

# Some Simple Activities to Manage Emotions

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Children do not come into the world with the ability to control their emotions, get along with others, or handle stress. However, as stress and emotions are a natural part of life, it is critical to learn to cope with these. The activities mentioned below help children in gaining the understanding, disposition and abilities necessary to control their emotions; have empathy for others; set and achieve objectives; make balanced decisions; and build healthy relationships.

### Positive self-talk

Positive self-talk implies being kind to oneself. It is a trait that can help children change their internal narrative, for example, 'I could do better next time' or 'I want to learn from my mistakes, not be held back by them.' Positive self-talk helps in combating stress and anxiety and boosts confidence. I gave my students three activities related to this topic.

First, to determine whether it is positive or negative self-talk, I gave them various examples, such as 'I am a failure and I will not complete this exercise' or 'I have the will to construct this science model,' so that they were able to distinguish between negative and positive self-talk. The second was an activity done with their desk partners. In this activity, desk partners had to substitute each other's negative self-talk with positive self-talk.

For instance:

Partner 1 (negative self-talk): I will fail this English exam. My parents will scold me.

Partner 2 (positive self-talk): I have studied diligently for the exam, and that will help me do well in this exam.

After this activity, we had a discussion. I posed questions to them giving examples of negative self-talk and asked them questions like, 'What would

Negatives	Positives
I can't	I can
I won't	I will
I will try	I will do it
I am not confident about...	I'm confident
I am unsure about...	I'm sure
My life is boring	My life is the best
I don't look good	I look the best
I don't deserve attention or success	I deserve attention and success
I am powerless	I am powerful

Figure 1. A completed worksheet with negative and positive statements



the opposite of this sentence sound like if it were positive? We also had a discussion on the benefits of using positive self-talk and the drawbacks of negative self-talk.

Next, to encourage positive thinking in various aspects of their daily lives, I gave them a worksheet with certain negative statements and asked them to change these into positive ones. This worksheet further stressed the idea that when we talk negatively about ourselves, we prevent ourselves from pursuing and attaining our objectives. It may also stop us from attempting new things or engaging in activities that we may find enjoyable.

### Decision-making

I gave one of Robert Frost's poems, *The Road Not Taken*, to my students in class VII. The last three lines of this poem stood out in particular: *Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—/ I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference.* In these lines, when Robert Frost came to a fork in the road, he had to decide between two options that would forever alter the course of his life. All of us are faced with choices and opportunities and

must make decisions throughout our lives. Early instruction in decision-making helps children avoid making wrong and hurried decisions and helps them to make well-informed choices.

We did two activities. First, I questioned my students about their preferred games. Some students preferred dodgeball, while others preferred to play football. I asked them to choose a game they wished to play among themselves. I had to ensure that everyone in the class had a voice and was heard. My main problem was that my girl students were not as outspoken as the boys, despite all the talk and initiatives to demonstrate that gender and other forms of discrimination have no place in our democratic society. However, this time the girls expressed their wish to play dodgeball after an extensive discussion and voting. The students then met to establish how many and on what basis to form the teams. All this was part of the decision-making process which they completed independently; I played no part in this.

After this, we completed a worksheet on making decisions in which they had to choose between two

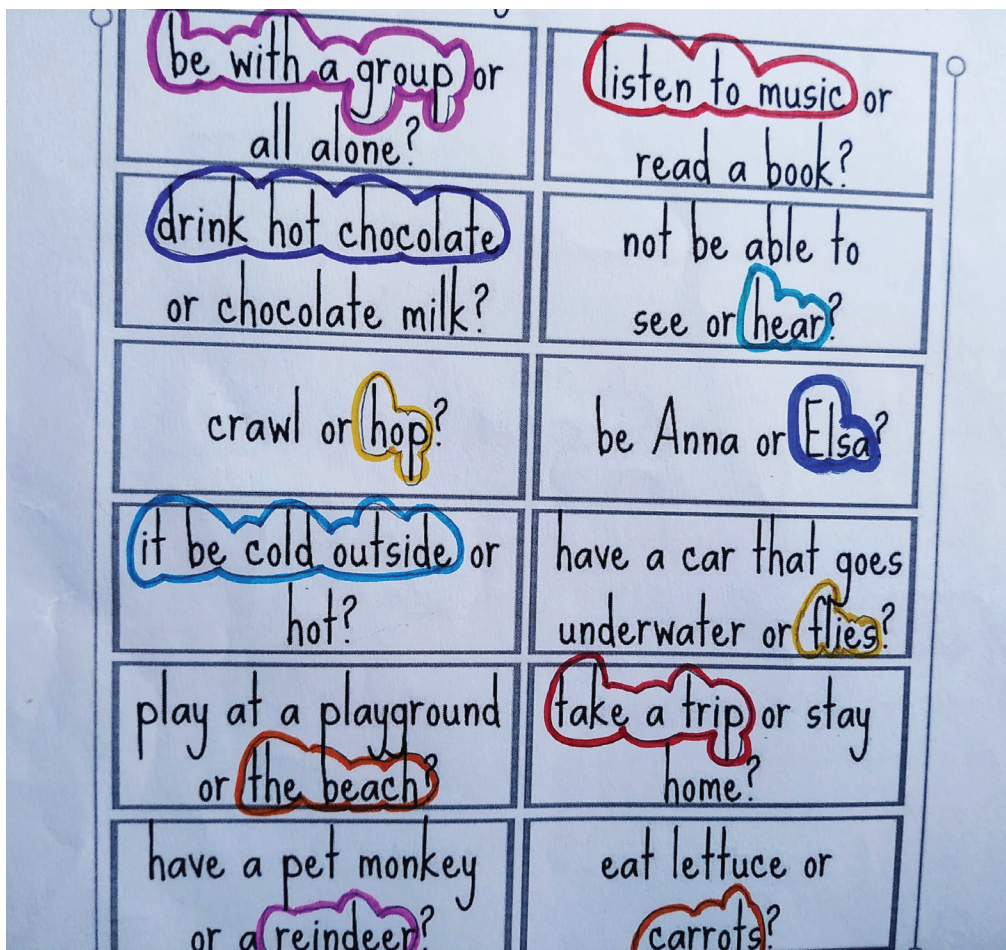


Figure 2. A completed worksheet in which children made some simple choices

options. It was an enjoyable exercise. They had to make their decisions and justify their choices.

The following day, one of my students led the entire class in decision-making. Some of my students wanted to play dodgeball, but this student took the initiative and wrote down in two columns, the pros and cons of playing football. The class discussed these points in detail, and everyone ultimately chose to play and practice football because the student gave them reasons for every point mentioned in the two columns. Students learned that reasoning is crucial to decision-making and it becomes easy when one has clarity about the reasons for their decisions.

### Managing stress and anxiety

Stress and anxiety are common reactions to changes and difficulties, which are a part of everyone's life, even during childhood. We frequently believe that stress and anxiety are terrible emotions brought on by negative circumstances. However, even the anticipation of happy occasions (such as school events, vacations, or social hobbies) can sometimes be stressful. When there is something that needs

to be anticipated, modified, or protected, children experience stress and anxiety. When something important to them is in jeopardy, they become anxious. Many of my students are stressed and anxious when they have to speak in front of the class or at the assembly. To get over this nervousness, I engaged them in various stress-relieving activities.

The first thing that comes up when you search for or read about ways to alleviate stress and anxiety is meditation. However, at times, it might be challenging for a child to meditate. As a student, I used meditation for stress-busting. However, my students are very active and prefer activities that require movement. So, I looked for ways other than meditation. Following are a few activities that I did in my class:

#### *Throw away your stress*

I asked the students to draw a large bucket on a sheet of paper and fill it with (write inside it) all the stress they were feeling. Exams, parental pressure, menstruation, etc. are a few examples. After they made their stress bucket, they did these certain activities.

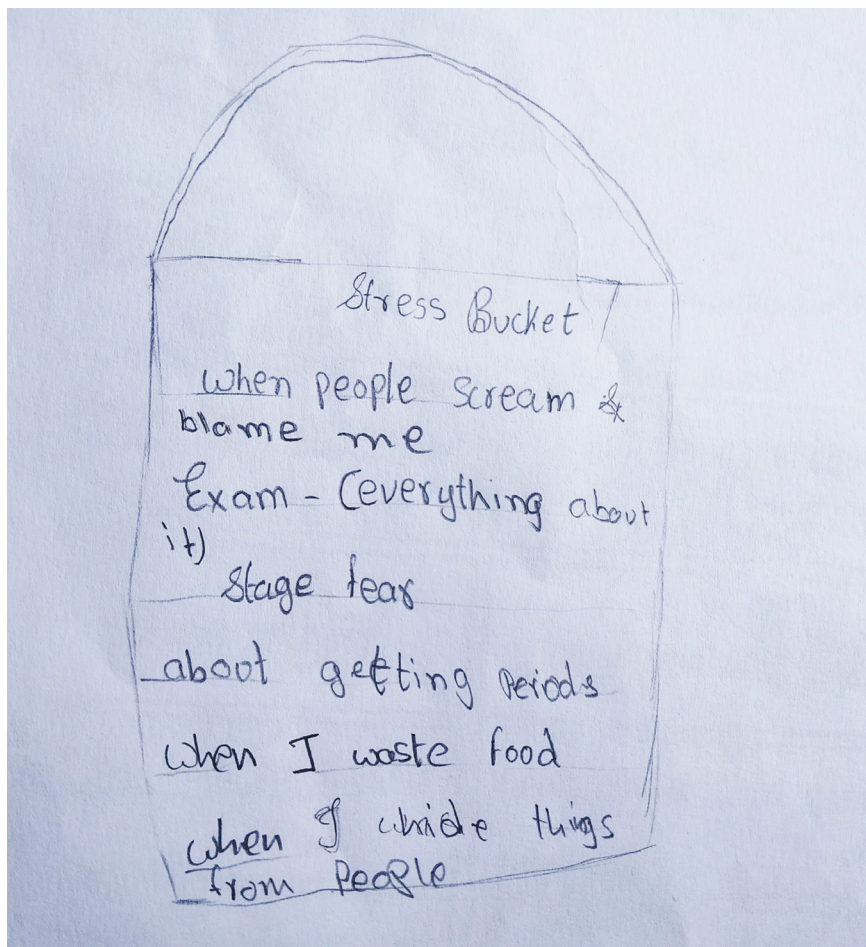


Figure 3. A student's stress bucket

### *Drawing activity*

I encouraged students to use coloured chalk on black paper to draw things that make them happy or something in the recent past that had made them happy. They enjoyed using coloured chalk, rather than a pen or pencil, for this exercise. Using coloured chalk instead of white chalk can also alleviate a child's mood.

### *Doodling*

Doodling is a relaxing activity because it does not demand any structured or expected outcome. I gave my students sketch pens and asked them to doodle freely. I also played some calming music to make them feel relaxed. In those 25 minutes of class, their minds were completely occupied in the creative activity rather than the anxiety of any kind.

### *Talking to a tree or a plant*

We have a money plant in our classroom. At first, my students thought it awkward to communicate with a plant, and they laughed, but once they discovered that it helped them release stress rather than store it, they began to take it seriously. A student remarked that after doing this assignment, he felt as if someone was always available to listen to his problems.

To conclude, while a lot has been achieved for the socio-emotional welfare of our students, more remains to be done. Simple activities and actions can significantly fulfil their social and emotional needs. As educators, we need to continually talk about this dimension of their personalities so that in addition to improving their chances of academic and professional success, we also nurture their social and emotional skills and provide them with a secure and positive learning environment.



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