

Middle/High School Youth Activity: Building Our Emotion Management Toolbox Regulating Emotions With RULER

Video 6

Note: This youth activity connects directly to the learning from Video 6, *Regulating Emotions Using RULER*. For this reason, we suggest that your staff view the video and complete the accompanying staff activities prior to facilitating this activity.

Activity Summary: In this activity, youth will:

- Understand that helpful regulation strategies make it easier to manage emotions and meet their goals
- Brainstorm short-term and long-term strategies for emotion regulation

Materials

- A whiteboard or poster board to record ideas, paper and writing utensils, graphic organizer (attached), pre-selected video clip (optional)

Time: 20 minutes

Facilitator Directions

1. Introduce the concept of emotion regulation:

"Emotions are happening in all of us, all the time and often out of our control. What we can control is how we respond to those emotions. We can decide to keep feeling the way we feel or shift by changing the way we feel. This is called regulating or managing our emotions. Today we're going to talk about strategies to regulate our emotions in ways that help us meet our goals. Regulation strategies are something that we think (thought strategies) or do (action strategies) to shift our emotions."

2. Ask youth to think about a time when they felt a strong emotion, and how they responded (e.g. *I was angry so I yelled at my mom. I was disappointed after receiving a D on a test so I decided that I will study harder next time. I was so excited about making a new friend that I promised to hang out again tomorrow without checking with my parents.*)

Discuss how their strategy was helpful and aligned with their values or was unhelpful and kept them from reaching their goal in the situation. Allow time for youth to share with a partner(s).

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3. Explain to youth that you are about to share examples of how individuals who are experiencing intense emotions manage them using unhelpful strategies. Use one of the following options:

- Show youth a movie/TV clip where characters experience intense emotions and use unhelpful strategies that don't help the character(s) meet their goal.
- Prompt youth to get comfortable as they experience a visualization of intense emotions. Ask them to notice the emotions described and the strategies the youth uses to handle them.

Audio

- Play the audio above or say:

"You jump up startled by the loud ring of your alarm. You rush around looking for something to wear. You had so much fun staying up late last night playing video games, but now you don't think that was such a good idea. Maybe you should have spent more time getting your things ready for school. You feel scattered. Where are the pants that you wanted to wear today? There they are. You throw your books and a quick snack in your backpack. You finally rush out the door. Just in time to see your ride go past your street so you have no choice but to start walking. You glance down at your watch. There is no way you are going to make it in time. After running the entire way, you arrive aggravated and sweaty. Your school principal greets you at the door with a bright and cheery "Hello" even though you almost knocked her down. Without stopping to even say excuse me, you continue through the hall to your math class and slide into your desk just before the second bell. You give a sigh of relief, but it is short-lived. The teacher then asks everyone to clear off their desks and begins to hand out a math test. "How could I forget about today's math test?" you think to yourself. You aren't sure how you'll do on this one. You probably should have been studying last night instead of playing video games. What was that formula for that math equation again? You quickly check your notes but shove them back in your backpack as your teacher starts giving the test directions. You read each question looking for the easy ones to do first. You answer a few but become anxious because there are so many that you can not answer. You feel your blood boiling. You crinkle your test paper, throw it at the teacher's desk and exit the room slamming the door behind you."

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4. Ask students to complete the *Intense Emotions: Helpful and Unhelpful Emotion Regulation Strategies* worksheet on page 5. Print a copy of the document for each youth or display the following questions:

- What emotions or Mood Meter quadrants did you experience in the visualization?
- At what point(s) in the visualization could shifting your emotions have been helpful?
- What helpful strategies could you have used? How do you think these strategies could have changed the events of the morning?

5. Prompt youth to reflect on a situation that currently feels challenging for them. Ask for volunteers to share if they are comfortable, or share the examples below to help get them started:

- I feel anxious (**red**) when I am in a class and don't understand what we're learning
- I feel so tired (**blue**) some mornings and find it hard to focus in my first class.
- I feel angry (**red**) when I am working on a project with another student, and they are not working as hard as I am.
- I feel annoyed (**red**) when I come home and see my sibling using my stuff.

6. Begin to brainstorm together and record various emotion regulation strategies that could be used in these recurring situations. Remember short-term strategies are readily available. Long-term strategies are not and most need to be planned in advance. Use the *Emotion Regulation Tip Sheet* to help youth generate ideas.

7. Ask youth to pick a strategy that they are going to try out this week when they experience intense emotions. Ask them to create an action plan by answering the prompts below:

- What is the situation, time of day or week, or event and recurring emotion(s)?
- In this situation, I feel in the (Mood Meter quadrant or specific feeling), and it would be helpful for me to meet my goal to feel in the (Mood Meter quadrant or specific feeling).
- The strategy I'm going to try this week is _____.

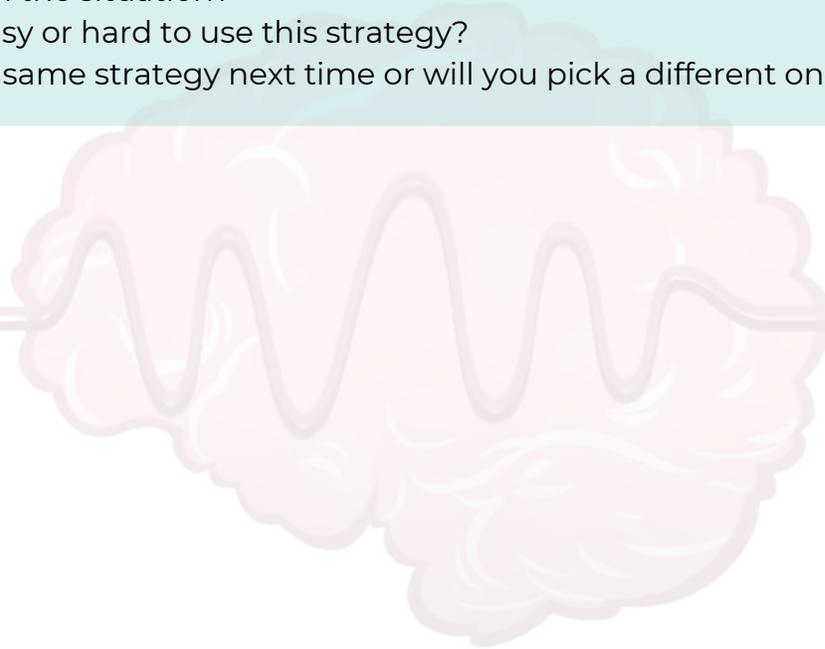
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8. Debrief: Follow up with youth within a week or so. Ask if they had the opportunity to use their strategy.

If so, use the following prompts to guide the discussion:

- What strategy did you use? How did it help you manage your emotion(s) and better meet your goal in the situation?
- Did you find it easy or hard to use this strategy?
- Will you use the same strategy next time or will you pick a different one? Why?



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Intense Emotions:
Helpful and Unhelpful Emotion Regulation Strategies

What emotions or Mood Meter quadrants did you experience in the clip or visualization?

At what point(s) in the clip or visualization could shifting your emotions have been helpful?

What helpful strategies could you have used? How do you think these strategies could have changed the events of the morning?