

Fear and Anxiety

Integration: Health (Mental/Emotional Health, Personal Health)

Grade Levels: 3-6

Time: 1-2 class periods

Materials:

none

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Discover that fear and anxiety are human emotions.
2. Recognize reactions to fear and anxiety.
3. Utilize techniques for overcoming fear and anxiety.
4. Reflect on the meaning of fear.

Lesson:

Full group

1. Ask students to name some things that people may fear. Write down the list of fears as they name them. After a list has been compiled, ask, "Why are there many different fears on the list?" (Everyone fears different things). Remind them that everyone, young children, teenagers, and adults as well, encounter fear at one time or another. Fear is an emotion that all people feel.
2. Ask students, "How can fear be a helpful emotion?" (Warns us of danger). Explain that one way to manage something that might make you afraid, is to learn as much as you can about the thing you fear, and then think about how you can conquer it.
3. Tell students that Ann Bancroft and Liv Arnesen spent a long time planning their expedition to Antarctica, but they too have fears. Ask students to predict what they think Ann and Liv might be afraid of. Students might respond with:
 - Fear of the cold
 - Fear of loneliness
 - Fear of accidents
 - Fear of becoming lost
 - Fear of broken equipment
 - Fear of getting sick
 - Fear of injury
4. Once they have brainstormed some things that Ann and Liv might be afraid of in Antarctica, tell them in reality, what they fear most is **failure**.

- a. Ask, “Why do you think they fear failure?” (Afraid that they might not meet the world’s expectations. Others might be disappointed in them if they can’t reach their goals).
- b. Recite the following quote from Ann Bancroft.

“I rarely fear for my life. My greatest fear is failure. Failure to live up to everyone’s expectations.”

Ann Bancroft
American Polar Explorer

- c. Tell students that even adults fear letting others down.
5. Ask students if they have ever noticed their hands feeling cold or sweaty when they are nervous or afraid of something? What other symptoms have they experienced when they are nervous?
 6. Explain that when you are tense or nervous about something, your body reacts. It goes into an emergency response pattern that is called the fight or flight pattern. The fight or flight pattern is a response that protects you from danger by preparing your body to defend itself (fight) or to run away (flight).
 7. Tell students that the human body has many reactions to fear and stressful situations. When you feel stress, how does your body let you know? (It gives you clues that you are experiencing stress). Elicit responses such as the following:

Irritability	Cold Hands
Racing Heartbeat	Sweating
Shaking Hands	Dry Mouth
Headache	Foot Tapping
Accidents	Emotional Outbursts
Backache	Clumsy
Forgetfulness	Muscle Aches
Restlessness	Sweaty Hands
Rash	Teeth Grinding
Fatigue	Skin Problems
Upset Stomach	Shortness of Breath

8. Explain that we usually think of fear as a reaction to a situation of physical danger to ourselves. But there are other fears, which we possess, that are not so clear to us. Fortunately, when we discuss our fears with others, we often discover that we become less afraid and more able to cope.

Think-Pair-Share

9. Tell students that they will take turns sharing a fear or something that makes them nervous with a listening partner who will let them tell about something that has

caused symptoms of stress such as cold hands, shortness of breath, racing heartbeat, etc.

10. Pair each student with a partner and allow time for each student in a pair to describe to the other, something that they are afraid of.

Full Group

11. Tell students that one way to overcome a fear is to create a picture in their mind that shows them meeting “the problem” or “the fear” head-on.
 - a. This is called positive visualization. Explain that positive visualization is a helpful tool for using their thoughts and imagination to see a good outcome in a scary situation.
 - b. An example is walking into a dark room alone at night
 - Take a deep breath, and imagine yourself walking into the room and switching on the light.
 - See yourself looking around the room for a comfortable place to sit.
 - Imagine that you are humming a favorite song.
12. Remind students that when they imagine themselves coping with fear they will benefit by feeling much more relaxed.
 - a. Positive visualization can be used for anything that makes them feel afraid.
13. Have students close their eyes and think of something that they fear, using positive visualization to reduce their anxiety.
14. Conduct a “pause and relax” exercise with students to help them learn to manage fear, anxiety, and stress. Introduce the following steps to the students and tell them to use them when fear that does not signal immediate danger strikes.

Recognize that you are tense.

Take a deep breath and say, “I am breathing peacefully.”

Breathe out and say, “I am letting go of tension.”

Think, “I am relaxed.”

15. Tell students that as you describe some scary situations, they will use the “pause and relax” exercise to practice coping with fear. After you present each situation, instruct students to recognize their tension, breathe in peacefully, breathe out the tension, and think about relaxing.
 - a. You hear a sudden crash of thunder and lightning.
 - b. You have awakened from a scary dream.
 - c. You came to school without your homework.
 - d. You are lost in a cave.
 - e. It is pitch dark in your room and you hear noises.
 - f. You are walking across a high bridge.

16. Have students describe how they felt when they practiced the “pause and relax” exercise.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Learning Log

Present the following quotes to students. Ask them to select one and produce a short essay that explains the meaning of fear.

- The highway of fear is the shortest route to defeat.
- The function of fear is to warn us of danger, not to make us afraid to face it.
- Remember, you are your own doctor when it comes to curing cold feet.
- The only thing we have to fear is not doing something about the fear we have.
- Courage is not the absence of fear, but the conquest of it.

Assessment:

Teachers will observe:

1. Student’s explanation of the purpose of fear.
2. Student’s understanding that everyone has fears.
3. Student’s ability to demonstrate the relaxation techniques.