

Elementary Youth Activity: Building Our Strategy 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 what emotion regulation is and how managing our emotions throughout the day can support our success
- Brainstorm short-term and long-term strategies for emotion regulation

Time: 30 minutes

Materials

- Pre-selected song(s) representing the **yellow** (high pleasantness/high energy) area of the Mood Meter, whiteboard or poster board to record strategies, printed or projected Strategy Toolbox (at end of document), reading material for each student.

Facilitator Directions

1. Introduce the concept of emotion regulation:

"Emotions are happening in all of us, all the time, and are sometimes outside of our control. What we can control is how we respond to those emotions. Today we're going to talk about strategies for responding to our 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."

2. Gather youth in a circle with their reading material. Play a portion of a high pleasantness/high energy (**yellow**) song. Ask youth to move their bodies based on how the music makes them feel. They can sing, clap, and dance along to the energetic music as long as they stay safe. Circulate, and ask them how they are feeling as they move to the music. Quickly, stop the music.

3. Ask everyone to sit down in their seat and read quietly.

After a few minutes of observing students ask:

"Was it hard to try to do our quiet reading? Why do you think it was hard to keep our bodies still and our voices quiet? What feelings might have made it easier to read quietly?"

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4. Say: "It may have been challenging to move quickly from feeling high pleasantness/high energy while dancing to doing an activity that requires low energy like reading." Tell youth that there are things we can do (action strategies), like taking three deep breaths, and there are ways we can change our thinking (thought strategies), like saying to ourselves, "I can do this" to help ourselves meet the goal of reading silently. We may find other examples of when we feel an emotion but want or need to change the way we feel. Provide other examples that may be relevant to your youth or choose from the following:

- I feel nervous (**red**) every time I come to an after-school program because I don't know anyone.
- I feel so tired (**blue**) every morning that it's hard to get up and get ready for school.
- I feel angry (**red**) when I see someone trying to copy my work.
- I feel annoyed (**red**) every time I come home and see my little sister's stuff everywhere on the table.
- I feel sad (**blue**) when I want to tell my mom about the book I am reading in the library, but the sign says "No Talking."

5. Use the Strategy Toolbox (found on page 4 and 5) to highlight short-term and long-term activities to manage our emotions. Short-term strategies are readily available. Long-term strategies are not and most need to be planned in advance.

For additional information, please refer to the Emotion Regulation Tip Sheet.

6. Model a situation that you find challenging and that causes you to experience intense emotions that feel difficult to manage. Share a regulation strategy that you will use the next time you are in that situation. Prompt youth to think about times when they have felt intense emotions in the past and would like to manage their emotions in helpful ways. Using the questions and prompts below, have them write or share their plan orally with a partner.

- I feel big emotions when (situation or event).
- When this happens, I am usually in the (Mood Meter color) and feel _____.
- It would be helpful for me to be in the (Mood Meter color) to meet my goals.
- The strategy I'm going to try the next time I am in this situation is _____.

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Ask a few volunteers to share their plans with the group. An example might look like:

- I feel big emotions when I'm left out of the game.
- When this happens, I'm usually in the blue and feel lonely.
- It would be helpful for me to be in the green to meet my goals.
- The strategy I'm going to try the next time I am in this situation is to share my emotions and ask to be included in the game."

7. Say:

"These strategies are building our strategy toolbox. The tools in our toolbox can help us think about how we are feeling and what emotions might help us best meet our goals. The more tools we have in our toolbox, the easier it is to regulate our emotions in the moment."

8. Debrief: Follow up with youth within a week or so. Ask if they had the opportunity to use their plan. If so, use the following prompts to guide the discussion:

- What strategy did you use?
- 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?
- Next time, will you use the same strategy or pick a different one? Why?

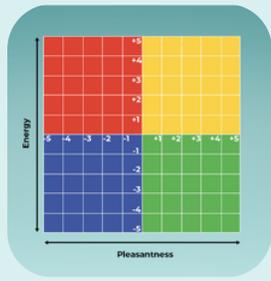
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Strategy Toolbox



Short-Term Strategies

<p>Deep Breathing</p>	
<p>Positive Self-Talk</p>	
<p>Positive Reframing</p>	
<p>Mood Meter Check-In</p>	

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Long-Term Strategies

Eating Healthy Foods	
Moving My Body	
Getting a Good Night's Sleep	
Sharing Emotions with Friends and Family and Asking For Support	
Playing or Being Creative	