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Foundations for Wellbeing

Year 6, lesson 2: Managing distraction



Managing distraction

This is the second of five lessons on self-regulation, mental health and emotional wellbeing, for year 6. This lesson focuses on how to direct attention and manage distractions.

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 a variety of strategies for managing internal and external distractions.

Pupils will be able to:

- assess how helpful internal and external distractions are and evaluate different strategies for managing them
- identify parts of the brain that are activated when someone is distracted
- describe how focusing on goals can help to manage distractions and support wellbeing

Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- Baseline assessments from lesson 1
- Resource 1: *Zam's swimming lesson* [one per small group (A3 size)]
- Resource 1a: *Zam's distractions* [support option, as required (A3 size)]
- Resource 2: *Zam's homework* [one per pair]
- Resource 2a: *Zam's steps* [support option, cut-up set as required]

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

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 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 the learning objective and outcomes. Explain that today's lesson will build on prior learning by exploring the helpfulness of different distractions and strategies to manage them, including goal setting.

Baseline assessment activity (Slide 12, 5 mins)

Read the scenario on slide 12 and ask pupils to answer the questions on their own, in their books. Take feedback to establish pupils' starting points and consider how the lesson may need adapting. For example, if pupils are unable to identify ways to manage distractions, you may wish to spend more time exploring strategies in the first activity.

Core activities

Zam's distractions (Slides 13–16, 10 mins)

Explain that the class will be looking at the different types of distraction Zam experiences in their swimming lessons. Ask them if they can recall any types of distraction they may have previously learnt about. Take feedback, using slide 13 to remind pupils of different types of distractions.

Using **Resource 1: Zam's swimming lesson**, in groups, ask pupils to fill in the table of distractions Zam experiences in the swimming lesson, noting which are internal, external, helpful and unhelpful. Take feedback using slide 15.

Next, share the strategies on slide 16, and ask pupils to decide which strategy they think will be the most helpful for Zam to use in the swimming lesson, filling in the table with the reasons for their decisions. Ask them to repeat this for the strategy they think would be least helpful in this situation.

Take feedback, drawing out key learning:

- *More helpful strategies: 'See, hear, move' could help Zam to quickly re-focus after getting distracted. As Zam is hoping to move to the next stage, using goals or rewards may also be a helpful strategy.*
- *Less helpful strategies: Zam will not be able to do a different activity during the lesson, making this strategy challenging in this scenario; 'watching thoughts' may be less helpful while Zam is completing a demanding activity like swimming.*

Highlight that different strategies can be helpful in different situations – it is important that Zam tries different strategies to find out what works best for them. You could use the strategies posters (Appendix 3) in the [Teacher Handbook](#) to reinforce these and other strategies, during and after the lesson.

Zam's amazing brain (Slides 17–18, 5 mins)

Use slide 17 to remind pupils of the parts of the brain that help manage distractions. Ask them to fill in the table, giving an example from Zam's scenario of when each part of the brain would have been active. For example, the ventral striatum (VS), which is activated when we do things that we like, would have been active when Zam's mouth was watering, thinking about food. If necessary, use the Amazing brain poster (Appendix 2) in the [Teacher Handbook](#) to remind pupils of the parts of the brain and what they do.

Ask pupils to check their own answers using slide 18. If pupils struggle to remember the parts of the brain, explain that the most important point is that if Zam uses the distraction strategies, the connections in the brain will become stronger, making it easier to manage distractions in future.



Support: Give pupils **Resource 1a: Zam's distractions**, with further scaffolding to support in answering each question.



Challenge: Ask pupils to discuss the different emotions Zam might be feeling in the swimming lesson, considering how pleasant they are and how energised they might make Zam feel.

Focusing on goals (Slides 19–21, 15 mins)

Explain that focusing on goals can be a helpful strategy for managing distractions. Having a goal that also relates to someone's personal values can be even more helpful. For example, Zam really wanted to pass the swimming stage to be able to enter competitions and continue improving at swimming – this is important to Zam, and they find it exciting.

Using slide 19, explain that someone could use the process model of self-regulation, which has five steps, to help them to focus on their goal and manage distractions. Model this using the example of Zam on slide 20.

Next, in pairs, give pupils **Resource 2: Zam's homework** and ask them to fill in the five steps, helping Zam choose the best place to work and to both avoid and manage distractions, in order to achieve their goal.

Circulate the room as pupils complete the activity and briefly take feedback from volunteers, using the suggestions in Resource 2a to support discussions.



Support: Give pupils **Resource 2a: Zam's steps** and ask them to organise the steps in the correct order.



Challenge: Ask pupils to discuss: How can thinking about personal values (what is important to someone in life, for example, kindness, creativity, improving) help people focus on goals that matter to them?

Reflection and endpoint assessment

Reflection and endpoint assessment (Slides 22-23, 5 mins)

Ask pupils to reflect on any goals they would like to achieve and how they could use some, or all, of the five steps to help achieve them. As this is personal reflection pupils should not be asked to share their responses.

Remind pupils of the learning outcomes and ask them to revisit question 2 of the baseline activity from lesson 1 ('What distractions might they face at the new school and how could they be managed?'). Ask them to make any changes to their original answers, or add in any new learning from this lesson in a different colour pen, considering:

- what internal and external distractions someone might experience when first starting secondary school
- how someone could manage unhelpful distractions
- how focusing on goals might help someone manage distractions and focus on things that matter to them at secondary school

This will help to evidence pupils' progress and highlight any gaps that may need addressing in future lessons on this or related topics.

Check the question box and respond to any remaining questions.

Signposting support

Signposting support (Slide 24, 2 mins)

Remind pupils that if distractions are difficult (for example, if they're happening often), or are causing problems, it's important they speak to a trusted adult at home or at school. 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

Primary and secondary school (Slide 26)

As a class, discuss the following questions:

- What new distractions might someone encounter when moving to secondary school that were not in primary school?
- Are there any distractions at primary school that might change in secondary school?
- How could someone manage these new or different distractions?

Using the five steps (Slide 27)

Ask pupils to come up with some reminders or a mantra to help them work towards the five steps and achieve their goals. Pupils could also think of a way of tracking their progress towards achieving their goals. As this is a personal reflection pupils should not be asked to share their responses.

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