



**Importance of SPECTacular Brain Health in Adolescence (🧠 A Brain Health Story)
(5th Grade – 10-11 yrs.)
Demonstration: Coping Skills are Life Skills**



STORY CONNECTION – SLIDE 17 (Approx time: 25-30 mins)

While it is easy to just blame your hormones for your emotional outbursts, that will not help you or your Emotional Health. There are lots of different ways to help your brain during these trying times. The first step is to be able to recognize how you are feeling about something may be a different from how you would normally feel – your hormonal brain tends to feel more negative emotions instead of positive ones. The next step – to avoid an adolescent temper tantrum - is to use a coping mechanism – breathe in and out slowly, count to 10, etc. – use whatever strategy works for you to help you deal with the fact that you are emotionally overreacting. You should also talk to people in your support system about the way you are feeling about things that affect your behavior. They can offer you help in trying to deal with the situation. In some cases, you may need to get help from a professional – and that is OK. Emotional issues during adolescence may trigger a disorder that you cannot handle by yourself. You need to understand that emotionally you are overreacting and you – along with help from others – need to figure out what you can do to control your hormonally challenged brain and behaviors.

Materials needed:

- Ample area for student(s) to stand up if necessary and have their own personal space.
- Coping Strategies Facilitator List (included below)
- Chart paper or poster board
- Markers
- Tape
- Funny Animal Video link:
 - <https://youtu.be/-OdZE98769M>
- Calm Music Link:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ekY8EvrZmM>

Preparation needed:

- Determine which strategies from the list provided you will demonstrate to the student(s).
 - Print, read, and practice the techniques the student(s) will do during the demonstration.
- Print out the coping strategies (1 per student, front & back to save paper) for student(s) to take with them at the end of the session.
- Label a piece of chart paper or a section of the whiteboard “Coping Strategies” to during the demonstration.
- Preview Funny Animal video and have it open in a tab if using it during activity demonstration.
- Have calm music link open in a tab if using it during activity demonstration.

Instructions:

1. This activity will focus on the emotional aspect of Brain Health. In this activity, student(s) will learn and practice several coping strategies they can use to help regulate their emotions in various situations.
2. Begin the lesson by explaining to the student(s) that everyone, adults included, must have a toolbox filled with skills to be able to handle the stress and emotions that we experience each day. Go over the following points with the student(s):
 - It is important to learn these strategies when they are calm (like now), so they know how to use them when they are upset.
 - Not every strategy will work for everyone, so it is important to have a lot of different tools.
 - What works today might not work tomorrow.
 - Different situations require different strategies.
 - Just like everything else, they will get better at using the strategies by practicing them.
 - The more fun a strategy is, the more likely they are to use it.
3. Next, tell the student(s) that they will learn and practice some coping strategies today. As you present/demonstrate the strategy, each one will be added to the "Coping Strategies" chart. This chart will stay up and serve as a reminder of the coping strategies learned today and they can use it as needed to help regulate their emotions.
4. Demonstrate as many strategies as time will allow. The strategies can also be presented over multiple sessions if time/scheduling permits.
5. In closing, remind the student(s) that they cannot simply blame their hormones for every emotional outburst they have throughout adolescence. They must learn and practice strategies that will allow them to avoid temper tantrums as they go through all the changes of adolescence. By being able to identify their emotions and use strategies to keep them under control, they will be able to keep their body and brain functioning in a healthy way. These strategies will be useful not only now, but also in the future. Have a toolbox full of helpful coping strategies is SPEctacular!

Coping Strategies Information Credit:

<https://psychcentral.com/health/coping-skills-for-kids#emotional-methods>

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/coping-skills-for-kids-4586871>

[https://www.strong4life.com/en/emotional-wellness/coping/healthy-coping-strategies-for-kids#:~:text=Listen%20to%20calming%20music.,muscles%20\(progressive%20muscle%20relaxation](https://www.strong4life.com/en/emotional-wellness/coping/healthy-coping-strategies-for-kids#:~:text=Listen%20to%20calming%20music.,muscles%20(progressive%20muscle%20relaxation)

Guided Imagery Information Credit: [https://www.strong4life.com/-](https://www.strong4life.com/-/media/Files/Strong4Life/Pages/Behavior/Coping-Skills-for-Kids-Guided-Imagery.pdf?la=en&hash=6D6C82D7F6BBBB6FDB81D32E3336071F5D5F4616)

[/media/Files/Strong4Life/Pages/Behavior/Coping-Skills-for-Kids-Guided-Imagery.pdf?la=en&hash=6D6C82D7F6BBBB6FDB81D32E3336071F5D5F4616](https://www.strong4life.com/-/media/Files/Strong4Life/Pages/Behavior/Coping-Skills-for-Kids-Guided-Imagery.pdf?la=en&hash=6D6C82D7F6BBBB6FDB81D32E3336071F5D5F4616)

Tense and Relax Information Credit: [https://www.strong4life.com/-](https://www.strong4life.com/-/media/Files/Strong4Life/Pages/Behavior/Coping-Skills-for-Kids-Progressive-Muscle-Relaxation.pdf?la=en&hash=D76E1BEA02DD0A0883441EC602D965C9EF5BB95B)

[/media/Files/Strong4Life/Pages/Behavior/Coping-Skills-for-Kids-Progressive-Muscle-Relaxation.pdf?la=en&hash=D76E1BEA02DD0A0883441EC602D965C9EF5BB95B](https://www.strong4life.com/-/media/Files/Strong4Life/Pages/Behavior/Coping-Skills-for-Kids-Progressive-Muscle-Relaxation.pdf?la=en&hash=D76E1BEA02DD0A0883441EC602D965C9EF5BB95B)

Name of Strategy	Explanation of Strategy
5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise	<p>Grounding techniques are mental exercises to help redirect thoughts away from distressing feelings. All you must do is activate your senses and count backward from 5 to identify each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 things they can hear • 4 things they can see • 3 things they can touch • 2 things they can smell • 1 thing they can taste (imagine)
Positive Self-Talk	<p>It is important for student(s) to understand that the better they are at being kind to themselves, the better they will be at being kind to others. It is easy to get extremely negative with themselves especially when they really care about what others think about them at this age. Tell the student(s) to ask themselves this question when they are mad, annoyed, frustrated, sad, etc. with themselves: "What would you say to your friend if they were feeling this way or having this problem?" This will allow the student(s) to produce a more positive and compassionate response that they can in turn, use on themselves. We tend to be much harsher on ourselves than others. Practice using the same positive self-talk on themselves that they would use on others.</p>
Guided Imagery (similar to 5-4-3-2-1)	<p>Our minds are powerful, and we can use our imagination to visualize anything. This relaxation exercise uses words, images and all five senses to help move attention away from worry and stress to a more relaxed state. Read these steps to student(s) to help them become more relaxed, calm, and ready to move through the tough emotional situation they are having:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find a comfortable place to sit and close your eyes. 2. Take a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. 3. Imagine yourself in a place where you feel safe, happy, and comfortable. This might be a favorite place you go, somewhere you have been before or somewhere you have completely made up. It is up to you. 4. Once you have picked out a place, imagine yourself there. 5. Think about every detail that makes this place special for you. 6. What do you hear? 7. What do you see? 8. What can you touch? 9. What can you smell? 10. What can you taste? 11. Take a few moments to enjoy your time in this place. 12. When it is time to leave, know that you can return here any time, wherever you are, whenever you need to feel calm. 13. Over the next few seconds, take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. Slowly open your eyes and notice how your body feels. Are your muscles relaxed? Is your mind calm?
Pursed Lip Breathing	<p>Pursed lip breathing focuses on slow and intentional breathing. Here is how to do it:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inhale slowly through your nose for 2 seconds, filling your belly and lungs with air. 2. Purse (or pucker) your lips, as if you are blowing out a candle or cooling off hot food. 3. Slowly let the air out through your pursed lips for 4 seconds. 4. Repeat for as long as you need, multiple times throughout the day, if it is helpful.

Rainbow Breathing	Rainbow breathing is exactly as it sounds: You focus on the colors of the rainbow by looking at various objects around you as you breathe deeply (“red apple,” “orange cup,” “yellow banana,” etc.).
Pizza Breathing	Ask student(s) to take a deep breath in like they are smelling a delicious slice of hot cheesy pizza, then have them exhale and blow on the pizza like they are cooling it down.
Creative Expression	Activities such as drawing, painting, coloring, or playing an instrument can be very calming and help regulate emotions.
Calm Music	Calm and relaxing music can also help student(s) relax and refocus when emotions are running high. Calm Music Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ekY8EvrZmM
Exercise	Exercise can be a wonderful way for student(s) to get out excess energy when they are nervous and to boost their mood when they are down. Strength building exercises like lifting weights and aerobic exercises like running or biking can be excellent ways to help student(s) regulate their emotions. Encourage student(s) to turn to physical activities when they are struggling with difficult emotions or situations. Eventually, going for a walk or a run will become a common—and healthy—way for them to cope with the challenges they face.
Funny Videos	Laughing is an effective way to take a mental break from problems. Watching a funny animal video, a hilarious cartoon, or something they captured on video could be a wonderful way to help student(s) feel better. Student(s) can even create their own funny videos. Funny animal video link: : https://youtu.be/-OdZE98769M
Tense and Relax	Stress and emotions can cause our muscles to be tense and tight. Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is a relaxation exercise that helps us calm our bodies and minds by slowly and progressively tensing and relaxing our muscles, one group at a time. Follow these steps with the students to demonstrate “Tense and Relax” coping strategy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sit in a comfortable, relaxed position. 2. Take a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. 3. Begin tightening and releasing one muscle group at a time: Inhale as you tighten. Hold for 5 seconds. Exhale as you relax. 4. Face (scrunch up your nose and mouth). 5. Shoulders (lift your shoulders up as if you’re trying to make them touch your ears). 6. Arms 7. Fists (pretend you’re squeezing an orange or lemon). 8. Stomach (pull your belly button toward your back). 9. Legs and thighs. 10. Feet and toes (imagine that your feet are in sand or mud). 11. Now, take several deep breaths and notice how loose and relaxed your body has become. If there is any remaining tension in your body, tense and relax those muscles, while breathing in and out.