself.

Identifying positive and unique aspects within yourself

You’ve probably heard someone say, “everyone is unique.” You may feel like that’s not true because many people have similar personalities, interests, or character traits but consider this: even identical twins, who have the EXACT same genes, are not *exactly* alike. All people are different and have special strengths. So, let’s think about some of the potential strengths you might have. For example, <go through and discuss examples of each with students>

- Brain/Cognitive Strengths – doing schoolwork (reading, math, writing, science), playing video games, solving problems, remembering and learning things
- Social/Friendship Strengths – making and keeping friends, understanding other people’s ideas, listening to others, speaking to others in ways they understand
- Artistic Creative Strengths – making things, painting, drawing, writing stories, appreciating/enjoying art
- Character Strengths – honesty, integrity, curiosity, eagerness, helping others, loyalty
- Physicality/Athletic Strengths – watching and understanding sports, exercising, playing sports or games, riding horses
- Others...

Understanding everything “counts” (i.e., dispelling social comparisons)

Sometimes, when people think about what they are good at, they focus on how good they are at that activity compared to OTHER people. For example, if you love to play basketball but you are not the best member of the team, you might say, “well, I’m not that good at basketball.” However, how good you are compared to OTHERS at something you love to do is not what makes you unique. What makes you unique is that you enjoy doing the activity, and it is an important part of how you live your life. Your combination of strengths, hobbies, interests, values, and personality is exclusive to you, and perhaps enjoying basketball is just one small part of who you are.



Reframing minimizing good behavior and effort

Some people may forget that they are special or good because they believe that certain actions don't really "count." For example, suppose you've completed all of your assignments this semester, and you've ended up with all A's and B's. Some people may say "well that doesn't count because that's just what I'm supposed to do." It does count! Consider this, there are many people who choose not to do the work, who can't figure out how to manage their time, or who don't care. If you CHOOSE to figure out your homework schedule and work hard to find the right answers, your actions "count," and your grades reflect that. The same can be true in social situations. Some people might say that checking in on a friend when they're down is just what friends "should" do, but not all friends would actually do this. Checking in on your friend "counts." Reflect on some other areas where you might assume your effort is the bare minimum and doesn't count. How can you reframe those thoughts?

Recognizing that you can use your best traits or qualities to help you make good choices

Now that we've talked about some characteristics that can make people special, think of THREE qualities that you think make you special or unique. You may write them down or just think about them in your head. These can be activities you are good at, or like to do, or they can be features that are unique to you. I'll give you a second to think about it. <Pause to allow reflection.> Try to keep these three qualities in mind when you're making decisions.

3. Normalizing mistakes is part of the human experience. Mistakes are separate from intrinsic value.

Mistakes are part everyone's life

Just like all people have strengths and talents, all people make mistakes, including authority figures. One example I like to talk about is <insert a personal story about something you struggle to do or that you work hard at; an example is inserted here for context> I really can be forgetful! I must write tasks, appointments, and ideas down or I forget them. Believe me, I've forgotten some things, and that has created problems—like forgetting my car keys or being late to important meetings. Now, I remind myself that, if I use a list, I forget a lot less. Remember that mistakes are just part of being a person, and, if we are willing to be creative in how we relate to them, they can be a chance for us to learn to do better.

Making bad choices or mistakes is separate from a person's intrinsic value

Have you ever made a big mistake and you felt mad, guilty, or unhappy about it? Maybe you said something unkind that you didn't mean or broke an expensive piece of furniture or blew off an important assignment for school. When those kinds of mistakes happen, you might become confused about the difference between your behavior (how you act) and your value (who you are as a person). When people make mistakes, they may say unkind things to themselves like, "I am so stupid!" or "I'm not a nice person!" These statements are NOT true! Making mistakes can be upsetting, but what you DID is NOT the same thing as who you are. Remember, making a mistake



is a chance to learn how to do better. A mistake does not change all of the other good qualities that make you who you are, and recognizing the ways that your mistake does not align with your character can help you mature.

4. Integrating positive self-concept with continual growth and change.

All people have positive qualities, and all people have areas in their lives that need to be improved.

It may be uncomfortable to remember this, but a good way to get to know yourself is to think about your strengths AND realize that you have areas where you struggle. For example, a person can be good at making friends but may experience problems with maintaining them. Some people may be great at most subjects but have a hard time playing certain sports. Remember, people have strengths, AND they have weaknesses they need to work on. You can leverage your current strengths to help you improve in other areas.

Showing the contrast of NOT having any areas for growth

Consider this, what if you didn't have any new information to learn or new challenges to overcome? That idea may seem nice, but your life would be BORING! If people didn't have new concepts or skills to learn or trials to overcome, they would avoid the pain that can come from making mistakes, and there wouldn't be any adventures to experience. Harry Potter, <insert other characters from children's fiction here> would not have scary, exciting, and fun stories to share if everything was always perfect, right? So, we must remember that mistakes and challenges often present good learning opportunities.

5. Getting to know the entirety of yourself is a strength.

When we know our weaknesses and challenges, we can practice getting better

Understanding ourselves helps us accurately assess situations. Knowing our weaknesses can help us determine when to ask for help, understand what we need to work on, and bring awareness to how we need to do a task or activity differently. If we don't know ourselves, we could repeatedly make the same mistakes. So, when we recognize our mistakes, we can see them as a chance to improve ourselves. We should not feel ashamed that we are still learning and growing. Learning and growing are normal parts of life that will continue our whole lives.

When we remember what makes us special and strong, we can use those skills to make our lives better

Inevitably, we will make mistakes. We will be faced with challenges. Understanding and utilizing our strengths can help us progress toward our goals. Consider checking in with yourself daily. What is something you did really well today? What's something you can



improve? Which of your strengths are going to play a part in helping you make that improvement?

6. Closing and Practice.

Provide an ending that includes a positive message

I've really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you! If you need more help reflecting on your strengths or practice learning from your mistakes, you can use the worksheets that are available with this lesson or reach out to your school counselor.



Activity - Learning from Your Mistakes

Directions: The purpose of this activity is for you to understand how to identify mistakes and determine how to learn from them without letting yourself become overwhelmed by self-judgement. It might feel a little silly, but, by working through examples like this, you can practice building cognitive muscles that will help you automatically reframe negative experiences, so you are able to grow from them. With practice, you can learn to talk yourself through this process without the aid of a worksheet. Think about a time when you made a mistake, and answer the following questions honestly and truthfully.

1. What happened?
2. How did that situation make me feel?
3. How did I handle the situation?
4. How did my actions (or reactions) affect the situation?
5. How will I handle a similar situation next time?
6. What did I learn about myself?



Activity - Personal Strengths

Directions: The purpose of this activity is for you to identify some personal strengths. Look over this list of potential strengths, and color in the strengths that represent you. You may want to use different colors for different levels of agreement. For example, you might use yellow for traits that are a lot like you, green for ones that are a little bit like you, and blue for traits that are not at all like you. You can also add your own words in the empty spaces. Look over the completed page. What kind of person does this page describe? Consider doing this activity again from a different perspective. For example, you could try coloring in the boxes based on the person you aspire to be or based on what traits you value in others. How do these versions compare to one another?

Honest	Assertive	Brave	Leader	Adventurous	Kind
Empathetic	Creative	Loving	Enthusiastic	Careful	Intelligent
Persistent	Curious	Confident	Artistic	Open-Minded	Flexible
Friendly	Loving	Disciplined	Logical	Independent	Strong
Optimistic	Athletic	Funny	Patient	Cooperative	Hard-working
Decisive	Honest	Forgiving	Ambitious	Modest	Trustworthy
Fair	Humble	Patient	Loyal	Resourceful	Resilient
Practical	Positive	Reliable	Energetic	Introspective	Generous



Lesson 2: Overwhelming Feelings

Skill: Emotion Identification

The goal of this lesson is to help students identify emotions. Students who can identify their emotions can benefit in the following ways:

- Understand feelings and feeling words.
- Identify bodily awareness of emotions.
- Differentiate between emotions and behaviors.

Student Lesson Plan

Behind every behavior is a feeling, and people who can accurately identify their feelings are better able to express themselves appropriately. The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to **emotion identification and recognition**. Students will also understand how feelings prompt behavior and will learn that, while all feelings are acceptable, some behaviors are unacceptable.

When delivering this lesson, feel free to think of your own examples, use your own stories and analogies, and utilize your pre-existing resources.

The content below includes basic scripting that you can use; however, you should use your own judgment on wording and extending the content. Remember, this lesson should only take about 15 minutes as students can have short attention spans.

1. Introduction to Feelings Can be Heavy.

Greeting your students

Hello everybody! Thanks for coming today! I hope you've been doing well. <Ask students what was good about their days/ weeks.>

(optional) Review of between-session work

Let's look at the activity from last week where we identified some of our strengths. Does anyone want to share their thoughts on this activity? <If students do not share, share an example from your own life this past week.>

Transition to new topic

I'm glad to hear many of you completed that activity and identified some of your strengths. This time I'd like to talk about how we recognize and respond to our emotions. For some of you, this will be a review, and it's good to get some extra practice with these topics. <Insert an example of



a time that emotion identification helped you address an issue.> Today, we are going to talk about how different feelings may make us feel like we need to use different responses.

2. Think of feelings as being grouped by intensity.

Identify four “groups” of feelings

It’s normal to have a lot of different feelings, even in just 1 day. Some of these feelings are “bigger” than others, and those feelings may require more attention, thought, or care. Learning to identify feelings based on how they feel in our bodies, and being able to tell how “big” they are, can help us know what to do about them.

Pleasant Feelings.

- Sometimes, we feel neutral or good, like when we are happy, relaxed, or content. What do you feel in your body when you are happy or relaxed? What do you notice? <Discuss content/ peaceful/ happy feelings.>

Unpleasant Feelings.

- I am sure you are also familiar with some less pleasant emotions. This category is for all of the feelings that don’t make you feel good but are manageable or tolerable. Consider what it feels like in your body when you experience worry, embarrassment, or frustration. Usually, these unpleasant feelings can be addressed by making adjustments to a situation. Perhaps, you’re worried you forgot something, so you can check to see if you have that item with you. Maybe, you’re embarrassed that you said someone’s name wrong, so you can clarify and apologize to that person. You may notice that if you try to avoid these feelings, they will start to get bigger. Body signs can let you know that you are experiencing a feeling that needs to be taken care of, such as a fast heart rate, getting a stomachache, or becoming sweaty. <Discuss examples of unpleasant feelings.>

Uncomfortable Feelings.

- If we ignore unpleasant feelings for a while, they can become uncomfortable. Also, we are, sometimes, presented with situations that make us react immediately. These feelings can cause a lot of physical and emotional discomfort, and you may have trouble thinking about anything other than the feelings you are having. Consider this: worry can escalate to anxiety, frustration can intensify to anger, and embarrassment can deepen to shame. At this point, these feelings need to be taken seriously and need to be responded to quickly and with care. What are some of the signs you might be feeling in your body that would let you know that a feeling is getting to this point? What are some strategies you have used to help you manage your feelings when they have increased to these levels?

Show-stopping Feelings.



- When feelings become really strong (or big), we may feel like we are out of control. You may notice that you no longer feel connected to your body or maybe your rational brain is not working correctly, and you are not making good choices. Stop for a moment, and take a breath, and check in with yourself as you try to respond to your feelings. By taking these actions, you may be better able to manage these strong emotions before they become unmanageable. Show-stopping feelings might feel impossible to handle, and you may require some help to calm down. Think about anxiety escalating to panic, anger intensifying to rage, and shame deepening to self-loathing. These are not easy emotions to address in the moment, but, with time and self-compassion, you can learn strategies that you can use to stay in control of your feelings or gain control of your feelings before they become overwhelming. What are some strategies you use or you could tell a friend about when show-stopping feelings emerge?

3. Use Your Body to Know How You're Feeling.

Label feelings accurately using internal (bodily) and external (situational) clues

This idea may seem silly to some of you, but understanding and accurately communicating our feelings are difficult skills to learn. Some people are not taught how to consider, talk about, or handle their feelings, so they must figure out strategies on their own. Some people may feel vulnerable when talking about their feelings and prefer to keep feelings to themselves. Everyone, including adults, can benefit from thinking about their reactions to situations and/or events: consider the situation or event, assess how your body feels, come up with a feeling word that fits your emotion, and consider what a good response would be to the situation or event. When you use this assessment process, you must look for “inside” and “outside” clues in order to make a plan. Inside clues relate to your experiences. Are your hands shaking? Do you feel hot? Do you notice that you want to disappear? Outside clues relate to the situation or event you are experiencing. Where are you? What just happened? What was said?

After you are able to consider this information, name your feeling, and understand how “big” that feeling is, you’re ready to try to figure out your next move. Research shows that being able to name a feeling is usually a sign that the feeling is starting to diminish, so you’re probably on your way to feeling better. Now, consider what does this feeling need? Think about all of the coping skills you may have learned, like deep breathing, going for a walk, talking to a friend, engaging in an activity, or asking someone to sit with you.

4. Feelings Are Different from Behaviors.

Feelings are different from behaviors

A misconception about feelings is that there are “good” and “bad” feelings. People might sort sad, worried, angry into the “bad feelings” category and happy, peaceful, and loving into the “good feelings” category. Really, these are all just “feelings,” and experiencing them is just part of being a person. Having unpleasant and uncomfortable emotions can teach us about ourselves, our



community, and our world. Experiencing different emotions can guide you as you make choices now and in the future.

As we just learned, feelings are not good or bad; however, behaviors, or how we might act because of a feeling we experience, can be “good” or “bad.” Feelings and behaviors are related, but they are not connected. You can choose how to respond to yourself and others when you are experiencing a feeling. Feeling angry is normal, but hurting someone because of it is bad. Feeling anxious about a test is normal, but not sleeping for 2 days to study is bad. We do not have control over our feelings, but we can control how we react to them. We can treat ourselves with compassion, and we can respond to others safely and respectfully.

People can feel differently; feelings can be big or small

People may act differently in a certain situation than you would act even though they may have the same feeling you could have. Think about a surprise birthday party. One person might feel excited and happy about having a surprise party. Another person might feel upset or nervous about a surprise party because they prefer to know what is going on ahead of time. Both of those responses are okay. Because everybody has different reactions, everyone’s feelings will be different even if they go through the same event or circumstance. No one can ever tell you how you “should” feel about something; the way you feel inside yourself is always right. Remember, how you react to your feelings is what is most important.

5. Closing and Practice.

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills

Today, we talked about how feelings can occur at different levels of intensity and about how feelings are different from behaviors. Thanks for following along. <introduce Word Bank Activity>. Later, we’ll talk about tricks or strategies for handling bigger feelings. Remember, the first step to handling feelings, big or small, is to use clues, so you can name the feeling. I’ll see you again soon!



Activity - Feelings Word Bank

Directions: Feelings can be better understood when the person experiencing them understands the different levels of intensity of the feelings. Read about feelings below, and answer the questions.

Pleasant feelings make us feel neutral, calm, or good.

Unpleasant feelings make us feel a little worked up but can be tolerated or managed fairly easily.

Uncomfortable feelings hurt, and people who are having them may be unable to think about anything else. You will use some more advanced or intense skills to calm yourself down.

Show-stopping feelings make us feel out of control. We need to stop in the moment before reacting, immediately try using coping skills, or ask for help.

1. Think of example feeling words for each of the groups listed above, and sort them into the correct categories on the next page.
2. Try to think of a strategy you could use to respond to that feeling
3. For more examples, use the Feelings Wheel.
4. Refer to this word bank when you're having trouble labeling a feeling or knowing how to respond to it.

Information adapted from Kuypers, L. M., & Winner, M. G. (2011). *The zones of regulation: A curriculum designed to foster self-regulation and emotional control*. Think Social Publishing Incorporated.



_____’s Feelings Word Bank

Pleasant Feelings	Unpleasant Feelings	Uncomfortable Feelings	Show-Stopping Feelings
<p>Example:</p> <p>Happy- enjoy it, do a hobby</p>	<p>Example:</p> <p>Frustrated- take a break</p>	<p>Example:</p> <p>Angry- walk away, go for a run</p>	<p>Example:</p> <p>Panic- tight self-hug, do a breathing exercise</p>

Information adapted from Kuypers, L. M., & Winner, M. G. (2011). *The zones of regulation: A curriculum designed to foster self regulation and emotional control*. Think Social Publishing Incorporated.

Feelings Wheel





This image can be found at <https://feelingswheel.com/>



Lesson 3: Calming Down

Skill: Emotion Regulation

The goal of this lesson is to help students learn how to regulate their emotions. Students who can regulate their emotions can benefit in the following ways:

- Learn about the importance of managing strong feelings, and understand how to minimize making poor choices.
- Learn how to use strategies for immediate self-soothing including grounding, diaphragmatic breathing, and muscle relaxation.
- Understand and explain the importance of practicing strategies when they are calm.

Student Lesson Plan

There are many methods students can use to center themselves, calm down, and feel better. For this learning activity, presenting simple coping skills may be beneficial. You may want to emphasize to students that the use of **calm-down strategies** is like exercising any other muscle, and waiting until “game day” to practice a critical skill is not effective. The same is true for using coping skills; we need to practice. The present lesson will cover three simple strategies that students should be encouraged to practice daily, and handouts and worksheets are provided to help students remember how to use the techniques. You likely have learned many of these strategies and others as part of your early childhood-development training so use the lesson plan flexibly as the script is just a suggestion to get you started. Use your own examples, materials, and judgment to expand on or alter the content as you desire. Given students’ limited attention spans, we recommend keeping your lesson to about 15 minutes.

1. Introduction to Calming Down.

Introduce yourself and the topic

Hello everybody! Glad to see you back here!

Review of between-session work.

Did any of you get a chance to do your word bank worksheet? Does anyone want to share any thoughts about that exercise? <Discuss with students or if they did not complete it, review the activity.>

Transition to new topic.

Since we’ve been talking about feelings, today, I would like to talk about how to calm down when we have some big or difficult feelings. Life can get tough sometimes. Growing up and learning



how to handle new situations is not easy. So, learning how to calm yourself down when you experience a difficult feeling is an essential skill. When you are calm, you can make decisions with your brain instead of reacting impulsively.

2. Normalizing having strong feelings that are uncomfortable.

Connecting feeling identification to feeling modulation and regulation

We've talked about looking for inside and outside clues in order to name feelings, and we've discussed how feelings can have varying levels of intensity. We've also talked about the difference between how we feel and how we choose to act. Although we started to think about what we can do to feel better last time by listing some ideas for positive coping skills, there is still a lot we need to learn. If we always made the choices we wanted to make, in the moment when we were overwhelmed with big feelings, we would not be successful in school, relationships, or life. When we notice that we are experiencing strong feelings, we need to use a coping strategy to calm down, so we can make decisions that are right for us.

Normalizing strong feelings and emotional arousal

Sometimes, when we have strong feelings, it can feel isolating—like no one could possibly understand how bad we feel or how hard it is for us to feel better. However, when we start to calm down or feel the emotion less strongly, we can understand that this isolating feeling was just temporary; it was a symptom of the big feeling. Everyone experiences times when they feel alone, scared, or out of control, and these feelings are temporary. Even if we did nothing to help us cope with these feelings, eventually these feelings would fade; however, recognizing and using strategies to help you deal with big feelings can help those feelings fade faster. Sometimes, you can use these techniques on your own; sometimes, you may need to ask for help. Everyone needs help managing feelings from time to time, so you may want to talk to a trusted adult for support.

3. Emphasizing strong feelings can sometimes lead to poor choices and inappropriate behavior.

Connection between hyperarousal and poor decision-making

When our feelings are becoming overwhelming, our bodies can feel out of control. <Insert personal example with body signs.> These experiences can be tough. At times like this, your feelings can get in the way of you making good choices. With all of the thoughts in your mind and feelings in your body, you may find it hard to think clearly. If I had <potential bad choice in the situation, potential consequences could have occurred>. So, instead of letting the feeling decide how you react, you need to figure out how to calm down before you decide what action to take.

4. Learning to calm down is like any other skill; it requires practice when you are already feeling good.



Emphasizing the connection between skills and agency (e.g., being able to make good choices)

Calming our feelings requires some practice because, when our emotions get strong, it might be hard to get them to quiet down. Learning to calm down requires practice, like learning how to play soccer or an instrument or learning how to speak a new language. Coping skills are like muscles that you have to use to engage in and practice with in order to master an activity. If you want to be able to use coping skills when you really need them, you must practice using them. Learning how to calm down doesn't erase or prevent big feelings, but using a calming skill can help you gain control when you are having big feelings.

5. Understanding three ways to calm down.

There are many ways to calm yourself down, and you probably already know about a few and may use them. Maybe you take a walk, spend time alone in your room, try a different activity for a while, or talk to a friend. Strategies that work for you, are safe to use with yourself and others, and are accessible at all, or most, times can be good coping skills. Today I'm going to talk about a few tricks that I use to calm down. You may want to consider using these ideas too when you feel overwhelmed.

Grounding and Mindfulness

Grounding and mindfulness are techniques you can use to bring your attention into the present moment, so you can focus your thoughts on what is real and right now instead of thinking about what might be. We definitely can't predict or control the future, but we can be aware of what's happening right now. Our brains have a hard time processing several things at the same time, so shifting our attention to something happening right now can take energy away from maintaining that big feeling.

There are many examples of grounding and mindfulness exercises, like the find-your-feet exercise. When you look at your feet, you may notice some things. Where are your feet (where are you standing or are your feet even on the ground)? Are you standing on carpet, grass, wood, tile? What is on your feet? Do you have on shoes, socks, or toenail polish? Are you barefoot? How do your feet feel? Do they feel sweaty, cold, itchy, tingly? Let's practice this exercise right now together. Answer out loud or quietly to yourself.

Another common grounding exercise is 5-4-3-2-1. Look around the room and name, either out loud or in your head, 5 things you can see. Then, find 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. Remember, it might feel silly to practice these skills if you don't have a strong feeling right now, but we must practice our calm-down strategies when we're feeling calm, so we can use these to help us feel better when we're having big or strong feelings.

Belly Breathing (diaphragmatic breathing)

Did you know that, sometimes, when people are upset, they hold their breath, and they don't know they are doing that? When you're having a strong feeling, you must be sure you are getting



enough air. This may sound silly, but, when people take the right kind of deep breath, they might notice that their heart slows down, they feel less sick to their stomach, and they start to feel a little better. There is a trick to it though. You've probably noticed that, when someone tells you "take a deep breath," doing this doesn't always help. Here's how to make that deep breath count. Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Take a slow breath through your nose, and feel your belly fill up with air. When you're breathing in, imagine that you're smelling a cup of hot chocolate or some pleasant smell (e.g., roses, chocolate chip cookies). I'm going to count to four while we smell that good smell slowly. At the top of your breath, hold for a few seconds. Now, breathe out, and feel your belly and your chest go empty. Let's imagine that we are blowing the steam from the hot chocolate or blowing out birthday candles. I'm going to count to five while we do this. Let's try that again. Slowly, smell and blow. The idea is for you to feel that breath in your belly and not in your chest and shoulders. It takes some practice to get good at this. Breathe in 4, hold 4, breathe out 5. Repeat. Try a few rounds of this, and see how you feel. You can speed up or slow down the timing as you feel necessary. The important parts are where you feel the breath and breathing out for a little bit longer than you're breathing in.

Muscle relaxation

Another way for us to calm down is to use muscle relaxation. When we are upset, our muscles can get tense especially in our shoulders, belly, arms, and legs. Those tight muscles are our body's way of trying to get us ready for an emergency—the "fight" in "fight or flight." But a strong feeling isn't always a real emergency, so having that tension can make us use up energy for no reason. Most of us can't release that tension just by telling ourselves to relax, so we could SQUEEZE the tension out. Let's try it. Start with your feet. Tense all of the muscles in your feet as hard as you can for 5 seconds. Relax your muscles, and breathe. Move to your calves. Tense those muscles as hard as you can for 5 seconds. Relax. Keep tensing all of the muscle groups through your body (e.g., thighs, tummy, shoulders) until you start to feel more in control.

6. Encouraging practice.

Help students understand that using relaxation and calm-down techniques is a skill that should be practiced before they experience distress. Hopefully, their calm-down strategies will become behaviors that they can build on.

As I've mentioned, building coping skills is a lot like building muscles. If you only work out one time, do you expect that you'll be very strong? Probably not, right? Doing exercises will help your body become strong so the same thing is true for your ability to use coping skills when you really need to. Practicing these skills when you're calm can help build those brain muscles, or neural pathways, so, when you do experience strong feelings, you can use your coping skills. You can't learn to play baseball by watching games on TV or playing the game one or two times. You must play baseball often and get help from people who know a lot about baseball. For your calm-down muscles, you need to practice EVERY DAY. You can practice using the ones we've discussed here or consult with trusted adults in your life to learn about strategies they use to help them feel more calm when they're overwhelmed. Remember, good coping skills should be safe and easy to use anywhere.



7. Closing.

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills

I've really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you today. Please practice some of these skills on your own. You can use the handout included here, or you can ask trusted adults for some other ideas. <introduce Additional Relaxation Techniques handout>. I hope to see you back here for our next chat!



Additional Relaxation Strategies

Practice using the additional relaxation strategies that are listed below. Find a strategy or strategies that work for you!

- **Stairway:** Imagine yourself standing on the top of a 10-step stairway or any size you want. With each breath, count backwards from 10 to 1 as you visualize yourself walking down the stairs and becoming more relaxed with each step. *Optional: You can continue this exercise by imagining that you have arrived at a special, personal place; then, explore this place in your mind.
- **Filling Your Room:** Close your eyes and relax. Imagine yourself sitting quietly in an empty room. Notice how you feel. Now, imagine adding a person or object that you would especially like to have with you in your room. Observe how you feel. Now, add someone or something else, and observe how you feel. Continue adding people and special objects or decorations to your room until you have filled it to your satisfaction. Pay attention to how full, satisfied, and safe you feel.
- **Blackboard Technique:** Sit quietly, and take several deep, relaxing breaths. Imagine yourself traveling to a private place where you notice a blackboard. Written on the blackboard are three mean statements that others have made about you in the past. Notice how you feel when you read these. Walk up to the blackboard, erase the statements, and write three positive statements about yourself in response. Notice how you feel when you read them. Take a deep breath, and remind yourself that you can make these positive statements to yourself whenever you need to.
- **Feelings fan.** Breathe in and imagine your chest and stomach are filling up with your big feeling instead of air. Breathe out and imagine you are blowing the big feeling out of your body.
- **Breath painting.** Breathe in and imagine you are dipping a brush in paint. Breathe out and use your breath as your paintbrush. Imagine your breaths out are blowing out colored paint. Try to paint the whole room.
- **Beach Breathing.** Breathe in and pretend that you are using your breath in to draw a wave toward the shore. Let it come in and wash over your feet. Breathe out and pretend that your breath is pushing the wave back into the ocean, and that wave is taking away tension as it washes back over your feet.
- **Infinity breaths.** Draw an infinity sign, or a number 8, on a piece of paper. Use a finger to trace one side of the figure while breathing in, and trace the other side while breathing out. You can also try using a finger, hand, or even foot to draw the figure 8 in the air while you practice breathing.
- **Wave breathing.** Lay down and place a small toy on your belly. Take deep, slow breaths, and pretend that your belly is the ocean, and the toy is riding the waves up and down. Prop your head up so you can watch the toy rise and fall with your breath.
- **Breathing and movement.** Combine simple movements with deep breathing. For example, breathe in and slowly raise your arms over your head. Breathe out and slowly lower your arms.



Lesson 4: Changing Thoughts

Skill: Cognitive Reframing

The goal of this lesson is to help students adjust negative thoughts. Students who can adjust their negative thoughts can benefit in the following ways:

- Acknowledge how thought patterns can encourage self-soothing or increase negative emotions.
- Use positive self-talk to help make strong feelings or painful feelings feel better.
- Adjust negative self-talk to decrease distress.
- Use basic cognitive reframing including the use of “and” or “but” to change unhelpful or irrational thoughts.
 - Adding an “and”: “I feel scared right now, AND I know I will be okay.”
 - Adding a “but”: “I didn’t do so well on that, BUT I’m learning to do better.”

Student Lesson Plan

Helping students learn how to manage emotions can be a two-pronged approach. Using calming down strategies (covered in the previous lesson) can help students decrease physiological arousal; however, making additional adjustments to thought patterns can also be useful for students. As educational professionals, you know how adults can sometimes “miss the mark” on helping students feel better. Shouting at a panicked student to “take deep breaths” or sternly telling them that “there’s nothing to worry about, just calm down” is largely unhelpful but often used. People who experience ongoing negative self-talk, limit beliefs, focus on “what’s wrong,” and constantly think about the worst-case scenario may not be helped by using mindfulness and deep breathing. Students must also learn ways to challenge the thoughts that contribute to, sustain, and amplify their feelings of distress. **Cognitive reframing** is an advanced skill that not all students can attain right away, but, in this lesson, ideas are offered to help all students begin to practice reframing thoughts. Specifically, the lesson covers understanding how to adjust or quiet negative self-talk and unhelpful thoughts and examines how to boost positive or more helpful thoughts. This script is just a suggestion to get you started. Use your own examples, materials, and judgment to expand on or alter the content as you desire. Given students’ limited attention spans, we recommend keeping your lesson to about 15 minutes.



1. Introduction to Changing Thoughts to Feel Better.

Greeting your students and introducing cognitive reframing lesson

Hi everyone! It's good to be with you again!

Review of between-session work.

What kind of calming-down practice were you able to do since last time we met? <Discuss with students or if they did not practice, review one of the relaxation strategies, and review why it is important to practice.>

Transition to new topic.

Today, I want to talk with you about strategies you can use to help you feel better! Last time we talked about ways to practice how to calm down. Today, we are going to talk about another way to help us feel better. We are going to learn about how to challenge our negative thoughts. These are the thoughts that make situations or events seem worse than they are and the thoughts that make us have unkind and untrue thoughts about ourselves. Many people sometimes struggle with thoughts that make them feel worse, so, today, we'll talk about how to work through negative thoughts.

2. How thoughts affect our feelings for better or for worse.

Introduce the idea that thoughts have an impact on how we feel. We can use our thoughts to feel better, but some of our thoughts can make us feel worse

We have many thoughts every day, and what we think makes a big difference in how we feel. Our thoughts can often mirror words we hear someone else say, like from teachers, friends, or other people. If you heard someone say to you, "You tried hard on that! Good work!" you would feel pretty good. If you heard someone say to you, "I can't believe you DID that! What's the matter with you?," you might feel hurt and sad. The words that people say to us can affect how we feel, and those words can also affect the words that we say to ourselves. The words we say to ourselves, or the thoughts we have, can also affect us. Our internal thoughts can help us, like a supportive friend, or they can hurt us, like a bully. When we think mean thoughts to ourselves, we are bullying ourselves.

Everyone has positive and negative thoughts. We need to be able to notice our thoughts, so we can evaluate whether they are true, helpful, and kind. If the thoughts are not, we have the power to change our thoughts, so we can feel better and be able to work on activities that matter to us.

3. Choosing our thoughts to decrease distress and increase resilience.

Help students understand that they can adjust or change their thoughts to help them feel better and manage their strong feelings



We have many thoughts every day, and we may feel like those thoughts are all over the place and hard to keep track of. We can learn how to tune in and spot the negative thoughts before those thoughts make us feel bad. We can also learn how to replace negative thoughts with helpful thoughts.

When you think a negative thought about yourself, you could ask yourself whether you would say these words to a best friend. For example, if your friend was really upset about a bad grade on a test, would you walk up to them and say, “I guess you’re just not smart at all, and you’re a terrible student”? Absolutely not! If your best friend was going through this situation, you might say this:

- It’s just one test, don’t worry too much about it.
- Maybe you can ask the teacher for help if you don’t understand.
- You are very smart. Some ideas just take longer to learn.

Before you start believing your negative self-talk, ask yourself: “Would it be okay if I said this to a person I cared about?” If the answer is “no,” then you need to think about what else you could say to yourself. Kindness is for yourself and others.

4. Identifying unhelpful thoughts to shift to self-soothing.

Using calm-down strategies to minimize physiological arousal, and learning to identify helpful or unhelpful thoughts to support positive self-talk

When we have big feelings, we need to understand that negative thoughts or self-talk may be creeping in. When we use our coping skills, like we learned last time, to let some of those strong feelings go, we can call on our positive self-talk to help us feel better. Let’s use an example. <Insert an example of a time that you noticed experiencing negative self talk, and then used a coping skill to calm down.> After I had a chance to calm my body down and let some of the feelings go, I asked myself “Are these thoughts helpful? Are they true? Are they kind?” Well, I realized that my positive self-talk would never say things like “it’ll never be better” or “this stuff always happens to me.” I would never speak like that to a friend. Those words are not helpful, true, or kind. I realized that my negative thoughts were getting out of control.

5. Adjusting negative self-talk to calm down.

Teach students to shift from negative thoughts to thoughts that are more soothing and emphasize calm and reasonable positive ideas

When our negative self-talk is loud and frequent or our thoughts are negative, we should use our positive self-talk. Sometimes, this is hard to do! When I <previous example> and was feeling <feeling words>, I needed to say a few things to myself OUT LOUD to help get my positive self-talk working. I said, “This situation is really uncomfortable, so it makes sense that I am upset, AND I know how to fix it.” Then I said to myself, “Everyone has tough days, but it won’t always be this way.” After I said those things to myself, out loud, my positive self-talk could take over. My



positive self-talk helped me remember that pain doesn't last forever. It helped me remember that I have a lot of skills and resources, and I have people around me who care about me.

6. *Basic cognitive reframing.*

Introduce ideas of “and” and “but” to help soften difficult situations, and brainstorm soothing and positive self-talk with students

Negative thoughts are tricky because they often feel true, and they get stuck in your head. Negative thoughts seem to always focus on how HARD or BAD a situation is. Sometimes, the situation is not good, like low grades, problems with friends, your parents expressing disappointment in you, or not being able to do a special activity you want to do. However, your positive self-talk knows that when you add the word “and” or “but,” you can make the situation feel less hard or bad. Remember, feelings and difficult situations can't last forever. So, when your negative self-talk says, “It's not fair,” your positive self-talk would say, “It's not fair this time, BUT sometimes things are fair!” When your negative self-talk says, “I never get what I want,” your positive self-talk would say, “I didn't get what I want, AND maybe next time I will!” No matter what negative thoughts you have, you can remember what your positive self-talk would say. Here are some examples:

- I can calm down and feel better.
- I can ask for help from someone who cares about me.
- Nothing bad lasts forever.
- It's going to be okay even if it hurts right now.

If you can't decide what your positive self-talk would say, you can try imagining what a friend, teacher, parent, counselor, or another person who loves you would say to make you feel better. Then, you can say that to yourself.

7. *Other Cognitive Strategies.*

Discuss other common cognitive distortions so students can begin to recognize unhealthy thought patterns

Negative thoughts are so common that there are words to describe the negative thoughts some people have (see below). Scientists have researched these different kinds of negative thoughts, and they have determined that people can recognize, challenge, and adjust these thoughts through consistent practice. A few examples of these kinds of negative thoughts follow:

- Filtering is when you only look for the negatives in a situation, like when you get a page of feedback on an assignment and you only remember the parts where the teacher said you needed to fix wording or ideas. You might think “I'm bad at this assignment.” A positive replacement thought might be “I got a lot of good feedback, and I can do better next time after I address the small bit of negative feedback.”



- Overgeneralizing is assuming that one event is part of a bigger pattern, like failing one test and saying to yourself “I *always* fail” or “I *never* do things right.” A replacement thought might be “I do well on some tests and not on others. I wonder what factors are at play here.”
- Catastrophizing is when you expect the worst possible outcome, like thinking “what if I wake up late, miss the bus again, get detention, get kicked off the team, lose my scholarship, and...” A replacement thought might be “I will be able to handle the consequences of a situation as they arise, and things will probably go more smoothly than I think they will right now.”

You will learn more about different kinds of negative thoughts using the worksheet at the end.

8. Review and summarize.

Review with your students that their thoughts can make them feel better or worse, and review that they can calm down, identify the thoughts, and use their positive self-talk

Remember, our feelings can be heavy sometimes, but we can use our coping skills to feel better. The thoughts in our heads can be negative or positive, and we can choose which thoughts to listen to. We can make choices about what we want to focus on, and we can work on creating replacement thoughts to use to fight back against our negative thoughts. Your positive self-talk wants you to remember how good you are and that you can deal with situations and events that aren't great and that you can ask for help when you need it. Don't let negative self-talk take over, and be sure to practice tuning into to your positive self-talk often.

9. Closing and practice.

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills

I've really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you! <Introduce Challenging Thoughts Worksheet and Getting Curious About Negative Thoughts Worksheet.> I hope to see you back here soon for our next chat!



Activity - Challenging Negative Thoughts

Directions: There are many kinds of negative thoughts. Take a look at each kind of negative thought, and come up with your own examples on how to challenge them. If you need help, you can look at the list of tips for challenging thoughts on the next page.

Kind of Negative Thought	Example from Your Life	Replacement Thought
All or nothing thinking	<i>Example: I left my friend on read for 2 days. I am <u>always</u> letting people down.</i>	<i>Example: I'm a good friend who <u>sometimes</u> messes up. I'll check in with them tomorrow.</i>
<u>All or nothing thinking</u> : When you think in extremes or absolutes, using "always," "never," and negative "I am" statements.		
<u>Overgeneralization</u> is when you assume that one negative event is part of a larger pattern.		
<u>Mental Filter</u> is when you only notice the bad parts of a situation and ignore the good parts or good evidence.		
<u>Emotional reasoning</u> is when you let your feelings boss you around, like "I feel stupid, so I must be stupid."		
<u>Jumping to Conclusions</u> is when you think you can read people's minds and you believe they don't like you, or you believe situations will turn out badly.		
<u>Personalization and Blame</u> are when you think you caused a situation that you aren't entirely responsible for, or you totally blame others for a situation when you may also be at fault.		
<u>"Should" Statements</u> are when you criticize yourself by assuming you "should" or must or have to be different.		
<u>Labeling</u> is when you identify as the problem and say, "I am bad," instead of saying, "I messed up."		



Tips for Challenging Thoughts

Directions: There are many ways to challenge negative thoughts. Look at the list below.

- **Identify the kind of negative thought.** Being able to label what's going on can help you start to understand how to adjust your thinking.
- **Examine the evidence.** Instead of assuming that the negative thought is true, try to list evidence that may prove it is not true or not always true.
- **The double-standard method.** A double-standard is when something is okay in one situation but not another and is considered unfair. You can't be kind to others but not yourself when dealing with the same situation. Try talking to yourself as if you are talking to a friend.
- **The experimental technique.** Do an experiment to test how true your negative thought is. If you assume that your negative thought is true, what is something you should not be able to do? Then try to do it.
- **Thinking in shades of grey.** Instead of thinking in extremes by using "always" and "never" (black and white thinking), try acknowledging the middle ground, and use words like "sometimes" or "partially" (grey).
- **The survey method.** Ask people questions such as "do you ever think that..." or "what do you think about yourself when..." to find out if the kind of thought you're having is normal.
- **Define terms.** Try to define the negative words you use to refer to yourself. You might feel better when you find out that some words, like "loser," don't have clear definitions, or you don't fit the definition.
- **Adjusting wording.** Try using words that are less emotionally charged, and say things simple, less judgmental ways.
- **Reattribution.** Attribution is how you explain an outcome. You might attribute failing a test to not being that smart. Using a more realistic attribution, or a reattribution, could consider other ways to explain the outcome: I didn't study, I was tired, I was distracted, I didn't understand the questions.
- **Cost-benefit analysis.** List the pros and cons of a negative thought. If you assume this thought is true, what will happen next? If you assume this thought is not true, what will happen next? Which set of events or activities do you want to have happen?

Adapted from Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1980; Signet, 1981.

Getting Curious About Negative Thoughts

Directions: The thoughts we have are not always "correct" just because we're having them. For example, after a mistake, we might think "I never do anything right," but is this thought correct?



Think of a situation in which you had a negative thought about yourself, and answer the questions below.

1. Describe the situation.
2. What am I thinking or imagining?
3. How much do I believe this thought: a little, a medium, a lot? (or rate 0-100%)
4. How does that thought make me feel: angry, sad, anxious?
5. How strong is the feeling: a little, a medium, a lot?(or rate 0-100%)
6. What is the evidence that makes this thought seem true?
7. What is the evidence that makes this thought seem false?
8. For those thoughts that may have been formed based on what the other people said, are those sources (i.e., people) reliable?
9. Are you confusing a habit with a fact? For example, does the belief seem true just because you have said this to yourself so many times?
10. Are you using extreme ways of thinking by thinking in all or nothing terms or using exaggerated words or phrases like “always” or “never”?
11. Are you taking examples out of context by only considering one part of the situation instead of considering the entire incident?
12. Are you confusing a low probability with a high probability?



13. Are your judgments based on feelings rather than facts?
14. Are you drawing conclusions in which evidence is lacking?
15. Are you exaggerating (including catastrophizing) or minimizing the meaning of an event?
16. Are you overgeneralizing from a single event (i.e. associating aspects of the event or perpetrator to other areas of your life)?
17. Are you guessing or “mind reading” other people’s thoughts or intentions?
18. What is an alternative way of thinking about this situation?
19. How much do I believe my original thought now: a little, a medium, a lot? (or rate 0-100%)
20. What am I feeling now: angry, sad, anxious?
21. How strong is the feeling: a little, a medium, a lot? (or rate 0-100%)
22. How true does this feeling feel to me now?

Adapted from CBT+: <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/socratic-questioning.pdf>



Lesson 5: Problem-Solving

Skill: Cognitive Reframing

The goal of this lesson is to help students respond appropriately to problems that they may encounter. Students who can respond appropriately to potential problems can benefit in the following ways:

- Normalize problems in everyday life.
- Review and integrate the use of calm-down strategies and emotion identification.
- Learn about strategies for identifying the relative seriousness of a problem, and find solutions (e.g., help-seeking behavior, independent resolution).
- Normalize ongoing and severe stressors, and use emotion regulation and social support in that context.

Student Lesson Plan

Students in your school may find themselves struggling with many different types of problems. Some of those problems may be serious, and some may be small. Some may get blown out of proportion or catastrophized. This lesson is designed to teach students how to **problem-solve** by encouraging them to stop and think about the size of their problem, match their reactions to the problem by using their calm-down skills as needed, and determine when to ask an adult for help. This lesson intends to teach students how to recognize that there are ways to find positive outcomes in negative experiences and normalize that some events and situations in life are very hard, but there is always hope. When delivering this lesson, feel free to think of your own examples, use your own stories and analogies, and utilize your preexisting resources.

The content below includes basic scripting that you can use; however, you should use your own judgment on wording and extending the content. Remember, this lesson should only take about 15 minutes as students have short attention spans.

1. Introduction to Problem-Solving.

Greeting your students

Welcome back!

Review of between-session work

Did you have a chance to practice noticing your negative thoughts this past week (or however long it has been since the last meeting)? <Review shifting thoughts and offer examples.>



Transition to new topic.

So far, we've talked about getting to know ourselves and learning how to identify our feelings and manage ourselves when we have strong feelings. Today, we will talk about how to solve problems. A lot of you may already have a process that you use for solving problems, so this lesson might be review, but it's important to review these skills from time to time. Big problems often involve big feelings, which can make it hard for you to make the right choices. Today, we're going to discuss a process for solving problems, so you can be sure you're making the best decisions possible for *you* and not just for your feelings in the moment.

2. Everyone has problems.

Normalizing problematic situations in life, emphasizing opportunities for growth, and normalizing help-seeking behavior

Everyone has problems. Problems are a normal part of life. You have probably faced some difficult problems before, and you will again. As you face some problems, you should feel good about yourself as you may be able to work through some of the problems on your own. You may have also experienced some times or situations that were so tough that you had to ask for help; asking for help is also a great skill. Before you can determine whether you can solve a problem on your own or whether you need advice or help from a trusted adult, you need to know what clues to look for in your problem, so you can decide how big your problem is. Let's talk about what these clues could be.

3. Stop and Breathe first!

Differentiating initial emotional reactions from the actual problem, and using a “stop and breathe” technique to begin problem-solving (stop, take a breath, name the problem, and name how you feel)

Remember, understanding your feelings can help you learn about yourself, the people around you, and your environment. But, sometimes, when things happen suddenly or if we're really emotionally invested in a situation, those first and intense feelings can take over and make us overreact or seem to limit our choices. If this happens, we might misunderstand the size of the problem. In order to not let our feelings take over, we need to calm down, so we can see the entire problem BEFORE we react to the problem. So, when a problem pops up, you need to: STOP. TAKE A DEEP BREATH. SAY THE PROBLEM, AND SAY HOW YOU FEEL. After you determine what you're really feeling and you have your emotions under control, you can use your feelings as clues to help you determine what kind of problem you have and what steps you should take next.

<Use an example here of a time someone might have over-reacted to a small problem that felt really overwhelming at first.>



4. How BIG is your problem?

Help students understand that there are different levels of seriousness or severity of problems, and help them identify their problems appropriately

Small Problems

Feelings are related to the problem-solving process because they are your FIRST clue about the size of your problem. If you have a small feeling, you might have a small problem. A small problem is something that you can solve on your own and that doesn't hurt anybody. An example of a small problem is forgetting a homework assignment or forgetting to do a chore. These problems probably only produce a small emotional reaction, nobody is hurt, and there is an easy solution (you can turn in an assignment later or do the chore another time).

Medium Problems

Maybe you have experienced a time when you have had a medium-sized problem. When this happens, your feelings are maybe getting a little less manageable. Maybe the problem involves a situation that you're not sure how to fix, or maybe your feelings are or your body is hurt. An example of a medium problem might be fighting with your friend. You may have bigger feelings, you may have hurt feelings, and you might not know if you need to ask for help in order to figure out your next step. For something like a medium problem, you could try to solve the problem on your own. You could try using coping skills to help yourself calm down, or you may decide to take a break from the problem for a while. If those strategies don't help, it's time to ask a trusted adult to help you with your problem.

Big Problems

When your feelings are very difficult to manage, and you really don't know what to do on your own to fix your feelings or the situation, then you have a big problem. Anytime someone is physically hurt or in danger of being physically hurt, or anytime someone is experiencing overwhelming feelings that they can't manage on their own, then it's probably time to ask for help.

<Engage students in coming up with examples of small, medium, and big problems.>

5. Match Your Solution to the Size of the Problem.

Help students match their strategy (what to do), regulate their emotional reaction appropriately, and know when to get help from an adult

First, we must determine how big our problem is. Remember, small problems are those that you can solve on your own and that did not hurt anyone. We can manage small problems on our own. For medium problems, you may need help, but you can first try to address the problem on your own and remember that you can ask for help if you cannot solve the problem yourself. Anytime someone is hurt or you can't fix the problem on your own, you need to ask someone for help. Seeking help for a difficult situation takes courage, and no one should be embarrassed or afraid to do so. Everyone needs help sometimes. Humans are social, and it is natural and correct for us to rely on each other for help and support. We can, and should, ask for help from someone who



is more knowledgeable than us about the kind of problem we are experiencing. While it is noble to want to help a friend, we need to recognize when we are not an expert in their problem and be comfortable referring them to someone who will be more helpful. Supporting your friends is great, but young adults are rarely experts on any topic. I want to suggest that you spend some time evaluating who might be the experts in your life. Who can you trust to help you manage really big problems? Your answers could include parents, teachers, therapists, coaches—people who have had some life experience and who may know how to navigate helpful resources.

6. Super Big Problems – Maybe No Easy Answers.

Relate content to serious challenges that do not lend themselves to answers, and normalize and reframe how serious situations can be managed

When there are big problems, not just on a personal level but ones on a local and/or global scale that are tough for everyone, you need to KEEP practicing your coping skills. Addressing your personal distress may not help alleviate super big problems, but relieving your own stress can help you avoid burnout. When problems are so big that they seem unfixable, you may spend more energy than you have trying to cope with them. Making sure you practice self-care is one way to help yourself stay in control and ensure you are available to help in whatever small ways you *can* to make a difference. Taking care of yourself so you can stay invested in working on big problems, or helping others, is really important. .

7. Closing and Practice

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills

I've really enjoyed getting to spend this time with you! <Introduce Problem-Solving Process handout> Can't wait to see you next time.



Activity: Problem-Solving Process

Directions: When feelings are complicated and involve intense emotions, you may have trouble figuring out your next steps. Try to use this worksheet at least once this week, or as often as necessary, to help you work through a problem without letting your emotions control your decision.

1. Notice that you are experiencing a problem. Notice that your feelings are getting too big, and use a coping skill to calm down. Name the skill(s) you used.

2. Say the problem and how you feel *out loud*. Write about how you feel and what is happening.

3. How big or small is your problem?

Big – You definitely need to ask for help; someone is hurt or might become hurt, or you are unable to calm down on your own.

Medium – You might need to ask for help, or you might need to use some coping skills in order to see the problem more clearly.

Small – You can definitely address the problem on your own.

4. Think of three potential next steps you could try.

5. Evaluate the potential consequences of these next steps.

6. Pick one next step to try.

7. Later, reflect on how the situation turned out. What happened? What are you feeling now? Are there any additional steps you need to take?



Lesson 6: Friendships

Skill: Social Skills

The goal of this lesson is to help students develop healthy friendships with peers. Students will benefit in the following ways:

- Describe qualities of positive friends.
- Learn how to self-reflect when thinking about friendship qualities.
- Identify ways to engage with friends.

Student Lesson Plan

This lesson focuses on bolstering **relational skills**, like friendships. While relationships are important during every season of life, making or maintaining friendships can be difficult at any time but especially when routines are disrupted, emotions are out of control, or students are new to a school. The purpose of this lesson is to describe the qualities of a friend.

When delivering this lesson, feel free to think of your own examples, use your own stories and analogies, and utilize your pre-existing resources.

The content below includes basic scripting that you can use; however, you should use your own judgment on wording and extending the content. Remember, this lesson should only take about 15 minutes as students have short attention spans.

1. Introduction to Friendships

Greeting your students.

Hi everyone! This is our last session together – I'm so glad I've had the chance to get to know you better!

Review of between-session work.

Did you have a chance to practice problem-solving from last week? <Review problem solving and offer examples.>

Transition to new topic.

Today, we're going to talk about friendships and what it means to be a friend. Let's get started!



2. What makes a good friend?

Describe qualities of positive friends

What is a friend? You may find it easy to think of an example of a friend you have, but you may find it harder to describe how you know someone is a good friend.

Why are friends important?

Most often, friends are people with whom we get along and share interests. Friends support one another, listen to each other, do activities together, and give each other advice. When you and a friend listen to each other, you can learn from each other, explore what you have in common, and celebrate what makes you different. Friends can teach us so much, like new sports or music choices, different foods and customs, and unusual ways of thinking.

<INSERT STORY ABOUT HOW A FRIEND TAUGHT YOU SOMETHING- EXAMPLE: Can you believe I had never tried a Reese's peanut butter cup until a friend offered to share one with me? Now that's a true friend!>

Friends also teach us empathy. When we practice understanding someone else's perspective or offer support when a friend is struggling, we become more understanding and knowledgeable about the world and ourselves. When you know and accept someone for who they are, you create the opportunity for yourself to be known and accepted.

What makes a good friend?

It is not always easy or possible to be friends with everyone. People have different interests, personalities, and strengths, so you may or may not find certain qualities in common with other people, and you may not want to be friends with everyone—that's fine. Sometimes, you may want to be friends with a person, but you don't feel good when you're around them. Let's talk about friendship as healthy friendships and unhealthy friendships. When you have a healthy friendship, you usually feel happy, safe, and peaceful when you are around this person. This friend also shows you respect by accepting your differences, forgiving your mistakes, and supporting you when you need help. In a healthy friendship, you enjoy being with each other but also feel that it's ok if you both have other friends and interests. Healthy friendships are a necessary part of one's overall health.

Now, let's talk about unhealthy friendships. In an unhealthy friendship, you may feel sad, frustrated, irritated, or worried most of the time when you're around this person. This friend might make fun of you, pressure you, bully you, or threaten to tell your secrets to other people. They might encourage you to make poor choices, engage in actions or activities you are uncomfortable doing, or hang out with people whom you don't like. If your friend tells you you're not allowed to be friends with anyone else but them or that no one else will be as nice to you as them, you are engaged in an unhealthy friendship. Generally, friendships should not feel suffocating or smothering. If a friend makes you feel like you can't ask for space or that you don't have any choices in certain situations, this friend is probably an unhealthy friend, and you may need to ask



a trusted adult for help in dealing with this situation. There is a difference between a friendship that creates moments of sadness or in which there are disagreements and a friendship that feels like it is always hard. Everybody has struggles with their friends sometimes. It's ok for friends to disagree or even be upset with each other occasionally, and some healthy friendships may, at times, require outside help to manage. An unhealthy friendship happens when you feel bad most of the time while you are with this person. Sometimes, it takes a while to figure out whether a friendship is going through a rough patch or if a friendship is unhealthy.

3. Be the kind of friend you'd like to have!

Learn how to self-reflect when thinking about friendship qualities

Now, we're going to talk about how to know if you're being a good friend. Understanding what a good friend is can also help you decide if your friends are being true friends to you. In healthy friendships you should spot most of these qualities most of the time:

- Kindness and caring – Healthy friends are concerned for you when you are having trouble and are happy for you when you are doing well.
- Respect – Healthy friends care about your point of view and ideas and understand that your ideas and perspectives may be different from theirs.
- Compromise – Healthy friends, because they care about you, are willing to take turns, share, and join you in activities that make you happy. As a healthy friend, you should sometimes join in activities that your friends want to do even if they are not your favorite interests.
- Trust – Healthy friends make you feel safe because you know they will listen to you without laughing, will keep your secrets, and will not spread rumors or talk badly about you to others.

What other good friend qualities can you think of that we didn't mention? <Discuss positive friendship qualities and ideas to make friends.>

4. How to cope when friendships are challenging.

Learn positive coping skills to use when friends do not want to hang out

Most people have the experience of being told “no” by a friend—directly or indirectly. You might have had someone say, “I don't want to hang out right now,” or a friend may miss an important event, leave you on read, or even tell you they don't want to be friends anymore. Your friends are allowed to request breaks or just take time to be alone. Your friends will also let you down from time to time. Unfortunately, they can also decide that, for whatever reason, they don't want to continue the relationship. Ultimately, we do not have control over others. As much as we may try to convince someone or manipulate situations, other people decide how they will respond to us. Sometimes, we will be disrespected or rejected, and those actions can hurt us. What we have control over is OUR response when someone hurts us. We can use coping skills to keep us calm, consider our options, and respond in the way that we think is best.



Learn about boundaries in relationships

In addition to controlling our responses, we also control our boundaries: a boundary is an imaginary line, or a limit or rule, we draw around areas of ourselves or our environment that help us feel safe and respected, and it can describe a way we expect to be treated. Boundaries are rules that we make for ourselves in order to keep us happy and healthy. For example, a boundary meant to ensure that you get some alone time each day might be “I will stop checking my phone at 9 p.m.” Your friends will need to understand that you will not message them after 9 p.m. Some people may misunderstand boundaries and think that boundaries are rules we make for other people. In this circumstance, they may think you are saying, “You cannot text me after 9 p.m.” Remember, we do not control others, just our reactions to other people. If someone violates our boundaries, we can decide how to respond, and this response may include consequences such as “If someone does not respect my alone time, I do not want to be friends with them.”

Learn about solving problems in relationships

Sometimes, you will have trouble getting along with a friend. You may not agree on what to do together, have different ideas about situations or people, or may have other friends whom you don't agree on. Friends may accidentally hurt each other's feelings or, unintentionally, cross each other's boundaries. When this happens, you can follow a simple process: use strategies to calm down, ask your friend if they are available to discuss the problem, take turns talking and listening, and decide together what happens next.

When to ask for help with social problems

Some problems with friends are easy to solve. Other problems may require some outside help from a trusted adult to solve the issue. This may be the case, if you do not feel comfortable managing a friend's behavior on your own.

Some examples of times that you should NEVER try to solve a problem with a friend on your own is when you are worried that a friend may hurt themselves, someone else, or you or if your friend is in any danger such as being hurt by someone else. Being “hurt” includes physically, emotionally, or in any other way. This is a time when you need to contact a trusted adult immediately, like a teacher, school counselor, school psychologist, or therapist. You may also consider talking to someone's parents; however, the people mentioned here may have experience with and/or specific training on how to respond in serious situations. They can ensure your friend gets help as soon as possible.

5. Closing and Practice

Provide an ending that includes a positive message, and remind students about ways to continue practicing skills

We've spent a lot of time together talking about feelings, solving problems, and having healthy relationships. I've enjoyed spending time with you! What was your favorite part about our time



together? <Allow students to share examples.> Remember, you have a lot of skills for taking care of yourself, but you can also always ask for help.



Activity - My Boundaries

Directions: You need to understand how you want to treat yourself and how you expect others to treat you. By making a list of your boundaries, you can add a layer of protection against harmful relationships. Remember that boundaries describe actions that we will do, not actions that we require from others. We first define our boundaries for ourselves; then communicate those boundaries and why they're important to us; and, if necessary, set consequences if our boundaries are not respected. Make a list of some of your relationship boundaries below.

Examples:

1. *I will not respond to messages during my alone time, which is after 9 p.m.*
2. *I say no to activities that I am not interested in or that make me feel uncomfortable.*
3. *I don't talk about people behind their backs.*

