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Foundations for Wellbeing

Year 4, lesson 5: Strategies for calm



Strategies for calm

This is the last of five lessons on self-regulation, mental health and emotional wellbeing, for year 4. 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 strategies that can help someone manage their responses.

Pupils will be able to:

- identify factors that can affect someone's reactions
- demonstrate or describe self-calming strategies
- explain how these strategies can have a positive impact on emotions, wellbeing and the brain

Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- Resource 1: *The calm podcast* [one per group]
- Resource 2: *Messages from the listeners* [one per group]
- Resource 3: *Self-calming strategies* [one per group]
- Each pupil's baseline assessment activity from 'Lesson 1: Describing emotions': **Lesson 1, Resource 1: What's our starting point**

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher guidance 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

Reconnecting activity and baseline assessment (Slides 9–12, 5 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 write their question on a piece of paper, anonymously or with their name, and put it in the question box.

Using slide 10, briefly recap the learning from last lesson, reminding pupils that they learnt about different ways to manage worry. Today's lesson will build on this by exploring strategies for feeling calmer.

Show slide 11 and explain that first, you'd like the class to think back to all the different actions they've learnt about over the last four lessons that can help someone to manage thoughts, feelings or distractions that are uncomfortable (*feelings and emotions*) or unhelpful (*thoughts and distractions*). In pairs, or as a whole class, ask pupils to recap this learning by playing 'strategy ping pong' – passing an imaginary or real ball between them. Each time someone hits the imaginary ball with their imaginary racket (or catches the real ball) they will say a strategy. They should try not to repeat a strategy that has already been said.

After 'strategy ping pong', explain that today pupils will be preparing for a 3-minute podcast all about reactions and tips for feeling calmer. Show slide 12 and ask the class what they have learnt previously about these words? Use their answers to gauge their starting point for the lesson and consider any adaptations. For example, if pupils can't remember what 'calm' and 'tense' mean, you will need to recap these key terms.

Introduction (Slide 13, 2 mins)

Introduce today's learning objective and outcomes. Explain that this lesson will explore the different things that impact people's reactions, and some strategies people can use to help them feel calmer – which will support their responses. Use this opportunity to make sure pupils recognise the difference between a reaction (such as frustration or shock – how someone might feel immediately in a situation, which will be affected by lots of different things) and a response (which is how someone then chooses to act or respond).

Core activities

What can affect reactions? (Slides 14–16, 8 mins)

Organise pupils into small groups and explain that each group will be creating a 3-minute podcast (or audio clip). Using slide 14, make it clear that everyone in the group will need to speak or contribute, and they will need to use the success criteria to make sure their listeners get the key information. Give each group **Resource 1: The calm podcast** so they have the success criteria to hand and can jot down their ideas when you prompt them to do so, during the lesson.

Show slide 15 and explain that in preparation for the podcast, listeners have written in with some of their problems about feeling calm and responding to situations. Ask groups to look at **Resource 2: Messages from the listeners** and discuss:

- What do you think affected each listener's reaction?
- How many different factors can you identify from these messages? Groups should list these in section 1 of **Resource 1: The calm podcast**.

Bring the class back together and ask groups to share the different factors they identified. Use these to make a class list, and encourage groups to cross-reference with their own list to make sure they have included factors such as:

- **Sleep:** *Andie had a bad sleep and has been feeling more tense and irritable. Good quality sleep can support people's mood and help them feel calmer.*
- **Movement:** *Meena talks about how running helps her feel relaxed afterwards and like she can be more patient with people. Physical activity has many benefits. For example, it can lift people's mood (by leading to the release of feel-good chemicals like endorphins).*
- **Rest:** *Tao didn't feel rested after too much movement in his day – so it's about having a balance. Some movement is helpful for feeling calm and relaxed, but too much can make people feel tired and tense, especially if they don't get a chance to take a break.*
- **Food and drink:** *David felt tearful – partly because he was sad about wet play, but it was made worse because he hadn't had lunch yet. The way someone reacts can be affected by what they eat and drink. Feeling hungry can make people feel tense and irritable, and sugary food and drink can negatively impact people's energy levels by making them go up and down very quickly.*
- **Time with family and friends:** *Zam's time laughing with his cousin made him feel happier and more relaxed. Enjoyable time with others can help people to feel calmer.*
- **Time outdoors:** *Walking through the park meant Kayla arrived at school feeling more relaxed. Spending time outdoors is another good way to help with feeling calmer. This could be visiting a park, a pond or it could even be as simple as noticing an animal, plant or tree while walking in the street.*

Ask the class if there is anything else, not on the list, that they think helps people to feel calmer and have more helpful reactions? (For example, doing things people enjoy, helping others).

Emphasise that all of these different factors (good quality sleep, nutritious food etc.) can help people to feel calm – and feeling calm can not only help people to have more helpful reactions but can also support people to have more helpful responses. For example, because Meena was feeling calmer and more relaxed, she was able to respond to people more patiently.

Before moving on, give groups a moment to add any additional ideas to section 1, and complete section 2 of **Resource 1: The calm podcast**.



Support: In their groups, ask pupils to focus on the message from Andie, David or Meena and share with their group the factor they think impacted the character.



Challenge: Once they have written a list of factors that affect the listeners' reactions, ask pupils to re-order it so the factor that they think has the biggest impact on someone's reactions is at the top and the factor with the smallest impact is at the bottom.

Self-calming strategies (Slide 17, 8 mins)

Ask the class, what else could the listeners do to help them feel calmer? Take pupils' ideas before using slide 17 to recap on the calming strategies that pupils may have learnt about previously.

Give groups a minute to read the strategies on **Resource 3: Self-calming strategies** and check if they have any questions about any of them. Then, ask groups to pick at least two strategies they will either demonstrate or explain to listeners on the podcast. Give them a few minutes to practise demonstrating or explaining these, in preparation.

Before moving on, give groups time to make any notes in section 3 of **Resource 1: The calm podcast**.



Challenge: Encourage groups to look back at the messages they received from Andie and Tao in particular. Which strategies do they think would be most helpful to include for these listeners?

The calm podcast (Slides 18–20, 15 mins)

Using slide 18, briefly recap what happens in the brain when someone uses these strategies and remind pupils that if strategies are used repeatedly, then they can change the brain (partly because the hippocampus learns and remembers strategies that made someone feel better in the past).

Finally, ask the class how they think repeatedly practising these calming strategies will help the listeners':

- behaviour or responses? *(For example, the listeners might find they can have more choice over how they behave or respond to situations)*
- emotions? *(For example, they will still experience emotions like frustration, anger or fear – but they will have strategies that can help them to manage these and move towards feeling calmer or more relaxed)*
- overall wellbeing over time? *(This will have a positive effect on their wellbeing, because they will find it easier to manage their strong emotions and their behaviour, on the one hand, and focus on activities that they care about and enjoy, on the other)*

Following the class discussion, give groups a minute or two to make sure they have captured any information from this activity in sections 4 and 5 on **Resource 1: The calm podcast**.

They should then have five minutes or so to add any final notes on their sheets and practise what they are going to say, referring to the podcast success criteria.

Finally, using slide 20, explain that groups will pair up to perform their podcasts. You could use a three-minute timer to indicate when the first group's slot is finished, at which point the other group should use the success criteria to share:

- one thing they think the group did well
- one thing they could build on next time.

Reflection and endpoint assessment

Reflection and endpoint assessment (Slides 21-23, 5 mins)

Ask pupils to silently reflect on the prompts on slide 21:

- The most useful thing I could take away from this podcast episode is...
- Two things I can do to help myself feel calmer are...

As this is a private reflection activity, pupils should not share their ideas.

Use slide 22 to remind pupils of everything they have learnt over the last five lessons. With this learning in mind, ask each pupil to look back at their copy of **Resource 1: What's our starting point** from 'Lesson 1: Describing emotions', and revisit each of the questions. Is there anything they would like to add to their original response? Is there anything they would like to change? Pupils should add or change their ideas using a different colour.

When pupils have finished, take in the copies of **Resource 1: What's our starting point?** so you can assess their progress over the series of lessons and identify any misconceptions or gaps that may still need addressing.

Check the question box and respond to any remaining questions.

Signposting support

Signposting support (Slide 24, 2 mins)

Remind pupils that if they have any worries about any of the topics covered over the five lessons, or if emotions are difficult or causing problems, then it's important they speak to a trusted adult at home or at school who can help. Pupils can also contact Childline www.childline.org.uk/kids.

Closing the lesson (Slide 25)

Finally, using slide 25, 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

A podcast recording (Slide 26)

Ask groups to record their podcasts if the facilities allow. These could be shared with other year groups or uploaded to the school website. Alternatively, if recording is not practical, pupils could create information leaflets translating the key information.

Calming clouds (Slide 27)

Ask pupils to draw some clouds in their notebook or journal at home and fill each cloud with a calming strategy. Each time they practise the strategy over the next few weeks, they should colour in a segment of the cloud. You could encourage pupils to use the relevant strategies poster (Appendix 3) in the [Teacher Handbook](#) to help them choose a strategy.