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Foundations for Wellbeing

Year 2, lesson 5: Reactions and responses



Reactions and responses

This is the last of five lessons on self-regulation, mental health and wellbeing, for year 2. This lesson focuses on managing stress, tension and reactivity.

To encourage pupils to use the self-regulation strategies taught in these lessons more automatically, autonomously and effectively, it is important to revisit and reinforce them regularly, as part of a whole-school approach to promoting mental health and wellbeing. The extension activities are designed to support this (for more information, see the [Teacher Handbook](#)). To learn more, please visit our [self-guided online courses](#), which are available to all School Plus members.

The lesson plan is based on a 45-minute lesson. The timings given are the minimum required to deliver the activities, but you may wish to spend longer exploring each activity.

Learning objective and outcomes

To learn about ways of managing reactions and responses.

Pupils will be able to:

- identify ways of reacting to different situations
- describe how our reactions and responses can change, based on how calm or tense we feel
- explain how practising different strategies helps us to manage our responses

Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- Flipchart paper and pens
- Resource 1: *Think, feel, do* [one per pupil]
- Resource 2: *Different reactions* [one per pair]

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher handbook notes before teaching this lesson. They include guidance on establishing a safe learning environment, supporting pupils with additional vulnerabilities, using assessment and personal reflection effectively, and embedding the learning. They also outline useful subject knowledge on the theory and evidence informing these lessons, self-regulation strategies and relevant neuroscience.

The lesson plans should be used flexibly, and you are encouraged to adapt them to meet the specific needs and abilities of your pupils. It is also important to consider sensitivities and prior knowledge about specific pupils' circumstances. If safeguarding concerns arise during this lesson, these should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, in line with your school policy.

Baseline assessment

Introduction (Slides 9-11, 2 mins)

Establish or revisit ground rules. Explain that if pupils have worries or questions during or after the lesson that they do not want to raise in front of the class, they can speak to you individually or write their question on a piece of paper, anonymously or with their name, and put it in the question box.

Using slide 10, begin by briefly recapping the learning from last lesson.

Introduce today's learning objective and outcomes. Explain that this lesson will focus on different ways of reacting, how being calm or tense can affect how we react or respond to something, and ways of managing how we respond.

Baseline assessment activity (Slides 11-12, 10 mins)

Share the following scenario using slide 11:

Zam has accidentally spilled paint on their artwork.

Ask pupils to complete **Resource 1: Think, feel, do**, exploring what Zam might be thinking and what they are feeling, recording their ideas in the 'think' and 'feel' boxes respectively. For the 'do' box, ask pupils to answer two questions:

- How might Zam react?
- What might they do next?

Once completed, explain that we can't always help how we react, but we can manage how we respond (what we do afterwards).

Pupils should work individually and without prompting. Use the responses to gauge their knowledge and understanding about the topic and aim to adapt teaching to address any misconceptions or gaps in understanding. For example, you may wish to repeat some of the learning about more helpful ways of thinking, if pupils struggle to suggest ways to manage reactions.



Support: Give pupils the option to complete a 'draw and talk', drawing their ideas in the boxes and then talking them through.

Core activities

Reactions charades (Slide 13, 10 mins)

In pairs, give pupils **Resource 2: Different reactions**. Ask one person in the pair to act out a reaction card, and the other to find the matching scenario, continuing until they have matched them all. Pairs could swap after each charade, or halfway through.

Possible answers:

Raining at breaktime – disappointed

A friend sharing their favourite toy – grateful

Losing a board game – upset

Getting an unexpected gift – surprised

Being on the winning team – happy

Once completed, explain that different people will have different ways of reacting to things. For example, if someone likes playing indoors, their reaction to it raining at breaktime might be different – they might not be as disappointed as someone who doesn't like indoor play.



Challenge: Ask pupils to choose a scenario and describe a different reaction to it. For example, *losing a board game – angry*.

Helpful thoughts (Slide 14, 5 mins)

Remind pupils that pausing and thinking 'helpful thoughts' before responding to something can be useful, especially when someone's reaction involves unpleasant feelings. Show the examples on slide 13 and ask pupils what helpful thoughts someone could focus on, when their reactions feel unpleasant. Take feedback.

Pupils might suggest:

Raining at breaktime – disappointed:

Think about which indoor games they might like instead; plan a new game; try to look forward to the next outdoor playtime; remember that it might be nice to stay indoors and read/play a game/draw/be dry!

Losing a board game – upset:

Remind themselves that everyone loses games sometimes; it was fun to play the game; they can practise to get better for next time.



Challenge: Ask pupils to suggest another scenario where someone might have a reaction and unpleasant feelings. What might help them to respond?

Managing responses (Slides 15–16, 10 mins)

Reiterate that we can't help how we react, for example, when someone loses a board game, they might not be able to help feeling upset. But they might be able to manage how they respond – for example, instead of storming away from the game, they might speak to an adult about how they are feeling. There are times, however, when it might be more difficult to manage how we respond to situations. In pairs, ask pupils to discuss when someone might find it more difficult to manage their response – they could use the clues on slide 15 to help them.

Pupils might suggest:

- 1. When someone is tired or hungry; when it's time for bed; when someone wakes up.*
- 2. When feelings are particularly unpleasant or particularly strong, for example, breaking a toy by accident; feeling left out; finding schoolwork difficult; falling out with a friend; feeling worried about something else.*

3. *When someone is feeling unsettled, for example, when they are facing a big change, such as joining a new school or class, or moving somewhere new.*

Explain that all of these examples can cause someone to feel tense. When someone feels tense, they might have a less helpful response to something happening. But, if they notice that they feel tense, they could use an activity to help them feel calmer. This can make it easier for them to manage their response.

Ask pupils for suggestions of what might help someone feel calmer, thinking about their learning over the last few lessons. Take feedback.

Pupils might suggest: Noticing and naming feelings; talking to a trusted adult or friend; taking deep breaths/doing a breathing exercise; using a distraction; trying to focus on having helpful thoughts; thinking about pleasant feelings or memories; finding somewhere quiet to calm down; doing something they enjoy.

Use slide 16 to check pupils' answers and remind them of all the activities that have been introduced in the lessons. You could refer to the strategies posters (Appendix 3) in the [Teacher's Handbook](#) to reinforce the emotion regulation techniques, during or after the lesson.

Endpoint assessment

Endpoint assessment (Slide 17, 5 mins)

Ask pupils to return to their responses in Resource 1: Think, feel, do and, using a different colour pencil, change or add to their original ideas based on the learning in the lesson. Once completed, remind pupils of the learning outcomes for the lesson and ask them to add underneath what could cause Zam's reaction and response to be less helpful or pleasant, and what Zam could do to manage their response. Use this as evidence of progress and to inform future teaching.

Check the question box and respond to any remaining questions.

Signposting support

Signposting support (Slide 18, 3 mins)

Remind pupils that we can't always change the way we react, but if they are finding it difficult to manage their responses, it's important to speak to a trusted adult at home or at school. Pupils can also contact Childline: 0800 1111.

Closing the lesson (Slide 19)

Finally, using slide 19, reinforce the key learning by summing up for the class what they have achieved in today's lesson.

Activities to extend and embed the learning

Flower bubble (Slide 20)

Lead the class in the flower bubble practice by using [this animation](#).

Explain that the more we practise this, the easier it becomes for our brains to remember, and we can use this when managing our responses in future.

What three things? See/hear/move (Slide 21)

Invite pupils to find three things of a certain colour (the 'What three things' strategy they met in year 1), or to not only find three things of a certain colour, but also notice three sounds in their environment and then make three different body movements (such as moving their arms, fingers and toes). This is the 'See, hear, move' strategy.

Remind them that repeating strategies like this will help the brain remember them next time and that we can use this activity to distract ourselves when we are feeling tense, worried or upset because it can help us to pay attention to something different and take our mind off what is upsetting us.

Other strategies (Slide 22)

Repeat the [muscle relaxation activity](#) from Year 2, lesson 4.