

SEL lesson Plan: Understanding & Working with Anxiety - 55 minute period
Designed to support the 7th grade Climate Change Wildfire Unit

Essential Question from Wildfire unit:

- What can I do to prepare for wildfires and make my family safer?

Today's Learning Objectives:

- Understand the purpose & the physiological process of anxiety
- Recognize the physical sensations and emotional feelings created by anxiety
- Know & practice strategies to calm yourself when you are feeling anxiety

Classroom Set Up:

- Table groups of 4-6
- Projector & Speakers
- Document camera
- Post essential question & today's learning objectives
- Whiteboard/markers or chart paper/pens

Student Materials:

- Handout: Feelings Chart
- Handout: Graphic Organizer for anxious feelings/strategies

Intro & Framing, purpose - 3 min

- Introduce ourselves & explain that other teachers are observing in prep to teach this same lesson with their classes
- Studying Climate Science, beginning a unit on wildfires, preparing for the unit by preparing ourselves to navigate feelings that might come up.
- Share today's learning objectives

Opening Activity "hook" & personal connections: - 10-15 min

- T:, *Take a minute to notice how your body is feeling right now. What do you notice?* (heart beat is slow, fast, does any part of your body feel tight, tense, hurting, do you feel light, heavy, is your breathing slow, normal, fast....)
- Watch 3 min video on how wildfires happen: <https://youtu.be/9EprnWrMNpw>
- T: *Now, let's pause. Check in with your body again now. What do you notice? Has anything changed?* Turn & talk
 - Explain "turn and talk". *"You're going to take turns listening. One of you will be Peanut butter & jelly, jelly will share first. After you've both shared, I'm going to call on a few folks to share for their pair, so you have to really listen to what your partner says..."*
 - Describe how that video made you feel. *"The video made me feel..."*
 - Pinpoint in your body, where do you feel it? *"I notice that now my..."*
 - Share something new you learned from the video
- Call on a few students to share out
 - Encourage courageous sharing, Make sure everyone can hear, use student names to call on kids and to thank them for sharing.
 - Why watching the wildfire video and/or thinking about wildfires could cause anxiety? How would that benefit you?

Normalize feelings & Activate Prior Knowledge - 7 min

- T: *We've all lived through different parts of this experience...*
 - *It's normal and human to have a variety of emotional responses to topics like this, and to things that happen to us every day in school, at home, etc.*
 - *When we have anxiety - a fear response to something - it stops us from being able to think clearly, learn new things, remember things we already know, and come up with creative solutions to problems.*
 - *To prepare for this unit of learning and taking action about wildfires, we want to remind ourselves and practice some simple techniques we can use to help ourselves when we feel scared, anxious, or panicked.*
 - Distribute [Student Handout](#)
- T: *We know you already know a lot about anxiety. Turn to your partner and quickly, peanut butter, tell jelly what you already know about anxiety. Then Jelly, you'll tell pb anything else you already know. You already know I'm going to call on a few of you to share with all of us, so listen well so you're ready.*
- Call on a few folks. Again, use names, encourage, appreciate.
- Jot responses on board or chart paper

Content Input - 30 min

- T: *We're going to watch a short video about anxiety. The first time, we'll watch it straight through. It has A LOT of important information in it, and I want to make sure every one of you understand it all before we leave here today. So, we'll watch it a second time and stop a few times to talk about it, and you'll add information to this note taking sheet. Pass out pages 3-4 or have kids turn to page 3 in the [Student Handout](#).*
- T: *Take 1 minute to silently read through both sides.*
- 1 minute
- *After we watch, you'll have a chance to talk about it with your partner, before we talk together as a whole group.*
- Play 6 min video: <https://youtu.be/16EoZOsCJgs>
- Partner conversation - 2 min
 - What new information did you learn about anxiety?
 - (What it is, why it happens, what happens to us, what you can do to help yourself...)
- T: *Okay, now we're going to watch it a second time, and you will fill in the notetaking sheet.*
- Restart the video and stop it every few
- Practice breathing strategy
 - Share/explain and have S pick ONE to try now. Box breath, belly breathing (hand on heart, hand on belly, deep slow breath), mountain breath, finger breathing, 3-4-7 breathing,

Expand our mental model & make personal connections

2 min (40 min period) T: <i>There are so many times in life when we feel anxious. I remember my first day at a new school, and how my heart was beating really fast and my stomach felt weird as I walked into the school building. Now, I want you to think to yourself for 30 seconds - what different situations make people feel anxious? In 30 seconds, think of as many different situations as you can.</i>	6 min (55 min period) - T: <i>With your partner, brainstorm all the situations you can think of in your life when you or a friend might have an anxious reaction. This is going to go super quick!</i> 1 min In pairs - Brainstorm all the situations you can think of in your life when you or a friend might have an anxious reaction.
---	--

- T: Call on a few folks to share out.
 - T" *this happens all the time and that it is sometimes useful when there is real immediate physical danger, but most of the time there is not, it's just our ancient wiring that gets confused in our modern life.*
 - Since this stops us from being fully present, thinking and doing our best, it's good to practice a bunch of strategies to calm ourselves down.*

If time, or next day: Have students Add new information to your handout, they can also do a "Give & Get" mingle or partner swap. (Give & Get: share with a new partner and see if there are things you can each add to your notes - this is not stealing, it's sharing good ideas!! Add new ideas to your notes.)

Learn more Strategies

- T: *There are tons of strategies we can use to calm ourselves down and get through our feelings of anxiety.. We're going to practice some of them together over the next few weeks.* Based on how much time you have, point these out on their handout or teach and practice a few.
- Quick dance or running in place break? - short video for this?
- Visualize a safe and wonderful place, a place where you feel happy, safe, loved. Could be a real place or someplace in your mind. What are the sounds? What does it look like? What's the temperature? If there are other people, try to see them as clearly as possible. Then, any time you're anxious, you can close your eyes and think about that place - try to see it, hear it, feel it.
- Drink a glass of very cold water (ice water) slowly, take sips and notice how it feels going down your throat.
- Stretch! Try downward facing dog
- Count backwards from 100
- Repeat a mantra to remind yourself - *"I am safe."* or *"I am not in danger."* or *"I can get through this."* or *"live in the faith that I'll get through this, not in the fear that I won't."* or *something else that reminds you that you will be okay.*
- Make a plan and rehearse it. This is a great strategy if there's a specific event you are feeling anxious about. For instance, if you are anxious about giving a presentation to class - write it out and rehearse it 5 times. If you are anxious about telling a friend you don't want to hang out with them, write out what you want to say and say it outloud a few times to yourself or to someone you

trust. If you're anxious about an earthquake, make a "go bag" of important things (inhaler, shoes, identification, etc.) and practice how you'll stay safe or get outside with your family.

Closing Routine - Checking our understanding of Today's Learning Objectives:

- Understand the purpose & the physiological process of anxiety
- Recognize the physical sensations and emotional feelings created by anxiety
- Know & practice strategies to calm yourself when you are feeling anxiety

For each objective, ask for "Fist of 5", have kids hold up finger(s), then call on 1 kid to share what they know. T: *Now we're going to see how much we learned today. Remember our learning objectives? I'm going to say each one, and you're going to show with your fingers how well you understand it. 0=not at all, 3 = I remember one part of it, 5 = I know it so well I can teach it to someone else. Okay, let's start out with.... How well do you know your own name?*

You know what the purpose of anxiety is...

You know what happens to your body and brain when you feel anxiety....

You can recognize some of the physical sensations and emotional feelings of anxiety...

You know at least 1 strategy you can use to calm yourself down....

Resources for teachers, students, families

<https://parents.au.reachout.com/common-concerns/everyday-issues/things-to-try-work-finances-the-future/helping-your-teen-deal-with-anxiety-about-climate-change>

[Climate Change Resources - tons of ideas & info for kids & teachers](#)

[The Goldman Environmental Prize](#) - This org gives awards to people around the globe who are taking climate action in their communities, and it is inspiring and hopeful! There are usually young folks amongst the winners. I've shared some of their stories and the short videos about each person as they relate to something we're studying, as a way to make the topic real, connect kids to it, inspire them to see themselves as actors in our world, and as a way to hook them into a concrete action plan.