

Managing Difficult Emotions

This lesson is designed to help students identify their triggers and learn ways to manage difficult emotions. Students will be introduced to the PEACE acronym as well as other strategies for dealing with intense emotions.

Essential Question

How can I develop the expertise and mindsets I need to accomplish my most important goals, despite the challenges I face along the way?

Guiding Question

How can we manage difficult emotions? What are our triggers?

Objectives

- Students will identify their own triggers and causes of intense emotions.
- Students will identify specific ways to manage heightened emotions.

Advance Preparation

- Prepare a blank “Remaining Calm” T-chart and “Self-regulation Strategies” list on the white board, smart board, or poster paper
- Prepare student handouts/ activity sheets

Materials/Resources

- PowerPoint slideshow 2.3 (adapt as needed)
- Blank “Remaining Calm” T-chart and marker
- Blank “Self-regulation Strategies” list

Student Materials

- Triggers Checklist/ Remaining Calm
- P.E.A.C.E. activity sheet
- (Optional) Conflict journal
- Half sheets of paper for exit ticket

Vocabulary

- Trigger

Do Now

3 min.

Think about the last few times you felt intense, difficult emotions. What caused these feelings?

Introduction (Framing/Overview)

2-3 min.

1. Slide 3: Student Dedication (30-60 seconds)
2. Show the lesson agenda (slide 4). Tell students they will be learning about identifying their own triggers and ways to manage difficult emotions.

Activity 1: Recognizing Our Triggers

10-15 min.

3. Display slide 5 and tell students, “Yesterday we talked about some of the signs of stress. Towards the end of class, we discussed some of the causes of these feelings. Today we are going to build on this conversation by thinking more specifically about ourselves. What triggers us? Before we can think about managing difficult emotions, it can be very helpful to identify their causes.

Direct Instruction

(Slide 6) “We talked generally about the causes of stress, but each of us may have different triggers. The term ‘trigger’ here refers to specific events or situations that cause heightened emotions such as nervousness, anxiety, anger, sadness, frustration, or worry. We each have specific triggers that may differ from those of our friends.”

4. Distribute the Emotional Triggers Checklist; have students look at the list of potential triggers and select any/all that apply to them (slide 7).
5. When most students have completed the checklist, display slide 8 and call students’ attention to the section of the checklist titled “Experiences.” Tell students, “When a situation or event frequently upsets us, it can be helpful to identify the specific feelings that it creates for us. Some of these feelings are listed in the checklist section titled ‘Experience,’ but we have a longer list in our slideshow.” Give students time to silently review the list on the slide, or invite one or more students to read the list aloud.

Personal Reflection

As an example, ask students, “If the poor condition of your school makes you angry, what feelings do you think that situation is causing, based on the list on slide 8?” Students might suggest that they feel disrespected, unsafe, uncared for, or powerless. Such feelings are the link between the actual physical situation and the strong negative emotions that they may experience. Point out to students that it is helpful to understand why a situation elicits strong emotions for us.

Whole Class Discussion

Activity 2: Managing Difficult Emotions

15-20 min.

6. Tell students that while it's helpful to recognize triggers, it's just as important to think about how to handle them (slide 9). Ask students, "Why is it important to remain calm when you are upset?"

Whole Class Discussion

After several students have suggested responses, advise students to work with their teams for a few minutes to brainstorm what it looks like and sounds like to remain calm. After brainstorming as a team, partner pairs should complete the Remaining Calm T-chart (slide 10; second page of activity sheet).

Cooperative Learning Activity

Invite students to report on the features they identified. Note these on the blank Remaining Calm T-chart you have prepared on the white board, smart board, or poster paper.

Whole Class Discussion

7. Tell students that one way to think about dealing with difficult situations or intense emotions is the PEACE approach. Share the following information (slides 11-16):

Direct Instruction

P stands for identifying the PROBLEM. If you can identify what is making you feel strongly, you can start to find a solution. If we don't know what the issue is exactly, we can feel very overwhelmed, and that makes it harder to sort through our feelings.

E stands for EXAMINE yourself. Take 60 seconds to pause and ask, "What am I feeling in my body? What are my emotions? Why am I feeling this way?"

A stands for ADVICE. Can you talk to a friend or adult who can give you advice? Sometimes it helps just to talk through what is bothering you. Is there someone you can do this with who is outside of the problem?

C stands for CONSIDER the outcome. What goal do you want to achieve? What would the best solution look like?

E stands for EXHIBIT or demonstrate the skill of a self-controlled person. What would this look like? How can you recognize if you are out of control?

What might you need to do if you are out of control?

8. Distribute the "Steps to P.E.A.C.E." activity sheet. Have students think about a recent problem or experience that made them very upset (slide 17). Tell students to take 5 minutes to use the PEACE acronym to think of ways they could have handled that situation.

Individual Reflection

Activity 3: Self-Regulation Strategies

5-10 min.

9. Tell students, “The PEACE strategy is one helpful way to deal with triggers. However, we also have other self-regulation approaches that help us calm ourselves down. As a class, let’s brainstorm some self-regulation strategies that we’ve used. When you feel really strong emotions, what are some things that you do to calm down? Let’s see if we can come up with a list of at least 15 ideas.”

**Whole
Class
Discussion**

Note student suggestions on the white board, smart board, or poster paper. Have students note them as well.

Closure - Exit Ticket

3 min.

Have students complete their exit ticket by writing answers to the following:

1. What is one self-regulation strategy that you often use?
2. What are two self-regulation strategies that you would like to try?

Extensions

If you have more time in class, or for homework, have students fill in the “Conflict Journal” chart with their reflections on recent conflicts they may have had.

Emotional Triggers Checklist

When teenagers were asked to identify things that made them mad, they listed things at school, home, in their relationships, and in themselves. They also mentioned specific feelings that may lead to more intense emotions. Are any of these your triggers too?



School

- ☐ Other kids fooling around in class so we can't learn
- ☐ School work doesn't seem to relate to my future goals
- ☐ The physical condition of my school
- ☐ Getting detention or a negative consequence
- ☐ Feeling misunderstood by my teacher
- ☐ Getting publicly called out
- ☐ Too much homework
- ☐ Being treated unfairly or accused of something that I did not do

Family

- ☐ My brother/sister
- ☐ Fighting, separation, or divorce of parents/guardians
- ☐ Chronic illness or death of a loved one
- ☐ Too many responsibilities at home
- ☐ Parents working all the time
- ☐ Parents treating me like a little kid
- ☐ Parents not understanding my perspective

Friends

- ☐ Having fights with friends
- ☐ Friends pressuring me to do things I don't want to do
- ☐ Friends not being nice to me
- ☐ Friends not including me in their plans
- ☐ People talking about me behind my back

Me

- ☐ Changes in my body
- ☐ Not getting a chance to voice my opinion to parents or teachers
- ☐ Taking on too many activities; feeling overwhelmed
- ☐ Feeling lonely

Experiences

- ☐ Feeling unheard
- ☐ Feeling embarrassed
- ☐ Feeling judged
- ☐ Feeling blamed
- ☐ Feeling disrespected
- ☐ Feeling ignored
- ☐ Feeling disconnected
- ☐ Feeling manipulated

What are some of your other triggers?

Remaining Calm



What does it look like and sound like to remain calm under pressure?

| Looks Like | Sounds Like |
|------------|-------------|
| | |

Self-Regulation Strategies:

What are strategies you use to regulate your emotions?

Steps to P.E.A.C.E.: How to Remain Calm Under Pressure

- P = Identify the PROBLEM
- E = EXAMINE yourself
- A = Get some ADVICE
- C = CONSIDER the result you want
- E = EXHIBIT the skills of a self-controlled person

P = Identify PROBLEM

E = EXAMINE yourself

A = seek ADVICE

C = CONSIDER outcome

E = EXHIBIT self-control

Problem: What recent problem/event made me want to lose my cool?

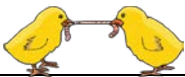
Examine: Why did I feel this way? What did it feel like in my body? What things affected how I reacted?

Advice: Did I get advice from someone? What did he, she, or they say?

Consider: What positive outcome did I want?

Exhibit: What did it (or would it) look like for me to be a self-controlled person?

Conflict Journal



| My Conflict | Who Was Involved | What It Was About | My Response | How Could I Have Handled It Better? |
|-------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
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