

HEAD FIRST

Supporting Emotional Health & PSHE in Schools

Activities Pack: Managing Stress & Worries

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Activity: Box Breathing



KEY STAGE: 1 & 2

Session Overview:

Introduces the Box Breathing technique to help manage difficult emotions and feelings.

Aims and objectives:

1. To teach pupils the Box Breathing strategy as a key technique to help manage difficult emotions and feelings

Session Type: Interactive

Materials needed: Video

Learning outcomes:

- For children to be competent to use the box breathing activity.

Overview

Box breathing is a simple breathing exercise which is a key strategy to help us manage difficult emotions and feelings.

It is referenced throughout the curriculum in specific lesson plans and can also be used as a standalone exercise.

We have also provided a video which can assist in delivering the exercise.

The video provides the required timings for the exercise. You can just play the video and ask pupils to breathe in, hold breath and exhale in time to the graphics in the video.

You should familiarise yourself with the activity as part of planning to deliver the curriculum.

You can access the video which supports the exercise by copying and pasting the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmUpUHnRF-Y>

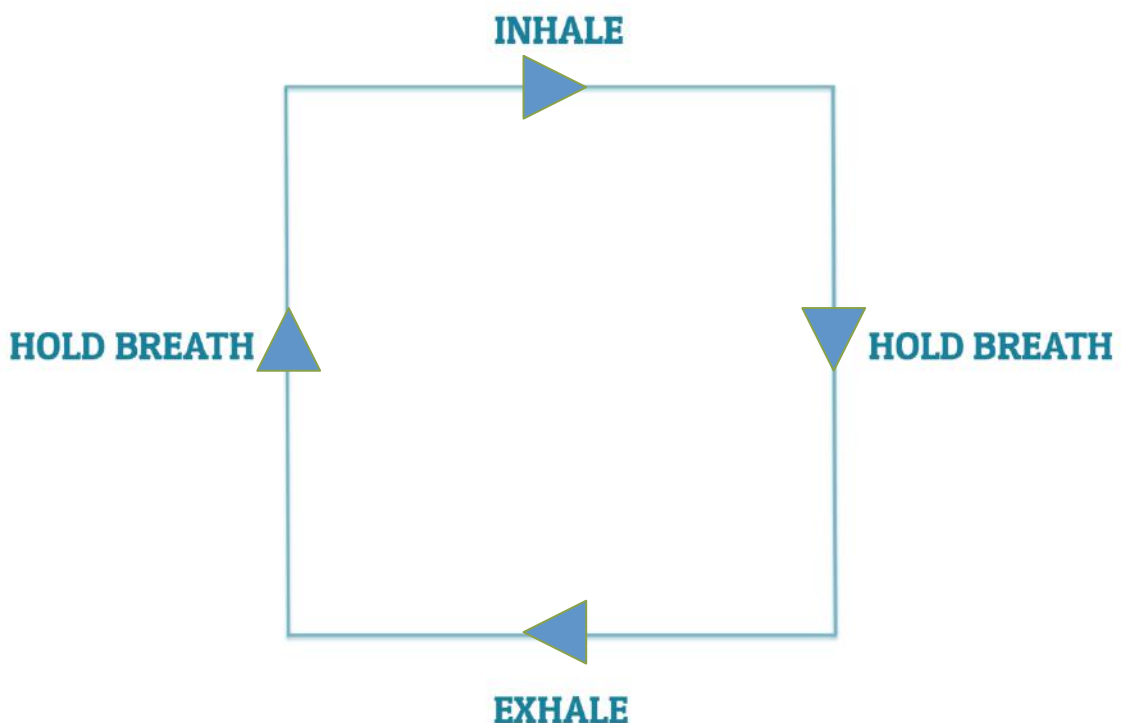
Box Breathing Activity

PLEASE NOTE: If running this activity with multiple students please enforce strict social distancing guidelines.

1. Tell your pupils that we are now going to think about a simple strategy we can use when we feel angry or upset. Read the scenario below to your pupils;

'Uh oh...Your brain is telling you that you are angry, upset or stressed about something. Before you have a chance to get overwhelmed, let's try something that can help calm you down so you can think more clearly and return to feeling calm.'

Introduce 'Box Breathing' as a strategy for difficult emotions. Box Breathing is explained in the diagram below. Further information is included at the end of this lesson plan.



Box Breathing Activity

This simple step by step guide will assist you in delivering the Box Breathing activity to your pupils.

Step 1

Sit straight up in a comfortable chair. Put your feet flat on the floor and relax your hands in your lap. You may overlap your hands or let them lie separately with palms facing up. The important factor is to maintain an aligned posture and to be at ease.

Step 2

Close your mouth and breath in slowly through your nose. Count to four as you inhale. Hold your breath for four seconds. You are not trying to deprive your body of oxygen, but need to allow a few seconds for the air to fill your lungs. Concentrate on your belly and notice how it also moves when you inhale deeply.

Step 3

Open your mouth slightly and slowly exhale to a count of four. Hold the exhale to another count of four. Ideally, you should repeat the exercise for four minutes, but two or three times will help you to achieve a more relaxed state, relieve tension and settle your nerves.

Box Breathing Activity

Step 4

Allow the air to fill your belly and notice how it passes over your chest. One of the goals of boxed square breathing is to bring the respiratory system back into alignment and end the shallow breathing that results from the fight or flight response mode the body enters when feeling stressed.

While the environment can help to add to your relaxed state, it is not imperative. If there are other people around and you cannot find a private, quiet place, this exercise can be performed quietly with your eyes open. Repeat your mantra and counting to yourself and no one will even notice that you are performing a stress-reduction exercise.

Closing up the Session

2. To finish read the following statement to your pupils;

'The exercise we just completed is called "Box Breathing" it can really help if we are angry, stressed or upset.'

'How did it feel to just spend two minutes focusing on just your breathing?'

(PROMPTS: It's not often we clear our minds like this in the modern world, reinforce that it is a very positive strategy to help manage our emotions.)

'The next time you feel like this try and remember this activity and use it to help you feel safe and relaxed again.'



Curriculum 4 Life

PSHE SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Activity: Stress Bucket



KEY STAGE: 2 & 3

Session Overview:

Young people are presented with an overview of ways to improve mental health and help others

Aims and objectives:

1. Young people feel more confident in helping others and are able to recognise the impact of their behaviour on their emotions/well-being

Session Type: Activity based

Materials needed: None

Learning outcomes:

- For young people to identify what helps them to relieve stress and improve their mental health

Stress Bucket

1. Explain to your pupils that a good way to picture our stress levels is to think of stress as water inside an invisible bucket we are always carrying. Every time something stressful happens, good or bad, water is added to the bucket.

People have different sized buckets, there is no right or wrong size. This means that for some people, it won't take long at all for the water, or stress, to fill the bucket. For those with bigger buckets, they can take on more water without it overflowing.

Explain to your pupils that when the bucket begins to overflow, that is when we are too stressed. It is really heavy to carry around and we feel like we can't control the overflowing water. What's the solution?

Coming up with ways to prevent more water being added in the first place and adding 'taps' that allow you to let out some water are really good ways to help manage our emotional health.

2. Ask your pupils to complete the following worksheet after talking through the next two pages.

Stress Bucket



We all have a "Stress bucket" which fills up with our worries and concerns. Everyone's is a different size which is why some people seem to be able to cope with more problems.



One of the ways we can control what goes into our bucket is by putting up an "Umbrella". These are the skills we have which can help us manage our worries and concerns.



We can also fit "Taps" to our bucket. These represent the things we can do to help us manage our worries and concerns.

Arguments with friends or family



Fitting in



Exams



Homework



We can put up an umbrella to control how much water (stress) gets into the bucket (EWS and people who support us), but the bucket is still heavy for us to carry around!



This is when it's good to use taps to filter out some of the stress we are already carrying.

Stress Bucket

What are your skills to manage your worries and concerns?
Fill them out under the umbrella.

Then think of ways that help you get rid of stress and worries –
this can be playing sports or reading a book. Write these next to
the taps.

