



Session 2

Managing our emotions



Goals

- To understand the role of different emotions
- To improve our ability to manage strong emotions
- To strengthen the 'I have' muscle – expressing gratitude to others



You need

- PowerPoint or interactive whiteboard slides for Session 2
- Student workbooks
- Post-it notes (at least ten per student)
- Tape 2 – 4 metres long
- YouTube video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZP_I6NkQb4
- Mindfulness recording for session 2



Recap

2m



- Ask the students what they remember about Session 1. Ask them to name the four resilience muscles. How can these 'muscles' help us to be more resilient? Ask if anyone would like to share any further suggestions they had at home about their resilience muscles.



Introductory activity: Resilience gym

10m



SLIDE 2.1

- Tell the students that, like all muscles, the resilience muscles need to be exercised in the gym! So they will now do an exercise to boost their 'I have' muscle.
- Remind the students that the 'I have' muscle is about connecting to people and forming strong and trusting relationships. One of the ways we can strengthen a relationship is to express your gratitude to that person.
- In groups of three, ask the students to:
 - Name three people they are grateful to have in their life, and why. These are people they appreciate or are thankful to have in their life.
 - Complete the 'I have people I am grateful for' chart in their workbook.
 - When they next see those people, tell them they are grateful to have them in their life and why. It may make it easier to read them what they have written here.



Presentation and discussion: Pleasant and unpleasant emotions

10m



SLIDE 2.2

- Explain that today they are going to be working on emotions and stress.
- Ask the students: What is an emotion?
- Ask the students to name some pleasant emotions (e.g. happy, joyful, confident).
- Ask them to name some unpleasant emotions (e.g. anxious, angry, sad).
- If necessary, prompt them with questions such as: How do you feel when you are late for school? How do you feel when you get a great mark in a test? How do you feel when you are playing sports? etc.

- Tell the students that, if we pay attention, we can often feel our emotions in our body. Ask the group if they ever feel emotions in their body, and if so where. If necessary, prompt them with examples, such as blushing with embarrassment, stomach tightening with nervousness, heart pounding with excitement.

SLIDE 2.3

- You can play this short video (2½ minutes) to demonstrate where we feel different emotions in the body: www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZP_I6NkQb4
- Explain that emotions are like a message and that they have a role. They can prompt us to act or remind us of what we need.

SLIDE 2.4

- Unpleasant, or difficult, emotions, can serve to make us focus on one specific action in order for us to survive. For example, if you see a car coming at you, how would you feel? What would you do? (*Feel scared and jump out of the way.*)
- What about anxiety or deep sadness? Do they prompt us to action or stop us doing something? (*These feelings can make us give up, because they prevent us from seeing ways out of a difficult situation.*)
- What about pleasant emotions, like feeling happy and confident? If you were playing a sports match, how might your positive feelings affect how you played? (*They allow us to see more positive ways of thinking or doing, and undo the effect of difficult feelings. They make us happier, more sociable, enable us to think more creatively, and to develop resilience.*)



Activity: Emotions scale

10m



- Give out Post-it notes - at least ten per student
- Ask all the students to write some emotions they know on Post-it notes, one emotion per Post-it. Encourage them to write down a variety of pleasant and unpleasant emotions.
- While they are doing this, form a double-ended arrow (2 to 4 metres long) with tape on the ground and label one end "+ / pleasant" and the other end "- / unpleasant". Label the half-way mark.
- Then ask the students to come and place their Post-its along the scale according to whether the emotions on the Post-its are pleasant or unpleasant.
- Once all of the Post-its have been positioned, ask the students to look at where other people have placed their emotions and ask if they agree with where other people have placed the Post-its.
- Point out the variety of emotions, from pleasant to unpleasant. Tell the students that all these emotions can be useful, but only if we control them, rather than them controlling us.



Activity: Managing emotions with a breathing exercise



SLIDE 2.5

- If our emotions are very strong, they can prevent us from doing what we need to do, whereas, at the right level, they can act as a positive prompt to do something.
- For example, if I am too scared to admit I haven't understood something, I am likely to do poorly when it comes to a test. Whereas if I can manage that fear, I will be able to ask for explanations and work better towards the test.
- If I feel stressed at the idea of a competition or an exam coming up, too much stress may make me give up, whereas the right dose of stress can prompt me to practise or revise.
- Tell the students that one way to manage unhelpful emotions is learning how to breathe mindfully, so you are now going to try a breathing exercise.
- Play the recording or lead the exercise with the following script:

Sit in a relaxed and comfortable position. Keep your back upright, but not too tight. Hands resting wherever they're comfortable. Bring your tongue onto the roof of your mouth or rest it wherever it's comfortable.

Notice and relax your body. Let yourself relax and become curious about your body seated here—the sensations it experiences, the touch, the connection with the floor or the chair. Relax any areas of tightness or tension. Just breathe.

Tune into your breath. Feel the natural flow of breath—in, out. You don't need to do anything to your breath. Not long, not short, just natural. Notice where you feel your breath in your body. It might be in your stomach. It may be in your chest or throat or in your nostrils. See if you can feel the sensations of breath, one breath at a time. When one breath ends, the next breath begins.

Now as you do this, you might notice that your mind may start to wander. You may start thinking about other things. If this happens, it is not a problem. It's very natural. Just notice that your mind has wandered. You can say "thinking" or "wandering" in your head softly. And then gently redirect your attention right back to the breathing.

Stay here for a few minutes. Notice your breath, in silence. From time to time, you'll get lost in thought, then return to your breath.

Continue to bring yourself back to your breath.

After a few minutes, once again notice your body, your whole body, seated here. Let yourself relax even more deeply and then offer yourself some appreciation for doing this practice today.

[This guided breathing meditation is adapted from the Greater Good in Action website: ggia.berkeley.edu]



Summary



SLIDE 2.6

- Emotions can be felt in both our minds and bodies. If they are very strong, they can prevent us from acting, but if we manage them they can be a useful prompt to do what we need to do. Breathing mindfully is one way of managing strong emotions.



Practice at home



- Tell the students that they should try to observe their emotions with "friendly curiosity". Explain that to manage them well, they first need to know how to recognise them and understand how they affect them. They should treat themselves as they would a friend if they are feeling an unpleasant emotion.
- As a home activity, ask the students to pay attention to, and write in their workbook, what they do in the event of an unpleasant emotion between now and the next session. When did it occur? What did they feel? Did they try to and manage to regulate the emotion? Did they use the breathing exercise? What else did/could they use to manage the emotion?