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Foundations for Wellbeing

Reception/Year R, activity plan 3: Feel-good thoughts and feelings



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Feel-good thoughts and feelings

This is the third of five activity plans on self-regulation, mental health and wellbeing, for children 4-5 in Reception/year R. This activity plan focuses on how thinking about positive things – things that we like and like doing - can make us feel, including helping us feel better when we are not feeling so good. For example, when we are worried, cross or upset. Each activity plan has been developed to support learning in the prime area of personal, social and emotional development (PSED) as part of the Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework. These plans provide early learning experiences to support children's future Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education, and are precursory to the Foundations for Wellbeing lessons for key stage 1.

The activities are designed to be taught in order but should be used flexibly according to your timetable. For example, they may be taught in one session, or taught in several sessions across the week. The teacher-led activities can be used either with the whole class or in small groups, and timings will depend on the size of your group. The activities are easy to set up, with little reliance on resources, other than those to be found in most Reception classrooms. Where story books are suggested, versions are also available online.

To encourage children 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.

Learning objective and outcomes

To learn about distractions.

Children will be able to:

- demonstrate focus on short tasks
- notice some distractions
- use strategies to manage some distractions

Resources required

- 1-minute sand timer
- Body outline from activity plan 1
- *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins, print or online version
- Resource 1: *Teddy's story*
- Resource 2: *Images*

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher guidance notes before teaching these activities. They include guidance on establishing a safe learning environment and supporting children with additional vulnerabilities. They also outline useful subject knowledge on the theory and evidence informing these activities, self-regulation strategies and relevant neuroscience.

The activity plans should be used flexibly, and you are encouraged to adapt them to meet the specific needs and abilities of your children. 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.

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Baseline assessment

Introduction

Tell children that they will be looking at how positive thoughts (nice thoughts about things we like or that make us happy) can make us feel, and how positive thoughts can sometimes help us to feel better when we are not feeling so good. For example, when we are worried, cross or upset.

Reconnecting activity and baseline assessment

Play the *My Favourite Things* song, stopping at 1.05mins.

Ask children for their responses to the song. *What did you like about it? What is the story in the song/the message? Can they name any of things that the singer liked?*

Tell children it's about someone who thinks about their favourite things when they're feeling sad, and that doing this regularly (often) helps them to feel better.

Ask children to point to their brain – what do they know about the brain and feelings? *Remind them that our feelings start in our brain and can be felt in our bodies.*

Ask children to point to somewhere in the body that feelings can be felt and choose some volunteers to share their ideas. Suggestions may include *in the tummy ('butterflies'), in the face (hot/pale), in the hands (clenched fists)*

Explain that thinking about positive things, like our favourite things or things we like doing, can make us feel happy, and that thinking about these things can sometimes help us to feel better when we're feeling not so good.

Core activities

Activity 1: Hello Teddy

Show the teddy and tell children they are going to hear a story about Teddy, and some things that happen to her. Read **part one** of the story on **Resource 1: Hello Teddy**, then ask children to identify:

- Teddy's favourite things. *Porridge with honey, a cuddle with Papa Bear, dogs, dragonflies,*
- Any positive experiences Teddy has. *Making the chair, going for a walk, eating porridge*
- How Teddy is feeling in her brain and in her body. *Relaxed, happy, proud, safe, hungry*

Then, as a group, plot Teddy's feelings on the 'feelings scale' (from Activity plan 1 or see below). Encourage children to notice that most of Teddy's feelings are towards the 'pleasant' end of the scale, except for 'hunger'. Discuss this with the children and decide on where to place hunger/hungry.

Unpleasant_____ Pleasant

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Activity 2: Teddy's feelings – cloze procedure

Write the feelings words: *furious, angry, hot, scared, shocked* on the board or on labels and explain that these words are missing from the story, and they need to decide where they go. Read **part two** of **Resource 1: Hello Teddy**, stopping at the missing words and deciding with the children which feelings word best fits. Answers are included.

Once all the missing words have been added, ask children:

- What feelings does Teddy have in her brain and in her body? *She feels hot and tense, she feels alert, she has wobbly legs, tummy feels like jelly, she feels shaky*. Encourage children to point to their own bodies when talking about where these feelings are experienced.

- What could Teddy do while she waits for Papa to arrive home? Encourage children to identify the best two options from:
  1. Wait in the garden
  2. Go to a neighbour's home – someone she knows and trusts
  3. Run away

Decide on options 1 or 2 above and tell children that now Teddy has found a safe place to wait for Papa, she can start to change feeling scared by trying to think about positive things, things that she likes, and likes to do, as these thoughts can help her feel better. Ask, what positive things could she think about? Encourage children to identify that Teddy could think about the things that she likes, for example: the biggest jar of honey in the whole world, dragonflies, cuddles and dogs. This positive thinking can help her focus on something different rather than focussing on feeling scared until Papa Bear arrives.

Support: Give children **Resource 2: Images** containing a selection of images, some of which depict Teddy's favourite things. Children should pick the ones that Teddy might think about to help herself feel better.

Challenge: Ask children to imagine that Teddy is still feeling scared and make suggestions for what else she could do. *For example, she could get Papa, take some deep breaths, shout for help.* Note these suggestions for use in Activity plan 4.

Activity 3: Teddy's feelings change

Tell children that Teddy feels upset and scared, but knows she needs to keep safe and stay calm.

Read **part three** of the story on **Resource 1: Hello Teddy**, then ask them:

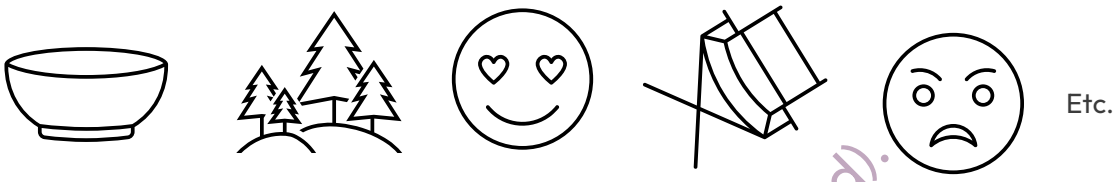
- What was Teddy feeling when she first heard the snore from upstairs? *Upset and scared*
- What did she do to make sure she was safe? *She went to her garden/neighbour's house to wait for Papa*
- What did Teddy do to change how she felt? *She thought about her favourite things*
- How did Teddy feel after she focused on positive thoughts? *Calmer*
- What can she do next time she's feeling scared or worried? *Find a safe place/tell Papa if appropriate and then think about her favourite things, like Doggett.*

Next, read **part four** of the story.

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Ask children to draw Teddy's feelings journey in pictures, for example:



Etc.

Encourage them to talk about the different feelings that Teddy experienced throughout the story, and what she did to change how she felt. *She thought about positive things, the things that she likes and likes to do.*

Reflection and endpoint assessment

Tell children that a few weeks later, Teddy was out walking in the forest with Doggett, when she met Bill from Owl Babies (activity plan 1's story). Bill was feeling sad and kept saying, 'I want my mummy' because he had been left with his brother and sister while his mum went out for a little while to get some food. What advice could Teddy give to Bill? Children should think about how thinking about positive things can make someone feel and how Bill can try changing his less positive thoughts to more positive thoughts by thinking about his favourite things.

Show images of Teddy and Bill with speech bubbles for children to write in, or scribe for them.

Ask children to think about what their favourite things are, including things that they like doing, such as playing, painting or dancing. Then, ask them whether they could try thinking about these more positive things next time they don't feel so good. There is no requirement for children to share their personal reflections.

Signposting support

Tell children that everyone has less positive thoughts and feelings at times. Explain that if they need to talk to someone about this, or anything else that is concerning them, they can talk to you or another adult in school or to someone at home who they like talking to and who listens to them.

Activities to extend and embed the learning

Activities and learning experiences which encourage children to notice their feelings, and opportunities to think about positive things to change their feelings where needed.

- Go on a nature walk or observe the school outdoor environment. Encourage children to notice the different colours of leaves, notice flowers or animals and recognise how that makes them feel.
- Reward children with stickers when they link the brain to feelings or actions.
- During enjoyable activities, remind children that they can try using these thoughts, feelings and experiences to change their brain to help them feel better in the future.
- Use modelling dough or cornflower/water mix to show changing state – relate this to our feelings, and how we can influence them to change.

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- Create a ‘happiness’ classroom display, where each child brings in one picture or item that makes them feel happy, for example pictures of their favourite food, pets, favourite toys. Encourage children to look at and locate their favourite thing if they are feeling sad.

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