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Foundations for Wellbeing

Year 2, lesson 3: Changing thoughts and feelings



Changing thoughts and feelings

This is the third of five lessons on self-regulation, mental health and wellbeing, for year 2. This lesson focuses on habitual thoughts and feelings, and how these can be managed or changed.

To encourage pupils to use the self-regulation strategies taught in these lessons more automatically, autonomously and effectively, it is important to revisit and reinforce them regularly, as part of a whole-school approach to promoting mental health and wellbeing. The extension activities are designed to support this (for more information, see the [Teacher Handbook](#)). To learn more, please visit our [self-guided online courses](#), which are available to all School Plus members.

The lesson plan is based on a 45-minute lesson. The timings given are the minimum required to deliver the activities, but you may wish to spend longer exploring each activity.

Learning objective and outcomes

To learn about different ways of changing thoughts and feelings.

Pupils will be able to:

- explain that the brain helps us remember, repeat and change what we pay attention to
- describe how to pay attention to more pleasant thoughts and feelings more often
- notice when we are paying attention to something enjoyable and how it can help us feel good

Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- Flipchart paper and pens
- Post-it notes
- Resource 1: *David's week* [one per pair]
- Resource 2: *Paying attention* [one per pupil]

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher handbook notes before teaching this lesson. They include guidance on establishing a safe learning environment, supporting pupils with additional vulnerabilities, using assessment and personal reflection effectively, and embedding the learning. They also outline useful subject knowledge on the theory and evidence informing these lessons, self-regulation strategies and relevant neuroscience.

The lesson plans should be used flexibly, and you are encouraged to adapt them to meet the specific needs and abilities of your pupils. It is also important to consider sensitivities and prior knowledge about specific pupils' circumstances. If safeguarding concerns arise during this lesson, these should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, in line with your school policy.

Baseline assessment

Introduction (Slides 9-11, 2 mins)

Establish or revisit ground rules. Explain that if pupils have worries or questions during or after the lesson that they do not want to raise in front of the class, they can speak to you individually or write their question on a piece of paper, anonymously or with their name, and put it in the question box.

Using slide 10, begin by briefly recapping the learning from last lesson.

Introduce today's learning objective and outcomes. Explain that this lesson focuses on how thoughts and feelings can change and how we can change them, as well as how paying attention to something enjoyable can help us to have pleasant feelings.

Baseline assessment activity (Slide 12, 5 mins)

Share the story about David's walk to school on slide 12:

It was a sunny morning and David could feel the sun on his face. On his way to school, he noticed a friendly dog wagging its tail and some beautiful flowers. He also saw a butterfly, which made him smile. But he stepped in a puddle and got his shoe wet and then, suddenly, a noisy lorry went by, which made him cover his ears.

Ask pupils to write responses to the following questions in their exercise books or on a sheet of paper:

- What things does David notice on the way to school?
- How might David feel when he arrives at school?
- What might help David have a pleasant day?

This activity should be done individually without prompting. Use pupils' responses to gauge their knowledge and understanding about the topic including any strategies they have for focusing on more pleasant thoughts and feelings. Note any misconceptions or gaps in understanding and aim to address these in the lesson. For example, you may want to spend longer on the link between paying attention to pleasant things and having more pleasant feelings.

Core activities

Feelings rollercoaster (Slides 13-15, 15 mins)

Using their ideas from the baseline activity to support them, ask pairs to name some feelings that David might experience on his walk to school, and write them on post it notes.

Pupils might suggest: happy; cheerful; relaxed; angry; annoyed; disappointed; scared; shocked; upset.

Explain that some of these feelings are 'up' – they are more pleasant, and some are 'down' – they are less pleasant.

Then, draw a wavy line on the flipchart or whiteboard, or use the example on slide 13, and ask pupils to add the post-it notes onto the line, placing the 'up' feelings at the top of the waves, and the 'down' feelings at the bottom. Highlight that someone can often experience many different feelings in one day, just like David.

Next, explain that at school, David is thinking about his walk – how his shoe got wet, and the shock of the lorry suddenly going past. These thoughts might cause David to have more 'down' feelings. Ask pupils, how might he feel throughout the morning if he focuses on the 'down' feelings from the walk? Upset, frustrated, angry, not ready for the day, not excited about school.

Then ask, how might he feel if he pays more attention to the pleasant things on the walk after his shoe has dried, which might cause him to have more 'up' feelings? Happy, cheerful, positive, ready for school.

Explain that paying attention to the more pleasant, 'up' thoughts and feelings from the walk could help David manage the unpleasant feelings from his shoe getting wet and the shock of the lorry. If David can repeat noticing the more pleasant thoughts and feelings, his brain will pay attention to them more often and he can enjoy himself more frequently.



Challenge: Remind pupils of the feelings thermometer from previous lessons, and ask them to think of any 'in the middle' feelings that David might feel on his walk to school. *For example, annoyed; bored; OK; fine.*

Looking forward (Slides 16-17, 10 mins)

Show the conversation between David and his dad on slide 16:

Dad: Next week is busy! There's a lot happening and things to look forward to.

David: It's going to be boring!

Dad: Are there any things, even small things, that might be enjoyable or fun?

Give pairs **Resource 1: David's week** and ask them to read the speech bubbles. For each, ask pupils to discuss the things that David could pay attention to that could help him have pleasant feelings.

Take feedback and draw out the key learning:

I'll be going to school – breaktime/playing with friends, seeing friends, doing a subject he enjoys, he might enjoy the walk to school.

Dad and I are going to do chores in the house – feeling proud of tidying his room/the house, talking to/spending time with Dad, listening to music/chatting whilst doing chores.

Grannie is visiting with her dog – seeing Grannie/spending time with Grannie, playing with the dog.

I'll ride my bike to my friend's house – the fun of riding his bike, different sights and sounds such as birds, trees, flowers, playing with his friend.

Then, ask pupils, how might paying attention to these pleasant things help David?

Pupils might suggest: it will help him to start the week in a positive way; it will help him look forward

to the week, rather than feel it's going to be boring; if he pays attention to fun and enjoyable things now, then his brain will remember to notice them during the week.

Reflection and endpoint assessment

Reflection and endpoint assessment (Slides 18-19, 10 mins)

Reminding pupils of the learning outcomes, ask them to write down their responses to the following:

- On David's walk to school tomorrow, what pleasant things might he notice and pay attention to?
- How might this make him feel?
- What else might help David have a good start to his day?
- What does his brain do to help?

Use this as evidence of progress and to inform future teaching.

Ask pupils to reflect on a time when they did something they enjoyed or do something they regularly enjoy. For example, a day out, a hobby or spending time with friends. Using **Resource 2: Paying attention**, ask pupils to describe what they enjoy about the activity and the pleasant feelings they have when they are doing the different parts of the activity. They could write and/or draw in the boxes. Once complete, pupils could share their example with a partner.

Check the question box and respond to any remaining questions.

Signposting support

Signposting support (Slide 20, 3 mins)

Explain that if they have 'down' or unpleasant feelings a lot of the time, or if these are difficult to manage, it's important to speak to a trusted adult at home or at school. Pupils can also contact Childline: 0800 1111.

Closing the lesson (Slide 21)

Finally, using slide 21, reinforce the key learning by summing up for the class what they have achieved in today's lesson.

Activities to extend and embed the learning

Mindful walk (Slide 22)

Lead pupils in a mindful walk around the school grounds or local area, asking them to pay attention to sights and sounds. Then, ask them to reflect on the following:

- What did you notice on the walk?
- How did it feel?
- Was there anything that made you have pleasant feelings?

Having fun (Slide 23)

Ask pupils to plan a fun activity with their friends, for example, at playtime. They should consider what they are looking forward to, and what opportunities there might be to enjoy themselves.

Pleasant feelings (Slide 24)

Ask pupils to make a list of pleasant things that happen often, or that they look forward to, or that make them have pleasant feelings, that they could pay attention to in future. For example, the chance to see friends at school, reading interesting books, doing hobbies, visiting the park.

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