

HEAD FIRST

Supporting Emotional Health & PSHE in Schools

Lesson Plan:

Helpful and Unhelpful Worries – COVID-19 Adapted Lesson Plan



KEY STAGE: 2

Session Overview:

This lesson furthers understanding of helpful and unhelpful worries. It begins to explore with pupils the worries we may have and encourages them to think about whether they are helpful or unhelpful.

Aims and objectives:

1. Pupils identify their own helpful and unhelpful worries.
2. Pupils start to recognise how they can manage their worries.

Session Type: Activity and discussion based

Materials needed: None

Learning outcomes:

- Pupils know that there are helpful and unhelpful worries, and explore the difference
- Learn about the impact of 'carrying around' worries
- Start to think about how external factors can influence emotions and worries

Introduction

1. Explain here that sometimes worrying can be helpful. Here is an example you can use with your pupils;

'If you're worried about a sports match or a school play, often your body will be better than normal because your brain has made all your senses a lot better, like a super hero, in case you need to run away from danger!'

Here is an example of unhelpful worrying you can use with your pupils;

'If you feel worried about things that aren't really dangerous, like speaking in class or spiders, after a while your brain can get really tired! It's exhausting being worried all the time! When you're tired this means sometimes we can get sad or upset about things a lot easier.'

2. A worksheet is provided at the end of this lesson plan to help children categorise what they think might be helpful and unhelpful worries. You can use it to encourage your pupils to think about worries they may have and ask them to think about whether they are helpful or unhelpful.

A Huge Bag of Worries

3. Read the following story to the children and ask them to listen out for what Jenny does with her worries;

Jenny had always been happy. She had a lovely mum and dad, and a great brother (well, most of the time...), she had a best friend at school and she liked her teacher. And then, of course, there was her dog, Loftus.

But recently she had been getting gloomier and gloomier. It wasn't just one thing; it was EVERYTHING. She worried that she was getting too fat, that Loftus had fleas, and that her best friend was going away.

She worried that she was getting bad marks at school and she thought she heard someone whispering about her in the playground... She worried when her mum and dad had an argument... She even worried about wars and sickness. Until one day she woke to find... a HUGE BAG OF WORRIES. The bag followed her everywhere... to school, to swimming, to the toilet, and it even stuck by her when she was watching TV.

She tried ignoring it... but it didn't work. She tried throwing it away... but it always came back. She tried to lock it out... but when she got back to her bedroom, there it was, waiting for her. It was like a horrible shadow she could not get rid of.
WHAT COULD SHE DO?

A Huge Bag of Worries

She asked her brother for help. But he was busy with his computer game, and all he said was "I don't know what you are talking about? I don't have any worries." After that she didn't feel like asking anyone else. She knew she'd only feel stupid. Mum would probably say: "You've got no worries that I can see. You're a lucky girl. You've got your health, your friends, your family – what more do you want?". So she decided not to tell her.

Dad might know what to do. But then she thought again. No. Dad had enough worries of his own. She couldn't ask him.

Everyday things got worse. The bag got bigger... and Bigger and BIGGER. She couldn't sleep because it kept tossing and turning beside her all night.

To make matters worse, the bag dragged around her feet so much when she was walking to school that she was late and the teacher was cross. Jenny couldn't tell her what had happened, and anyway she knew what she would say: "You've got too many worries! Infuture, LEAVE THAT BAG AT HOME!".

When Jenny told her best friend about the bag, she suggested that Jenny locked it up in a cupboard and tried not to think about it.

"That's what I do" she said. But it just didn't work. Even Loftus couldn't help. He tried his best and barked like mad, but the bag stood its ground.

A Huge Bag of Worries

One morning Jenny woke up, got dressed and walked down the road. She'd had enough. The tears started rolling down her cheeks. She sat on a garden wall and put her head in her hands. She thought she'd have to live with the bag FOREVER.

Then she heard a voice and, looking up, she saw the kindly face of the old lady who lived next door. "Goodness!" said the old lady. "What on earth is that HUGE bag of worries?" Through her tears Jenny explained how it had followed her for weeks, and got bigger and bigger, and just wouldn't go away.

"Now lets just open it up and see what's inside," said the old lady. But Jenny said she couldn't. If she opened the bag the worries might jump out and who knew what might happen then?

"Nonsense," said the old lady firmly. "There's nothing a worry hates more than being seen. If you have any worries, however small, the secret is to let them out slowly, one by one and show them to someone else. They'll soon go away."

So Jenny opened the bag. The old lady sorted the worries into groups. Jenny was astonished to see how small they looked when they were out in the open.

A Huge Bag of Worries

Half the worries disappeared because lots of worries just hate the light of day. As for the rest, the old lady put some in her shopping basket, to deal with herself; some she sent packing because she said they belonged to other people; some she just blew a kiss to; and some she said were worries that everyone had, even Jenny's family and her friends and her teacher. And as for the bag – well she chucked that as far away as she could!

Adapted from “*Huge bag of worries*”, Virginia Ironside, 1994

4. Now ask the children:

- What did Jenny do with her worries?
- Do you ever feel like Jenny?
- What did other people in the story do to help Jenny?
- Who will you share your worries with?

NOTE: A worksheet is provided at the end of the lesson plan to help with this activity.

What Worries You?

5. Now ask your pupils about their worries:

- What do they do with theirs?
- Do they need help to manage them?
- Can anyone help look after them for them?
- Is there anything they can do to manage the worry (i.e. with coronavirus)

NOTE: There is a worksheet to help with this activity at the end of the lesson plan.

Worries about COVID-19

6. The issue of COVID-19 or Coronavirus may be brought up naturally by the children through the discussion. While it is an important issue there are key points to mention:

- It is understandable to feel worried but if you listen to the advice given by your parents, teachers and the government we can minimise the risk of you or you family getting ill
- Managing our behaviours protects us and others from getting sick, i.e. by washing our hands regularly for 20 seconds, staying at home and keeping our distance from each other
- If you have any worries or concerns you can turn to a trusted adult to help manage them

Closing the Session

'Today we have started to think about how things might upset us, make us worry or make us sad.'

'We should all think about how we can make sure our worries don't make things harder for us.'

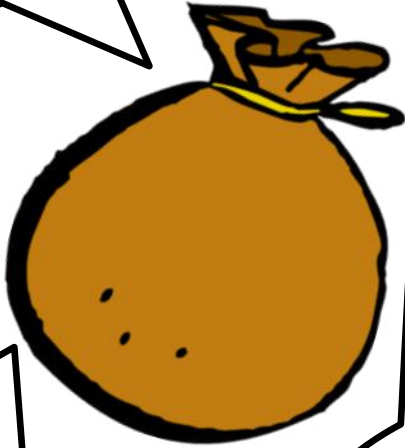
'Thanks for all your hard work today!'

7. Practice the box breathing and stress bucket activity which is available as part of this COVID-19 resource pack. This can give the children a way to cope with their worries.

Huge Bag of Worries

Do you ever feel like Jenny?

What did Jenny do with her worries?



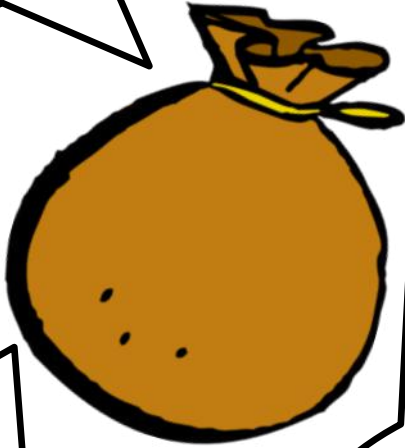
Who will you share your worries with?

What did other people in the story do to help Jenny?

What Worries You?

Do you ever feel
you have worries?

What do you
do with your worries?



Who will you share
your worries with?

How do other people help
you with your worries ?

Helpful

Unhelpful