



# Coping, Resiliency, and Stress

**THREE WEEKS OF EASY ACTIVITIES FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS  
TO PRATICE MENTAL HEALTH SKILLS WITHIN THEIR CLASSROOMS.**

Week 1: Healthy Coping Strategies

Week 2: Resiliency

Week 3: Practice Self-Love and a Positive Mindset

## INTRODUCTION

- Resilient students can recover from stressors through healthy coping mechanisms such as: problem solving, root cause analysis, and benefit finding. Social withdrawal, aggression, self-harm and substance use are signs of negative coping strategies which ultimately cause harm to the student and their social network.
- Students (and staff) have experienced increased levels of stress due to a loss of routine and limited social interactions during the pandemic. Resulting in different mental health concerns including depression, increased anxiety, and attention difficulties.
- By helping students to develop healthy coping mechanisms we help build their resiliency. More resilient students will be able to work through the life's challenges in a healthy and safe way. These skills are more important than ever following pandemic safety measures.

## KEY POINTS

- Week 1: Healthy coping. Have you ever had a student lash out, or refuse to participate? These are both signs of negative coping strategies. When a person is stressed their stress response kicks in causing them to "fight or flight". Over time maladaptive coping mechanisms can lead to relationship break down and increased risk behaviours. We all have stressors in our lives which is why students need to learn how to safely handle challenges. Healthy coping strategies include: problem solving (what can be done now to fix the problem?), root cause analysis (what caused this to happen so I can stop it from happening again?), and benefit finding (I can't change this, but it isn't all bad). Turn challenging moments into constructive ones by walking your students through these three strategies. You can make it age appropriate and fun through activities such as: drawing a picture, reflective journaling, and matching emotions to songs.
- Week 2: Resiliency is healthy coping strategies in action. When students know how to handle their challenges, they will build the skill set to handle future concerns. Help students to recognize that we all face challenges, but our challenges don't define us, and they can be overcome. Practice a daily moment of gratitude to help students recognize the positive things in their lives every day.
- Week 3: A positive mindset goes a long way. Did you know that in addition to building resiliency through a healthy coping mechanism a positive mindset has been shown to decrease instances of depression, decrease the sensation of distress and pain, and increase resistance to illness! But building a positive mindset is tricky, especially when you have been through a lot. You can build a positive mindset into your classroom by:
  - Helping students visualize positive outcomes to scenarios
  - Eliminate negative talk
  - Help your students recognize negative thought patterns and replace them with a positive thought
  - Be your student's biggest fan and model positivity

## Weekly Announcements (Mental Health Monday)

### Week One Announcement:

It is a new month, and there is a new mental health theme! This month we are focusing on coping, resiliency, and positive thinking. Think of the last time you were really mad. What did you do? What do you wish you did instead? This week we are focusing on coping strategies. Coping strategies help us feel better when we are having a hard time.

#### Activities for Healthy Coping Strategies:

- See and Say How You Feel, helps students identify their feelings and learn to express them. It also teaches students that everyone experiences things differently and that is ok! [Grades 5-8]
- Take Five Breathing, teach students this simple method to help them cope with feelings of stress and anxiety. Appropriate for all ages this activity takes 2 – 5 minutes.
- Let Go and Stretch, a series of three simple stretches that help students connect back to their bodies and surroundings during moments of stress or classroom transition (changing subjects, from learning to nutrition break etc). Suitable for all ages with adaptations.



### Book Recommendation

The Way I Feel by Janan Cain

## Week Two Announcement:

Time for a mental health moment! Are you feeling sad, anxious, or even a little stressed? Don't worry there are lots of things you can do to help you feel better! Why not get up and stretch? Or draw a picture of something or someone that makes you happy? Practice these skills so you can feel better in no time!

### Activities for Resiliency:

- Stress Buster Bulletin Board helps students with support seeking skills. Strong relationships are a protective factor against negative coping strategies. Appropriate for junior and intermediate levels.
- Calming Spaces/Havens, sometimes a student just needs some space away from others to process a challenge they are going through. Knowing when to take a step back is an important resiliency skill. Appropriate for all elementary grades.
- Try, Try Again, teach students to keep going even when they want to give up with this simple activity. Appropriate for all elementary grades.



### Book Recommendation

A Friend for Henry by Jenn Bailey





## Week Three Announcement:

Time for a mental health moment! What are you grateful for today? Did you notice all the positive things around you? Take a moment to choose three things to be grateful for today and write them down for a rainy day.

### Activities for Practicing Self-Love and a Positive Mindset:

- Inspirational Snowball Fight, a fun way for students to send each other positive messages. 5 min activity suitable for primary and junior grades.
- Adjectives About Me, students describe positive traits about themselves with help from their peers. Fostering self love and acceptance. Suitable for all ages.
- The Book of Gratitude, Teach students to notice positive elements in their day and shift their mindset towards optimism. 5 – 10 minute activity suitable for all ages.



### Book Recommendation

Tomorrow I'll be Brave by Jessica Hische

# References

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