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Foundations for Wellbeing

Foundations for Wellbeing

Year 1, lesson 5: Reacting



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Reacting

This is the last of five lessons on self-regulation, mental health and wellbeing, for year 1. 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 about different ways of reacting.

Pupils will be able to:

- describe the difference between feeling relaxed and feeling tense
- identify different reactions
- describe how someone might manage their reactions and responses

Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- Flipchart paper and pens
- Resource 1: *Different reactions* [one per pair]
- Resource 1a: *Different reactions – teacher copy* [for teacher reference only]
- Resource 2: *Visual supports* [support option, as required]

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher handbook 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.

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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 speak to you individually or 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 today's learning objective and outcomes. Explain that this lesson will be about the difference between feeling relaxed and feeling tense, how we might react to different situations, and what might help us with reactions and responses.

Baseline assessment activity (Slide 12, 5 mins)

Read the story about Meena's day using slide 12:
Meena really enjoyed her art lesson before break and was proud of the picture she painted. She was excited for breaktime; Meena and her friends were going to play with the skipping ropes, but it started raining and they couldn't go outside. Next, it was time for phonics, which Meena usually enjoyed, but today she found it tricky. At lunchtime, all Meena's friends enjoyed their food, but Meena didn't like it.

Ask pupils to discuss the following questions in pairs:
When might Meena be feeling relaxed?
When might Meena be feeling tense?
How might Meena react at different points in the story?
When she feels tense, what might Meena do to feel calmer?

Write their ideas on the flipchart or whiteboard. Use the responses to gauge what pupils already know about feeling relaxed or tense, reacting and managing their responses. Note any misconceptions or gaps in understanding and aim to address these during the lesson. For example, you might want to spend more time on the link between how someone is feeling and how they react.

Core activities

Relaxed or tense? (Slides 13-15, 10 mins)

Introduce 'Buzzy the bee' using slide 13. Lead pupils in a class game to decide how tense or relaxed Buzzy is feeling. Explain that feeling relaxed means someone is calm and comfortable, and that feeling tense means someone might have difficult feelings and be uncomfortable. Designate one part or corner of the classroom as 'tense' and one as 'relaxed', and then, using slide 14 to support, read the sentences below, one by one, asking pupils to move to/point to how Buzzy might be feeling.
Buzzy hovers around the flowers.
Suddenly, a lawnmower starts nearby. It makes a loud noise.
Buzzy flies away and enjoys the warm sun and a gentle breeze.
Dark clouds appear, and Buzzy gets caught in the rain.

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Buzzy gets stuck in a spider's web, and wriggles around trying to get out.
Buzzy gets free and finds their way back to the hive.

Then, ask pupils to think about the different things that happen to Buzzy in the story:
Which things do they think might make Buzzy feel the 'most tense'? *For example, getting stuck in the spider's web.*
How might buzzy notice they are tense? *Their body feels tense/stiff; they are feeling nervous/scared; their breathing is fast; they might get hot or sweaty.*
How might Buzzy notice they are relaxed? *They feel calm/peaceful; their body feels relaxed; they are breathing slowly; they have a warm/fuzzy feeling inside; they are comfortable; they feel happy.*

Explain that just like Buzzy, everyone feels tense sometimes, and we can't always help how we react in some situations that surprise us or make us feel tense, for example to a loud noise like a lawnmower, but we can practise how to respond and feel calmer afterwards.

Different reactions (Slide 16, 10 mins)

Reiterate that when Buzzy got stuck in the spider's web, they felt tense and reacted by wriggling around to get free.

Explain that different people react to things in different ways - this can depend on what has happened to them. In pairs, give pupils one of the scenarios from **Resource 1: Different reactions** and ask them to write or draw in the grid how the character might react if they are feeling tense. The following prompts may be helpful:

- How might they feel?
- What might they do or say?

Take feedback, using **Resource 1a: Different reactions – teacher copy** to support discussions. . Explain that people will react differently to things; what might make one person feel tense may not be the same for someone else. Remind pupils that everybody has reactions, and these can differ in strength.

Support: Ask pupils to use **Resource 2: Visual supports** to help them write/draw the character's feelings.

Challenge: Ask pupils to choose a scenario and suggest what the character could do to help themselves. For example, *Meena could ask a teacher for help/join in a different game.*

What can help? (Slides 17-19, 10 mins)

Remind pupils of Meena's day from the baseline assessment using slides 17-18, highlighting the thermometers to show how tense she is feeling in each part of the story.
Then, share the final part of the story:
Meena went to get a drink of water, but accidentally spilt some when pouring it into a cup. Meena's teacher said, 'It's OK Meena', but Meena got really upset, she started crying, and couldn't focus on cleaning up the mess.

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Then, ask pairs, why did Meena react like this to spilling her drink? Allow some time for discussion before taking feedback.
Pupils might suggest:

- *because she had been feeling tense/angry/sad at other times in the day and it had got worse*
- *she hadn't been able to calm down and now she was feeling really tense/upset*
- *all the things that had happened in the day had made her feel tense/upset and this was 'too much', so she started crying.*

Highlight that Meena had been feeling more and more tense (along with the other feelings that pupils identified) throughout the day and this meant her reaction was stronger when she spilt her drink.

Then ask, what could help Meena to become calmer and manage how she responds next time she feels this way?
Pupils might suggest: notice and name their feelings; take a deep breath; count to 10; talk about how they are feeling with a trusted adult/friend.

Explain that one way to help is to practise relaxing techniques to release tension. Lead the class in a simple example, such as a toe touch stretch. You could also refer to the emotion regulation strategies, such as breathing and seeking support, on the strategies posters (Appendix 3) in the Teacher's Handbook.

Endpoint assessment

Endpoint assessment (Slide 20, 5 mins)

Ask pupils to return to their scenario from Resource 1 (Kayla, Meena, David, or Zam) and suggest:

- how the character might notice if are feeling tense or relaxed
- another example of a reaction they might have
- how they might manage their response

Take feedback and write up pupils' responses on the flipchart or whiteboard. This can be used to demonstrate their learning based on the lesson, as evidence of progress, and to inform future teaching.

Check the question box and respond to any remaining questions.

Signposting support

Signposting support (Slide 21, 3 mins)

Explain that everyone feels tense sometimes and might react to things strongly. However, explain that if they feel very tense or tense for a long time, or are finding it difficult to manage responses, it's important to speak to a trusted adult at home or at school. Pupils can also contact Childline: 0800 1111.

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Closing the lesson (Slide 22)

Finally, using slide 22, 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

Muscle relaxation (Slide 23)

Lead pupils in this muscle relaxation activity.

Facing a challenge (Slide 24)

Read a story (for example, 'When Cucumber Lost His Cool' by Michelle Collins) that involves a character facing a challenge and having a strong reaction. Discuss how the character could calm down and manage their response. Then, encourage pupils to create their own positive endings or solutions.

Problem solving (Slide 25)

Use unstructured time to play problem-solving games with pupils, discussing ways to find solutions and overcome challenges.

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