



Instructor Guide

Unit 1: Lesson 3 Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors

Background Information for Facilitator:

Objectives:

- The child will understand how their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors all impact each other, especially when the child is stressed.
- The child will learn to use positive self-talk to overcome automatic negative thoughts.

Time Needed: It is flexible. You can choose to do everything in this guide, or you might select just a few parts to do with the kids each day

Materials, depending on which activities you choose:

- One copy per child of *1-3-5 Info Sheet Understanding Stress: How Your Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviors Affect Each Other*. For primary students, you can talk through these sheets as a discussion.
- White board/chalk board for *1-3-6 Brainstorm Activity to Practice Positive Self-Talk*. You may also print out this activity and let children do it as a writing exercise.
- If you want to do a formal assessment at the end, hand out one copy to each child of *1-3-7 Assessment: Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors*. For primary students, you can talk through this assessment as a discussion.
- For visual art activity, provide Play-Doh, paper plates, markers, crayons and paint.
- a copy of the following picture books to read aloud:
 - [The Feelings Book by Todd Parr](#)
 - [Jabari Jumps by Gaia Cornwall](#)
 - [Train Your Angry Dragon by Steve Herman](#)
 - [After the Fall \(How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again\) by Dan Santat](#)
- A copy of *1-3-4 Sharing Circle Script for Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors*.

Key Concept:

Your thoughts, feelings and emotions are all related. We can use positive self-talk to overcome negative automatic thoughts, and this can help us regulate our emotions and choose healthier behaviors.

Fundamental Skills or Competencies:

Self-awareness, Identifying emotions, Self-management, Stress management

Part One: Watch Video for Kids About Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors

Start by watching the *Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors Video for Kids*. After watching the video, you can move into Part Two below.

Part Two: Discussions about Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors

Essential Questions:

- When you are experiencing stress, how do your thoughts, feelings, and behavior impact each other?
- How can understanding the thoughts-feelings-behaviors cycle help you respond to stressful situations?

Introduce the topic of stress and the dynamic relationship between our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

- Intro/Hook to Engage Students

Instructor: Have you ever found yourself having the same upsetting argument with someone close to you -- maybe a parent, sibling, or friend? Picture this: As the argument starts, your body gets tense. Your mind starts to race, thinking about what the other person will say and preparing the points you are going to make. By the end, the conflict hasn't been resolved, and you're left feeling upset, misunderstood, or even angry. You wish things could have turned out differently. In a calmer moment, you wonder if you could you have handled the situation differently.

We've all experienced stressful situations in which certain thoughts and feelings seem to pop up almost automatically, and before we know it, we're saying things or acting in a way that's not helpful.

In these moments, you are experiencing a powerful dynamic that you may not have thought about before: how our thoughts, feelings, and behavior interact and feed each other.

- Hand out one copy to each student of *1-3-5 Info Sheet Understanding Stress: How Your Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviors Affect Each Other*.
- Hold a discussion about the concepts in the handout using the following teaching concepts:

Teaching Concept 1: Everyone responds to stress differently.

- Elsa from Frozen felt stress when she tried to hide her powers. Elsa felt the most stressed when she was in front of large groups of people, because that was when her powers felt the most dangerous.
- For you, a situation that could cause stress might be a math test, a fight with your friends, or worrying about a family member who is having a hard time.
- Stress comes out in many different ways. Sometimes it makes you feel sad; other times it makes you feel scared or angry. Some kids cope with stress more easily than others. Our goal is to help you learn to make the best possible decisions when you are stressed.
- How you react to stress depends on three parts: your *feelings*, your *thoughts* and your *behaviors*.

Teaching Concept 2: It's normal to feel scared or anxious when you are stressed.

- Your feelings include your emotions and physical sensations you experience. A physical sensation means something you can feel in your actual body, like a stomachache. When you are faced with stress, you are more likely to have uncomfortable feelings.
- **Scared** is when you have feelings of fear right in the moment that the scary thing is happening. Elsa felt scared when she hit her sister Anna in the head with a bolt of ice while they were playing. You might feel scared when you are taking a test and you don't know the answers to the questions.
- **Anxious** is when you feel worried about an event that is in the future or that hasn't happened yet. Elsa felt anxious before her coronation day because she was afraid that everything she touched would turn into ice, and everyone would discover her secret. You might feel anxious before going out to recess because you are worried about finding a friend who will play with you.

Teaching Concept 3: When you are stressed, your brain often tells you automatic negative thoughts that make you feel even worse.

- For Elsa, some automatic thoughts were, "Everyone will be afraid of me if they see I have snow powers."
- For you, some examples might be "I'm stupid because I don't understand this math" or "Nobody wants to play with me."
- You might find that you start to feel more and more panicked as it gets closer to the event that you fear, because your automatic thoughts are usually about failure and embarrassment.

Teaching Concept 4: Positive self-talk is a mindful choice you make to fight back against the automatic negative thoughts.

- Once you have learned to identify these scary thoughts, you can work to replace them with positive self-talk.
- You might realize that the reason you are avoiding the playground at recess is because you are thinking a yucky thought like, "Nobody likes me."
- You will feel better if you can catch yourself and replace the automatic thoughts with positive self-talk so that you can choose healthy behaviors. For example, you might try telling yourself, "I know that people do care about me and I can have fun on the playground. I'm going to go find something fun to do during recess!"

Part Three: Activity Options

*For a one-page brief summary of quick activity options, please see *1-3-3 Quick Guide to Breakout Activity Options for Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors*.

Activity Option 1: Practicing Self-Talk to Overcome Negative Thoughts.

- Children will each get a copy of *1-3-6 Brainstorm Activity to Practice Positive Self-Talk* to fill out. This will help them cope with their emotions during stressful and challenging times.
- There are several options for how to do the *Brainstorm Activity*. For non-readers, you can talk through the scenarios and come up with answers as a group. For readers, you can split the kids into small groups to work collaboratively or you can allow students to work independently on their own private worksheets. Students can also take the worksheets home to talk through the scenarios with their parents and guardians.

Activity Option 2: Hold a full group Sharing Circle to discuss Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors

- Please use the complete guided script for facilitators labeled *1-3-4 Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors Sharing Circle Script*. Allow 20-35 minutes for this activity, depending on how many rounds you complete and how large the circle is.

Activity Option 3: Read aloud and discuss a picture book about thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

- We recommend the following books that embody the themes of this lesson plan. After reading each book aloud, ask the children how they think the story relates to managing your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
 - [The Feelings Book by Todd Parr](#)
 - [Jabari Jumps by Gaia Cornwall](#)
 - [Train Your Angry Dragon by Steve Herman](#)
 - [After the Fall \(How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again\) by Dan Santat](#)

Activity Option 4: Physical activity: Engaging in bouts of intense physical activity can help kids manage the sensations of anxiety that accompany stress. Ask kids to engage in short bursts of exercise that get their heart rate up. Here are some examples:

1. Sprint as fast as you can around the gym or the playground three times. Then lie down on your stomach and notice the sensation of your heart beating all the way down in your stomach. When your heartbeat has slowed down and your breath has returned to normal, jump up and sprint around again. Notice how it feels after you finish exercising and your body regulates.
2. Play a game of Duck, Duck, Goose where each person who is “It” has to name two different emotions instead of using the words “duck”, “duck”, “goose.” For example, a child could tap each person on the head and say “calm”, “calm”, “angry” or “sad”, “sad”, excited.” Encourage kids to use as many different emotion words as possible and try not to repeat if possible.

Activity Option 5: Drama/Theater activity: Invite kids to form groups and create a skit about this week’s theme, which is managing your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Below are prompts:

- “You are a superhero who can swim around the whole ocean in one minute. One day, you have a bad panic attack in the water, and you become afraid to get back in the water. How can you overcome your fear in time to save a giant boat full of people being attacked by a sea monster?”
- “You are trapped on an island with the following characters from Inside Out: Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear and Disgust. You have to make an escape plan. Each character is only expressing their own emotion. How do you help each other feel each other’s feelings and work together to get off the island?”

Activity Option 6: Visual Art activity: Making emojis. See *1-3-8 Art Activity Option* for reference images to print out for children who need visual examples.

- Individual activity: Kids can use Play-Doh or clay to create a series of emojis that reflect the emotions they experience day-to day. They can bring their emojis home to share.
- Collaborative activity: Pass out paper plates for kids to use as faces. Let them draw or paint emojis to represent the different feelings they experience day to day. The finished paper plates can all be glued onto a large posterboard or taped to a wall in the YMCA to create a customized emotion chart that everyone can see.

Part Four: Assessment

If you want to do a formal assessment at the end, hand out one printed copy to each child of *1-3-7 Assessment: Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors*. Ask the children to do the written exercise. For primary students, you can talk through this assessment as a discussion.

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6

Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.