

Healthy Coping Strategies

Age: Key Stage 3/4

Outcomes:

- Recognise circumstances leading to intense emotions that may be difficult to manage.
- Explain a range of positive strategies for managing difficult emotions.
- Assess who, how and why to ask for support when it's needed.

Resources:

- Flipchart paper
- Pens and pencils
- True or false quiz.

Activity	Description
1. Introduction - feelings	<p>In pairs, hand the pair one or two pieces of paper or card with an intense feeling on it and a blank scale underneath.</p> <p>Ask students to add different words to express the degree of these feelings along the scale, from least to most intense (eg for 'anger' students might add irritated, annoyed, incensed, furious, livid as they progress up the scale).</p> <p>They should also suggest any strategies they think might help manage the intense feelings that are at the higher end of the scale. Take some brief feedback and ask students to put these aside to return to at the end of the lesson.</p> <p>To develop discussion further, ask if feeling intense emotions every now and again is a problem. Explore with the group when it does become a problem. Explain that feelings such as fury or frustration, for example, every now and again can be for a good reason.</p> <p>Discuss that if someone is experiencing an overwhelming number of negative feelings, and they do not have a healthy way of coping with those feelings, then they could be at risk of using unhealthy coping strategies. Or, if they are experiencing these feelings for no apparent reason, then it may indicate they need further support.</p>
2. Asking for help	<p>Provide a story or scenario for the class. This could be that a child seems down, is struggling with schoolwork, isn't talking to their friends and has stopped socialising with them. Adapt the scenario and story to help create situations that require the class to provide strategies to help the child in the scenario.</p> <p>Ask the class what the child in the story could do and get feedback. Feedback can include the benefits and strengths of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing nothing • Talking to a teacher • Talking to parents • Talking to the child • Doing something else to help <p>In groups, get the class to explore what else the child could do, and what possible consequences could be for the suggestions made.</p> <p>After this discussion, provide the group with a person's name (eg the child, parent, teacher, friend). Ask the groups to brainstorm on a piece of flipchart paper all the ways the person could open up a conversation about their concerns for the child in the story. Once finished, ask each group to stick their sheet on the wall in different areas of the room. Students then go as a group to look at the other groups' work and add their own ideas in their colour pen.</p>

Activity	Description
4. Reflection	<p>As a class, identify the strategies that each group has added to their flipchart paper as a healthy coping strategy. This could be talking to a friend, exercise, taking time out etc.</p> <p>Add them to a piece of flipchart paper or the whiteboard, to create a healthy coping strategies toolkit or list. Ask the class to feedback any strategies they can think of and discuss with them how it may be a healthy coping strategy and what situations may the healthy coping strategy be useful.</p> <p>Keep the flipchart paper in the class to refer to.</p>