

Dealing with Negative Emotions

Quarter 7 • Lesson 12

Focus on Life Skills

1. *Connecting*: Do an activity about being out of control and listen to a story about negative emotions.
2. *Teaching*: Learn healthy coping strategies (Philippians 4:6–7; Psalm 62:8; Psalm 55:16–17).
3. *Responding*: Choose 1 coping strategy to practice and pray for partners.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

Optional Supplies:

- Pencils
- Memory Verse Poster
- Student Pages
- Board and chalk or large paper and marker

Teacher Devotion

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

Romans 12:2

Have you ever felt paralyzed by fear? Been consumed with anger? Cried out with self-pity? If you are like most people, your answer is probably yes. God wants to transform your mind so that you do not react in ways that are harmful to you or others. Prayerfully read the list of strategies for dealing well with negative emotions.

Breathe deeply and slowly

Squeeze and relax your muscles

Count to 10 slowly

Daydream

Listen to music

Exercise

Laugh

Talk with friends

Name your feelings

Read the Bible and pray

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you to 1–2 strategies that might help you deal with strong emotions in a healthy way. Circle those strategies. Ask God to bring these strategies to mind whenever you begin to feel strong, negative emotions. He is able to transform your mind!

Family Connection: Let your children's families know that the children will learn 10 strategies for dealing with negative emotions. Encourage them to ask the children to tell them about the strategies. Families can add other ideas for how to deal with negative emotions.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Do an activity about being out of control and listen to a story about negative emotions.

Greet the children by name as they arrive. Ask them what different emotions they felt during the week. Share about your own week and the emotions you experienced.

Have your children spread out in a cleared, open space. They should all be at least an arm's length away from other children. If you do not have enough space for that, pick 5 children to do this activity while the others cheer for them. Explain that they will spin in place 10 times and then try to walk in a straight line. Give the children time to spin and walk. Then gather the class together.

That was difficult! When you finished spinning, you probably felt like you did not have full control of your body. Negative emotions can also make you feel out of control. Today we will learn more about emotions. We will learn how to deal with difficult feelings in healthy ways. This can help us feel safer and more in control. We can also use them to help others who are hurting. Remember, feelings themselves are not bad or good, right or wrong. We cannot control the feelings we have, but we can always control how we respond to our feelings.

- **What are some feelings that are difficult to deal with?**

Children might suggest feelings such as fear, anger, sadness, and others.

Before we talk about healthy ways to deal with feelings, let's talk about unhealthy ways to deal with feelings.

- **What are some unhealthy ways that people deal with feelings?**

As the children respond, have them tell you why they think these ways of dealing with feelings are not healthy.

These are some unhealthy coping strategies:

Using drugs or alcohol. This only makes the person feel better temporarily. It does not solve his problems. Drugs and alcohol confuse a person's thinking and feelings and can lead to even more problems, such as addiction.

Ignoring feelings and pretending the feelings are not there. This makes bad feelings grow even stronger and can make a person sick.

Violence or yelling or saying unkind things. These do not solve problems and hurt other people. When people do or say unkind things in anger—even if they do not mean them—they can never take back the hurt that their words caused.

Read the following story about anger:

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. When he was angry, he would say horrible things to his uncle. One day his uncle gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper and said hurtful things, he had to hammer a nail into the fence. The first day the boy hammered 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, he learned to control his

anger. He did not yell and scream at his uncle as often. The number of nails he hammered every day became fewer and fewer. He discovered he could control his words and actions when he was angry.

Finally the day came when the boy did not lose his temper even once. He told his uncle about it, and his uncle suggested that now the boy should pull out 1 nail for each day that he was able to control his temper. Weeks passed, and the young boy was finally able to tell his uncle that all the nails were gone.

The uncle took his nephew by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, nephew, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like the scars on this fence. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It will not matter how many times you say you are sorry; the wound is still there."

The little boy then understood how powerful his angry words were. He asked his uncle to forgive him.

2. Teaching: Learn healthy coping strategies (Philippians 4:6–7; Psalm 62:8; Psalm 55:16–17).

Now let's look at some strategies for dealing with difficult feelings in a healthy way.

Share these 10 strategies and physically practice some of them with the children. This will increase the likelihood that they will use the strategies in the future.

Optional Supplies: List these 10 steps (the underlined phrases below) on the large paper or the board.

Today we will talk about how to calm down when we have upset feelings or are in difficult situations. When our feelings are very strong or out of control, we have a hard time thinking clearly. Thinking through things helps us avoid doing or saying things that we will regret later. It also helps us find solutions to our problems. Here are some things that we can do to deal with strong negative feelings.

1. Breathe deeply and slowly! Sometimes the brain does not get enough oxygen when we are upset. It needs a lot of oxygen to think clearly. Here is what we can do: Take a deep breath, counting to 3 as we breathe in. Hold our breath for the count of 3. Then, breathe out slowly for the count of 3. Repeat this 3 times or more until we feel calmer.

Practice this exercise with the children.

2. Squeeze and relax your muscles. When we are upset our muscles can become tense without our even noticing. Let's practice tightening our muscles as much as we can and then relaxing them. Let's start with the muscles in our feet and gradually move up our bodies, tightening and relaxing all of our muscles and ending with our face muscles. We should feel more relaxed when we are finished.

Practice clenching 2–3 different muscles for a count of 5 and relaxing them.

3. Count to 10 slowly. Some people find it helpful to silently count to 10, or even 100, in order to calm down before speaking, especially when they are angry. When they do this, they do not say things they will regret later.

4. **Daydream!** Imagine a pleasant, relaxing place. Or think of a good memory. Or think of something we have to look forward to. Doing these things helps calm us down.

5. **Listen to music.** Listening to music can relax us and distract us from our troubles. Sometimes we can even dance away a bad mood.

6. **Exercise.** Running, playing sports, or cleaning up can help us release some negative energy. Also, our brain sends chemicals into our bodies when we exercise that help us feel better.

7. **Laugh!** Find something to laugh about. Laughing releases chemicals into the body that stop pain and make us feel good.

Have the children practice laughing. You can start by demonstrating a silly laugh. Encourage the children to laugh too. Forced laughter quickly turns into real laughter!

8. **Talk with friends!** Talking about what we are feeling can help us feel better. Sometimes other people have ideas that can help us to solve our problems.

9. **Name your feelings.** What else could I be feeling? Sometimes we experience more than one feeling at the same time. Naming all of the feelings can help us understand ourselves better.

10. **Read the Bible and pray.** We can always talk to God about all of our feelings and ask Him to help us. Reading His Word can comfort us.

Share and discuss the following Bible verses. Read them directly from your Bible. You may want to paraphrase them to make sure the children understand the difficult words.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

*And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 4:6–7

*Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.*

Psalms 62:8

If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

*As for me, I call to God, and the LORD saves me.
Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.*

Psalms 55:16–17

You may find that you feel better after doing 1 or more of the strategies above. You may not need to do anything more. But there are some feelings, such as grief, that take more time. Doing the exercises will not make grief go away immediately.

3. Responding: Choose 1 coping strategy to practice and pray for partners.

- **What are some of the strategies we learned today for dealing with negative emotions?**

Allow your children to share until all 10 are mentioned. Remind them of any they miss: breathe in 3s, squeeze and relax your muscles, count to 10 slowly, daydream, listen to music, exercise, laugh, talk it out, name your feelings, read the Bible and pray.

Optional: If you are using the Student Page, give the students time to complete it. There is space for children to respond to the coping strategies they learned.

Divide children into pairs. Boys should be with boys and girls with girls. Have them share their answers to the following questions with their partners:

- **Think about the last week. What is a negative emotion you felt?**
- **What is 1 strategy we learned today that you will try the next time you feel that emotion?**

Give the children time to share with their partners. Then teach them this simple prayer and have them use it to pray for their partners:

God, please help _____ (name of partner) **respond calmly when she feels**
_____ (name of negative emotion). **In Jesus' name, amen.**

Close class by praying this blessing over the children:

Blessing: God cares about your feelings. May you cry out to Him when you feel sad, angry, frustrated, or scared. And may He help you respond to your emotions with calmness and control.

Lead the children in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

"Raise a Hallelujah" by Bethel Music https://youtu.be/JvXBf_dEiHU