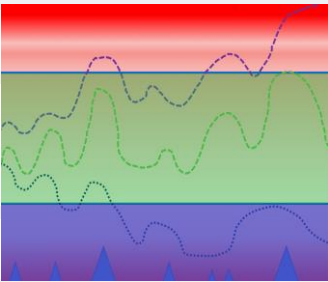


Strategies to Support Pupil Emotional Regulation: Covid-19

Ongoing Covid-19 measures will impact on many of the informal strategies children normally use to manage their emotional regulation in school- such as rough and tumble play, touch, contact with wider friendship groups/siblings, movement around school and changing context. It is therefore vital that children are given predictable opportunities and support across the school day to self-regulate.

Emotional regulation refers to the process in which we manage our internal states to cope with the external demands so we can stay rational and productive (in our thinking brains). Emotional regulation is a continuously fluctuating process as our internal states are forever changing as are external influences. Being hungry, tired, ill, excited or stressed will make a difference to emotional regulation as will external factors such as whether someone is in a nurturing peaceful environment or fast paced demanding situation. Good emotional regulation skills enable us to dynamically manage these differing situations.

<p>Key skills for emotional regulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to notice emotions and feelings • Being able to label emotions / feelings • Having internal strategies to calm or stimulate • Being able to utilise external sources of support • Being able to ask for support 	<p>Hyper- arousal</p> 
	<p>Optimal level of arousal</p>
	<p>Hypo- arousal</p>

Quick grab ideas:

- **Check in** - during registration ask pupils to rate how they are feeling: red = hyper (big emotions), green = fine/just right, blue = sluggish/slowed down - if this is recorded patterns may emerge
- **Circle Time** - build in set times to discuss concerns related to being back at school and any other concerns that children may have
- **Emotional literacy** – talk to children about how it is normal and ok for us as human beings to experience big emotions (excited, stressed, worried, angry) and for us to feel slowed down (tired, sad, switched off) and that we might sometimes need a bit of help to get ourselves get back to feeling 'just right'. Use film/literature to discuss emotions or have an emotion word of the week.
- Teach about the **Hand model of the brain** – Dan Siegel
- **Practice regular sensory breaks and emotional regulation activities** to enable children to calm or become more alert at key times across the school day such as at the beginning of the day, after lunch and before transitions. **See list of activities below:**

Creating a Rainstorm

This activity supports children to become excited and make lots of noise and then to calm down. Children are asked to make the sounds of a rainstorm using their bodies to make the storm build up (children get excited) and then the rain stops and the sun comes back out (children calm down). This exercise can be practiced whilst standing at desks but ensure that children have stepped back and that there are no hazards around them.

Instructions

Ask the children to stand up and explain to them that you are going to perform lots of different actions and that each time you perform an action; you want the children to copy you. Spend 5-10 seconds on each action. It can be helpful to spend longer on actions 5-8.

When you have completed the first action, you move on to the next action and so forth. Complete the first 4 actions loudly and excitedly and perform actions 5-8 more slowly and quietly making sure that your voice is quieter and calm.

List of actions



1. Rub your palms together (**"It is starting to get windy... it is getting really windy..."**)



2. Click your fingers, clap your hands or tap two fingers on to your palm if clicking is difficult (**"It is starting to rain... the rain is getting really heavy now I am getting soaked!"**)



3. Clap your hands onto your thighs (**"It is starting to thunder now..."**)



4. Stamp your feet on the floor (**"The thunder is getting louder..."**)



5. Slowly clap your hands onto your thighs (**"the thunder is quietening down a bit now. I think it is going to stop..."**)



6. Gently click your fingers (**"it is still raining but the rain is not as heavy now... there are just a few drops of rain now..."**)



7. Slowly rub your palms together (**"it is still windy but I think it is calming down now... it is a gentle breeze now..."**)

8. Move your hands apart as though you are making a sign that the sun has come out. (**"the sun has come out now..."**).

Calm Hands Activity

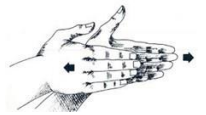
This is an activity which will support children to calm their systems down through the use of touch. Physical touch has been found to release oxytocin, reduce the stress hormone cortisol and reduce the activation of brain areas related to stress. The activity also supports the

Instructions

Ask that children wearing glasses take them off (if they are not comfortable to do this, they can still do the exercise but should put their hands over their cheeks instead of their eyes).

Using a calm gentle voice with relaxed body posture ask the children to:

- **Stretch out your hands and fingers like a star and hold them out in front of you.**
- **Bring your palms together.**
- **Rub them together (up and down).**
- **Rub your hands together a bit faster**
- **Notice your hands are feeling warmer**
- **Count to 3 and then put the palms of your hands gently over your eyes and cheeks.**
- **Ask the children to close their eyes**
- **Stay like this for 10 seconds and then ask the children to slowly move their hands away from their eyes.**



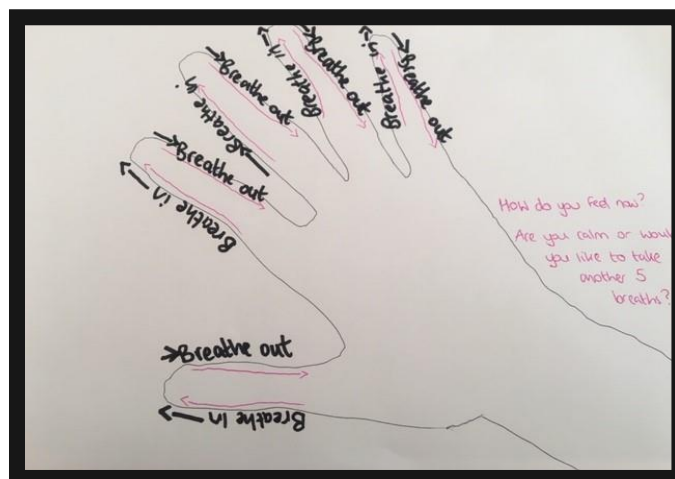
Hand Breathing Activity

This is an activity that will support children to calm their systems down through regulating their breathing and through the use of touch. Physical touch has been found to release oxytocin, reduce the stress hormone cortisol and reduce the activation of brain areas related to stress. When we regulate our breathing, we send messages to the brain to calm down and relax.

Instructions

Using a calm gentle voice with relaxed body posture ask the children to complete the following actions whilst demonstrating them:

- ⇒ Spread one hand out like a star.
- ⇒ Using your index finger on your other hand you are going to trace the outline of your hand.
- ⇒ Place your finger at the bottom of your thumb on your spread-out hand and taking a deep breath, slide your finger up to the top of your thumb as you breathe in.
- ⇒ As you breathe out as slide your finger down the side of your thumb.
- ⇒ Take another breath in as you move to the top of your first finger.
- ⇒ Breathe out as you move down between your first and second finger.
- ⇒ Repeat until you have taken five slow, deep breaths.



Regulating desk exercises

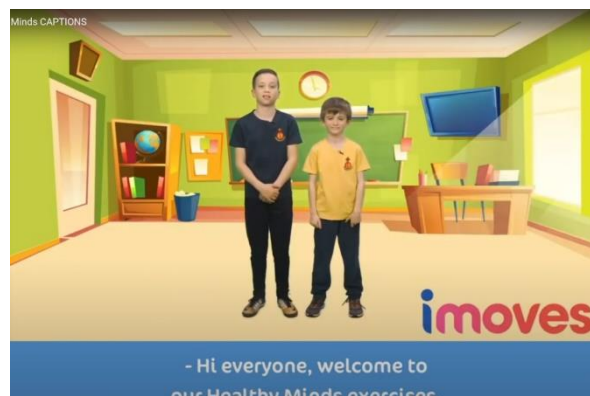
The exercises below use proprioceptive input which is really good at helping our brain to have a little bit of a re-set and can support us to calm down if our arousal levels are high or wake up if our arousal levels are low. In a class of 30, there will be children who need to use the exercises to calm down and children who need to wake back up and that need will change throughout the day.

Tips for using the exercises

- ⇒ Children only need to choose one of the exercises to do each time as it will be too tiring on their muscles to do all of the exercises in one go. It is helpful to show your class all of the exercises and let them choose which one they prefer.
- ⇒ Make sure that you explain to your class that if any of the exercises feel uncomfortable or start to hurt that they need to stop.
- ⇒ It can be useful to ask your class to do one of the exercises every time you transition between a lesson or activity.
- ⇒ Support your class to describe what they can feel in their body when they are doing the exercises, for example, “the muscles in my arm feel warm” and how it made them feel, for example, “I felt calm and relaxed”, “I felt like I had woken up a bit.”

See the below link for a fantastic video of some of the following emotional regulation activities being demonstrated by the Healthy Minds Champions at St Marie’s primary school:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffCYpOSQBgc&feature=youtu.be



Regulating desk exercises

ARM MASSAGE



Ask the children to stretch out one of their arms and with their hand from the other arm, gently squeeze their arm moving up from their wrist to their shoulder.

PUSH PALMS TOGETHER



Ask the children to face their palms together and to push and hold for 5-10 seconds.

DESK PUSH



Ask the children to use either their hands or fists to push into their desk ensuring that they push downwards and not so hard that the desk falls over!

BEAR HUG



Ask the children to wrap their arms around their shoulders or knees and give themselves a big firm hug.

Weather Report exercise

This activity encourages children to focus on and accept their internal world in the present moment. With practice, observing our internal state without judgement and without taking any action can increase self-regulation and support readiness to learn.

Instructions

Ask children to close their eyes and focus on how they are feeling right now. Ask questions such as:

- ⇒ **What is the weather like inside you right now?**
- ⇒ **Do you feel relaxed and sunny inside?**
- ⇒ **Or does it feel rainy and overcast?**
- ⇒ **Is there a storm raging perhaps?**
- ⇒ **What do you notice? How do you feel inside?**



Ask children to pay attention to the clouds, the clear sky or the storm that may be brewing inside them. Remind them that this is how they feel right now but that later today, just like the weather; things will be completely different again. And that is absolutely fine. Moods change and they blow over. There is no need to take any action or do anything.

If you have time afterwards, you could ask the children to draw a picture of their internal weather report.

Make sure you let the children know that they can come and speak to you if they need to about how they are feeling and remind them how they can do that, for example, at break time or by using the worry box or another system that you have in school.

Butterfly Body Scan

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56_8aK3cLEA&t=1s

