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Foundations for Wellbeing

Reception/Year R, activity plan 4: From Worrysaurus to Bettersaurus



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From Worrysaurus to Bettersaurus

This is the fourth of five activity plans on self-regulation, mental health and wellbeing, for children aged 4-5 in Reception/year R. This activity plan focuses on how worries can make us feel and behave, and how we can feel better after worrying. 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 learning in 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.

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Learning objective and outcomes

To learn about ways to feel better when feeling worried.

Children will be able to:

- recognise that everyone worries sometimes
- describe how a worry might feel in the body
- recognise that a worry can change how someone feels and behaves
- identify what someone can do to feel better when they are worried

Resources required

- *The Worrysaurus* by Rachel Bright, print or online version
- 2 trays (or similar)
- A box with special items (for example, a fir cone, stone, postcard, dice)
- Small box, or an image of an empty box [1 per child]
- Drawing paper

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 children's 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

Explain that everyone has worries sometimes, but that feeling worried can be unhelpful if it makes us behave differently or stops us from doing things we want to do. Tell children that there are, however, things we can do to make us feel better and help the worries go away, or not seem so big.

Reconnecting activity and baseline assessment

Remind children of the 'feelings scale' used in Activity Plans 1 and 3. Ask them to think about where 'worry' should go on the scale, and why. Then, ask them how someone feeling worried might act. Listen to the responses, taking note of their ideas and use of vocabulary. Also note any misconceptions, which can be addressed at appropriate times during the activities.

Core activities

Activity 1: Looking inside the story

Read or play video (start at 0.30[1]) of *The Worrysaurus*. Support children's understanding by discussing sections as follows:

Pages 1-6 (video 0.30-1.12)

- What are Worrysaurus' plans for the day? *Go for a walk in the sun with a lovely picnic*
- How is he feeling? *Happy, relaxed; he's got a plan for the day which makes him feel calm*
- Where do these feelings start? *In his brain (children to point to their brain)*
- Can you explain how you know that he is feeling happy, relaxed and calm? *How he behaves (he is skipping and smiling); he's got some delicious, yummy snacks; his day is planned*
- Show me how Worrysaurus feels and how he behaves. *Encourage children to skip, smile and behave in a calm way. Reiterate that his behaviour shows he is feeling happy and calm as he's skipping and smiling.*

Using two trays, label one 'Feeling good' and the other 'Feeling worried'.

On small pieces of paper, ask children to draw and label the things that Worrysaurus is happy about and how he shows he is happy. *It is sunny and hot; yummy picnic; going on an outing; he is skipping, he is smiling, happy, calm.* Put these in the tray titled 'Feeling good'.

Pages 7-16 (video1.12-2.52):

[1] If appropriate for your group, ask children to act out the story as you read or show it. For example, Worrysaurus brushes his teeth – children could act out brushing their teeth; he packs a picnic – children could choose play food and pack in a bag; he sets off on his journey – children could smile, skip along, etc.

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- What does Worrysaurus think might go wrong? *He might not have enough food and drink; he might get lost; he might fall over.*
- How is he feeling now? *He's feeling worried.*
- Where does this feeling start? *In his brain (children point to the brain).*
- How has his behaviour changed? *He's not skipping anymore; he's slowed to a crawl.*
- Lizard's worries make Worrysaurus worry even more! What is he worried about now? *It might rain; he hasn't got his wellies.*
- Show me how Worrysaurus' worries change how he feels and how he behaves. *Children may act our chattering teeth, wobbly (jelly) knees, tummy ache (butterflies in his tummy).*

Again, on small pieces of paper, ask children to draw and label the things that Worrysaurus is worried about, the *storm, rain, having no wellies, getting lost and falling over;* and how he's feeling: *worried, chattering teeth, 'jelly' knees, butterflies in tummy*. Put these in the tray titled 'Feeling worried'.

Activity 2: 'What ifs' and 'Might happens'

Looking at the 'Feeling worried' tray, ask:

- Have the worries happened yet? Has he got lost? Is he hurt? Is it raining? *No, none of these things have happened yet*

Tell children that he is worrying about 'what ifs', about things that *might* happen, but haven't yet happened, and that people often have these sorts of worries.

Ask children to suggest some ways that someone might behave if they were worried about something. *Children might suggest someone may be quiet; they might not want any lunch; they might be snappy; they might not want to play; they might need a cuddle or want to be close to an adult.*

Together, sort the labelled drawings from both the 'Feeling good' and 'Feeling worried' trays, into 'what if'/ 'might happen' and 'have happened', as below:

- **What ifs/might happens**: rain, storm, get lost, fall over
- **Have happened**: packed a delicious picnic, sun is shining, hot weather, he is prepared for his day, he has told his mum where he's going

Highlight that Worrysaurus is worried about things that might happen in the future, rather than what is happening now, in the present. Explain that these worries about 'what if' and 'might happen' are unhelpful thoughts as they are stopping Worrysaurus from enjoying his day out. Ask:

- Can Worrysaurus do anything about the 'what ifs' and' might happens'? *Not really – he can't make the weather stay fine, but he can pack a raincoat for if it rains. He can make sure that he has enough food and drink, and that he stays on a path he knows so he doesn't get lost*
- What is happening now, in the present? *The sun is shining, he's got a plan, he's got a delicious picnic*

Explain that Worrysaurus' worries began in his brain and – in his body – the worries feel like fluttering in his tummy. Explain that this is often called having butterflies in the tummy and that it is a feeling that many people get when they have worries or are feeling nervous about something.

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Support: Talk about how sometimes the butterflies can feel like tummy ache or needing the toilet. This is a feeling that can be changed either by ourselves or with help from someone else. Practise using simple phrases such as: "I feel funny in my tummy" or "my tummy feels fidgety" as well as naming feelings such as "I feel a bit worried" or "I'm feeling scared". Allow children to use puppets to practise saying these phrases. Extend to seeking help by practising phrases such as "I need help" or "Can you help me?", using puppets.

Challenge: Ask children to imagine they are in the story and ask, what advice would you give Worrysaurus at this point? Who could he talk to about his worries? *Don't worry as it hasn't happened yet, you've got a delicious picnic to look forward to, your mum knows where you're going, he could talk to his mum, he could talk to himself and tell himself not to worry.*

Activity 3: How to feel better when we're worried

Explain that Worrysaurus needs help to make him feel better, so that his worry butterflies can go away. Read pages 17-20 (video 2.52-3.33) and ask children to notice and name ways that Worrysaurus helps himself to let his worries go and become a 'Bettersaurus'.

Children might suggest:

- *He thinks about his mum – she knows that everyone has worries sometimes, and she knows how to help him feel better*
- *He has as a special tin with things in that make him feel happy, calm, more cheerful*
- *He can say positive things, for example, 'I will be strong', 'I'll stand up tall', 'I have prepared for the day'*
- *He makes things fun again by having the picnic*

Show children a box and tell them that you have borrowed it from Lizard to show to them today. Reiterate that looking at happy and special things is one way of feeling better when we are worried. Show them what Lizard has put in the box, such as a stone, a fir cone, a post card and dice, explaining that these things are Lizard's happy things.

Tell children that they are going to create their own box of happy things to help them feel better when they're worried. First ask them to think and talk with a partner about what they would put in and why (four objects maximum). Then give children a small box and ask them to make drawings of their special things to put in the box. Alternatively, give children a picture of an empty box in which they draw their special things.

Reiterate that looking at these special things, just like Worrysaurus did, can help by stopping us thinking about our worries and reminding us of our happy thoughts and this helps us to feel better.

After the session, the boxes can be sent home so that the children, along with their parents/carers can fill the boxes with the real artefacts. These can be brought in and shared with you and one or two other children at a time.

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Reflection and endpoint assessment

Ask children to again imagine that they are in the story with Worrysaurus and Lizard. Which of the ways of letting worries go would they try? Who might they speak to if they felt worried about something? There is no requirement for children to share their personal reflections.

Ask children to imagine that they meet Worrysaurus and Lizard before they set out for the picnic. What do Worrysaurus and Lizard need to know about worries before they set out? What would they tell them to do next time they feel worried? Use their responses to measure progress and inform future teaching.

Signposting support

Remind children that if they need to talk to someone about what they have been learning about during this session, 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

- Play songs such as 'Don't worry, be happy'; 'Happy', 'Let it go', 'Three Little Birds (Don't worry about a thing)' during times of transitions.
- Share stories about worries, such as *Ruby's Worry* by Tom Percival, *The Worry Monster* by Caroline Uff, *The Huge Bag of Worries* by Virginia Ironside and *The Worry Box* by Suzanne Chiew. Identify any ways that characters deal with worries and how they get to feeling better.
- Share stories where characters find ways of helping themselves with feelings, such as *Supposing* by Frances Thomas and Ross Collins.
- Share stories that familiarise children with different feelings, such as, *The Big Book of Feelings* by Mary Hoffman or *What makes me happy*? by Catherine Anholt.
- Use the children's special boxes during times of worry or upset in the classroom.
- Reward instances when children use strategies to feel better. Allow children to reward themselves or others when they notice they can change their feelings.

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