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Foundations for Wellbeing

Year 6, lesson 4: Managing rumination and worry



Managing rumination and worry

This is the fourth of five lessons on self-regulation, mental health and emotional wellbeing, for year 6. This lesson focuses on managing rumination and worries and developing emotion regulation strategies.

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 the impact of rumination and worry on emotions and behaviour, and strategies for managing rumination and worry.

Pupils will be able to:

- describe the effects of rumination and worry on someone's emotions and behaviour
- evaluate strategies for managing rumination and worry
- explain why brain plasticity is important in managing rumination and worry

Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- Baseline assessments from lesson 1
- Resource 1: *Head, heart, hands* [one per pair]
- Resource 2: *Andie's worries* [one per pupil]
- Resource 2a: *Which strategy?* [support option, 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 about positive thinking habits.

Introduce today's learning objective and outcomes. Explain that the lesson will explore the effects of rumination and worry on emotions and behaviour and how strategies can be used to manage them.

This builds on prior learning about the difference between rumination and worry, and the use of sensory focus activities and reappraisal.

Reconnecting activity and baseline assessment (Slides 12-13, 5 mins)

Explain that you're going to remind pupils about some key words and terms they have met in previous lessons, and you want to see what they can remember about them.

Using slide 12, show the first key word, 'rumination'. To put this word into context, read out the sentence:

- *Marek can't stop ruminating about the spellings he got wrong in the test yesterday.*

Then, using this sentence to support them, ask pupils to write what they think 'rumination' means, on their mini whiteboard or in their book, and hold it up. Briefly check pupils' answers before clicking to reveal the definition. Reassure pupils that what they write does not have to be exactly the same as the definition on the slide – you're looking for their current understanding of the terms.

Repeat these steps for each key word.

- Worry – *David is worrying about forgetting his lines in the performance tomorrow.*
- Sensory focus – *David listens to some music to help feel less worried.*
- See, hear move – *Kayla was getting distracted – to help her focus she stopped and looked for three green things, listened for three sounds and moved her fingers, toes and head.*
- Reappraisal – *Marek reminded himself that making mistakes in his spelling test helps him to learn and that everyone makes mistakes.*
- Brain plasticity – *The more Meena practised noticing her emotions, the easier it was to manage them.*
- Hippocampus – *Meena explained to Tao that her hippocampus makes it easier for her to use the same strategy again.*

Next, ask pupils to discuss:

- What emotions might someone experience when they are worried or ruminating?
- What could someone do to help them feel less worried?

Use this to establish pupils' starting points, and consider how the lesson may need adapting, for example, if pupils do not identify how someone can change the way they think about something, spend more time exploring reappraisal in the second activity.

Core activities

Head, heart, hands (Slides 14–15, 8 mins)

Share the scenario on slide 14 and explain that Andie has just moved up to the 'elite' cricket team but has some worries. In pairs, give pupils **Resource 1: Head, heart, hands** and ask them to write on the left side of the page only, answering just the first two questions:

- What might Andie be thinking about starting in the elite team?
- What emotions might Andie be feeling about it?

Take feedback, drawing out key learning:

- *Thoughts – she doesn't know how to get a ticket or pass for the bus, she might get lost on the way to the bus stop, she might not know who to talk to in the new team, she doesn't know how to fit in homework around the extra practice sessions*
- *Emotions – nervousness, loneliness, fear, apprehension, worry, excitement, pride*

Remind pupils that 'rumination' means that someone has repetitive, unhelpful thoughts about something in the past, while 'worry' means that someone has concerns about something in the future. For example, Andie ruminates about the time she got lost on the bus and worries about how she will manage her schoolwork when she joins the elite team in the future.



Challenge: Ask pupils to discuss how any changes in Andie's behaviour, due to how she is feeling, might affect her relationships. Pupils should consider the relationships with her friends, family and new teammates.

Thinking differently (Slides 16–18, 12 mins)

Explain that, like Andie, lots of people worry about new experiences, but by problem solving, using different strategies, and asking for help, these worries can be managed. This can help them to feel more positive and prepared for change.

Using slide 16, model the example of David, who is worried about performing in the school play. David reminds himself that being in the school play is an opportunity to have fun with his friends and show what he has learnt. He also reminds himself that even if he does make a mistake, it is ok! Everyone makes mistakes, and these can help us learn. He uses 'reappraisal' – changing the way he thinks about the event – to help him think more positively and worry less about making mistakes. This is a bit like looking at an object from a different angle or perspective.

Using the example of David to help them, ask pairs to write what Andie might do next (i.e. responding to the third question on the left), on **Resource 1: Head, heart, hands**, considering:

- how Andie could use reappraisal and change the way she thinks about getting the bus, making friends, and/or the extra training sessions
- how Andie could use problem solving to help manage her worries, for example, what she could do or who she could ask for help, to feel more prepared for travelling on the bus, making friends, and/or the extra training sessions

Take feedback, ensuring the following points are highlighted:

- *The bus*
 - *Reappraisal - getting the bus is an opportunity to feel more independent. This will be good practice for when Andie wants to travel to other places without an adult, e.g. when doing things with friends.*
 - *Problem solving - to help prepare, Andie could practise the route with an adult and then alone a few times.*
- *Making friends*
 - *Reappraisal - there will be other new people in the team who don't know anyone, so she won't be alone, and it's an exciting opportunity to make new friends.*
 - *Problem solving - Andie could ask her coach who else is new and see if she could make some introductions. Andie could also find out if any of the team go to her school, or arrange to meet up with some of the players.*
- *Extra training sessions*
 - *Reappraisal - Andie will have more opportunities to practise and prepare for matches. Managing homework deadlines around training may help Andie develop her time-management and organisation skills.*
 - *Problem solving - Andie could create a homework timetable template of the times she is available to do her homework after school, or at the weekend, around cricket training and other commitments.*

You could use the strategies posters (Appendix 3) in the Teacher Handbook, to reinforce these strategies during and after the lesson.

Finally, ask pupils to complete the other half of **Resource 1: Head heart hands**, considering how Andie's thoughts, emotions and behaviours might change once she has reappraised her worries and planned ways of managing potential problems.

Take feedback, drawing out key learning:

- *Thoughts - getting the bus is an exciting opportunity to be independent, the new team will help me meet friends with similar interests, I could ask the other players how they manage their time.*
- *Emotions - excitement, hopefulness, calmness, confidence, optimism, nervousness*
- *Behaviours - Andie might stick to her timetable, focus on her training and prepare for the first match, make plans with new friends, speak to the coach or another trusted adult if she has more worries in future.*

Helping Andie (Slides 19–25, 10 mins)

Highlight that using strategies to manage worries, such as problem solving and reappraisal, can stop them from 'growing bigger'. Show the example of David on slide 19. If David is not able to manage his worry about making mistakes, the worry might get bigger and cause him to not want to be in the performance anymore or take part in future plays. However, practising strategies, such as problem solving and reappraisal, makes them easier to use over time and can help David stop his worries from growing bigger.

Share the sentences on slide 20 and, in groups, ask pupils to discuss the correct order of the sentences to explain how brain plasticity can help manage worries. Ask them to write the sentence numbers in order on a mini whiteboard before revealing the answers on slide 21.

Then, share the next part of Andie's story by giving pupils **Resource 2: Andie's worries**. Explain that, recently, Andie's worries about the day ahead have been getting bigger, and she is also starting to ruminate more over things that have happened. Ask pupils to decide which strategy, from slide 22, Andie might find most helpful for managing her rumination and worries at each part of the story.

Take feedback, asking pupils to explain their decisions, using slides 23–25.



Support: Give pupils **Resource 2a: Which strategy?** to help structure their answers.



Challenge: Ask pupils to discuss the difference between rumination and self-reflection. *For example, rumination can make someone feel negatively about themselves, but self-reflection is more constructive, helping someone think about how they could improve or learn from mistakes.*

Signposting support

Signposting support (Slide 26, 3 mins)

Remind pupils that, although everyone ruminates and worries from time to time, if (like Andie) they are finding rumination and worries upsetting or difficult to manage, it's important they speak to a trusted adult at home or at school. Pupils can also contact Childline: www.childline.org.uk/kids.

Reflection and end point assessment

Reflection and endpoint assessment (Slides 27–28, 5 mins)

Ask pupils to reflect on when they might find it helpful to use the different strategies and pick one to try this week, or when they next feel themselves worrying.

Remind pupils of the learning outcomes and ask them to revisit question 4 ('What might they be worried about and what could they do to help manage these worries?') of the baseline activity from lesson 1. They should make any changes to their original answers, or add in any new learning from the lesson in a different colour pen, considering:

- different strategies someone might use to manage rumination and worry, and how to choose a suitable one

- how someone's emotions can change by managing rumination and worry
- why it is important to practise the strategies
- what someone should do if the strategies are not helping them to feel better

This will help to evidence student 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.

Closing the lesson (Slide 29)

Finally, using slide 29, 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

Managing worries advice guide (Slide 30)

Ask pupils to create a pocket-sized guide to managing rumination and worries that could fit in a wallet or pencil case. The guide could include:

- different strategies for managing rumination and worries
- why using the strategies is helpful
- where someone can get help

Transition questions (Slide 31)

Ask pupils to reflect on any worries or things they are unsure about, when they think about moving to secondary school. Ask them to write a list of questions they would like to ask to help manage any worries they have about the transition, that they could either ask you or take to their 'taster day'.