



**I Can Handle It... I Got It (🧠 A Social Health Story)
(4th Grade – 9-10 yrs.)
Demonstration: In Over Your Head**



STORY CONNECTION – SLIDE 5 (Approx Time: 5-10 mins)

The first thing that you need to do is to figure out how you know when you are facing challenges that are stressing you out. Or, when you feel like you are in “over your head.” At your age, you are really starting to know yourself. Being able to listen to what your body is telling you will help you to figure out when you are in “over your head.” You may feel your heart racing and your palms are getting sweaty. You may feel dizzy or nauseous – like you are going to throw up. You may feel emotional – sad, angry, or scared. You may have trouble concentrating or thinking. You may have lots of negative thoughts and feelings. You may not be able to eat or sleep or sit still. You may just want a hug.

Materials needed:

- Paper
- Pencil
- Trash can
- Worry Box/Bag with small items
- Bubbles (optional)

Preparation needed:

- Determine a “stressor” to use as an example for Write It Down and Tear It Up techniques.
- Create a Mini Worry Box to show student(s).
- Determine if you want to use actual bubbles or just pretend.

Instructions:

1. We all have experiences when we feel we are in “over our heads.” In this activity, student(s) will learn some strategies to calm themselves and feel more in control of their feelings, emotions, and the situation that is causing them stress.
2. Begin the activity by brainstorming. Ask the student(s): “What does the term “over your head” mean?”
 - Student(s) might say this means they are stressed, out of control of a situation, feeling overwhelmed, thinking that something is too much or too hard for them to accomplish, etc.
 - “Some sources put the origin of this expression at around the 1600s. Synonymous expressions include *out of one’s depth* and *in over one’s head*. This suggests that the idiom might be related to swimming in water. If a person goes too deep into the water, and the water literally is over one’s head, that person would drown if he or she didn’t know how to swim.”
(<https://writingexplained.org/idiom-dictionary/over-your-head>)

3. Next, ask student(s): “What do you do when you are feeling this way?”
 - Most student(s) have learned some form of self-regulation through schools since the pandemic. Student(s) might say breathing techniques, counting to ten, taking a break, talking to someone, etc.
4. Tell student(s) that these are all wonderful things to try when they are feeling in “over their heads” and that they are going to learn a few new techniques to add to their toolboxes.
5. The first technique is **Write It Down**.
 - Tell student(s) that sometimes writing down their worries or what is making them feel in “over their heads” allows them to release some of the stress and worry about the situation. Oftentimes, by the time they are finished writing, they are already feeling better about the situation.
6. This is a demonstration; therefore, model this technique for the student(s). Share with student(s) something that is a personal stressor (ex: preparing for a trip, someone being sick, workload, etc.) Write it down.
7. This leads to the second technique, **Tear It Up**.
 - Tear it up takes the writing down the worry to the next level. After writing down the situation, explain to student(s) that they tear it up and throw it away.
8. This is a demonstration; therefore, model this technique for the student(s). Hold up the paper you wrote the stressor on, tear it up, and throw it away. This is a visual and physical way for the student(s) to see the problem they are facing go into the garbage and out of their minds
9. The next technique is a **Mini Worry Box**.
 - Explain to student(s) that if being in “over their heads” is a regular feeling and happens often, they can create a worry box to keep in their desks. This can be any small box (empty crayon box, plastic soap box, or even a small Ziplock baggie) that student(s) can put small items into to access when they begin to see the signs that they are in “over their heads.” Items might include a stress ball, slime, picture of a pet or family, small toy, smooth rock, etc.
10. This is a demonstration; therefore, model this technique for the student(s) by having your own worry box with items that help you when you feel “over your head.”
11. The final technique to demonstrate will be **Bubble Breathing**.
 - This can be done with real bubbles or not. The point is to have student(s) pretend like they are blowing bubbles. Ask student(s) to take a nice, deep breath and release it slowly and at a steady pace as if they were blowing bubbles. This allows them to slow down, calm down, and focus on breathing rather than the event that is making them feel in “over their heads.”
12. This is a demonstration; therefore, model this technique for the student(s).
13. In closing, remind student(s) that since we are all different, we all have different ways our body reacts when we are feeling “over our heads” about a situation. The important thing is to be able recognize when this is happening and what to use from your toolbox to help you work through it. This will make their body and their brain healthy and happy.

Activity Ideas Credit: <https://thecounselingteacher.com/2019/12/6-engaging-anxiety-management-activities-for-kids.html>