
Teaching Our Students to Cope: K-8 Classroom Lessons

— Laura Smestad, MA, LMHC, NCC, NCSC —

Why should we teach coping skills to our students?

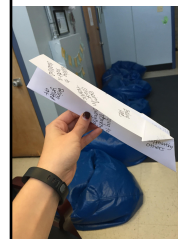
- Reduction in counselor caseload
- Students acquire skills to handle negative situations
- SEL Competencies
- ASCA standards

ASCA National Standards

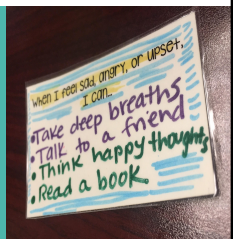
ASCA National Standards for personal/social development guide school counseling programs to provide the foundation for personal and social growth as students progress through school and into adulthood.

- Standard B: Students will make decisions, set goals and take necessary action to achieve goals.
 - PS:B1.4 Develop effective coping skills for dealing with problems
- Standard C: Students will understand safety and survival skills.
 - PS:C1.9 Learn how to cope with peer pressure
 - PS:C1.10 Learn techniques for managing stress and conflict
 - PS:C1.11 Learn coping skills for managing life event

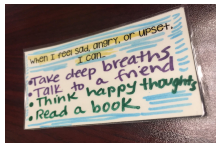
Coping Skills Classroom Lessons



- #1 Coping Skills Cards
- #2 Check Your Engine
- #3 Coping With Stress
- #4 Yoga For Stress
- #5 Calm Down Cube



Lesson #1 Coping Skills Cards



- Begin by reviewing previous coping skills lessons or defining coping skills
- Allow students to share examples of when they might need to use a coping skill
- Explain that the students will be making something to help them use their coping skills at school, and pass out coping skills cards
- Tell the class that each student will write 4 coping skills on the front of the cards that can be used at school

Lesson #1 Coping Skills Cards (continued)

- Once students have written down their coping skills, they will draw or write something on the back of the card that will make them feel better if they are upset (quote, picture, joke, etc.)

"YOU'RE BRAVER THAN YOU BELIEVE, STRONGER THAN YOU SEEM, AND SMARTER THAN YOU THINK."

"EVERY DAY MAY NOT BE GOOD, BUT THERE IS SOMETHING GOOD IN EVERY DAY."

"MISTAKES ARE PROOF THAT YOU ARE TRYING."

"DON'T EVER LET ANYONE DULL YOUR SPARKLE."

Lesson #1 Coping Skills Cards (continued)

- Give students the opportunity to share their cards with the class
- Process the activity
- Explain that students will keep these cards in their desks for the remainder of the school year (I laminate my students' cards)

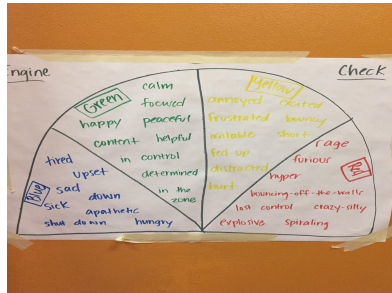
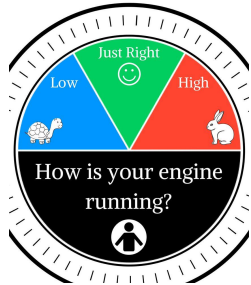
Lesson #2 Check Your Engine



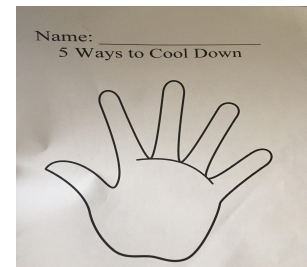
Lester is a Soda Pop Head! He has a hard time controlling his anger, until his dad figures out how help him. This book takes an empathetic, yet powerful look at anger management in a fun way!

Lesson #2 Check Your Engine (continued)

Check your Engine



Lesson #2 Check Your Engine (continued)

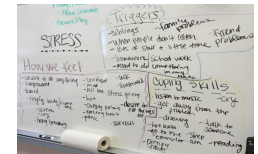


- Learn about emotions and how to regulate them (Soda Pop)
- Learn how to gauge where they are (Check Your Engine)
- Learn which coping skills work for them to bring them back to green (5 ways to cool down)

Lesson #2 Check Your Engine

- Read Soda Pop book to class
 - Discuss emotions and how Lester responds
- Pass out paper plates to class
 - Give art supplies (Red, green, yellow, blue)
 - Let class make engines
 - Give examples of what sends students to red, green, yellow, blue (student led)
- Pass out cool down worksheet
 - Write down 5 ways students can calm down (individualized)
 - Can be used as HW
 - Extension of lesson with teachers

Lesson #3 Stress and Coping Skills



- Begin lesson by triggering a stress response in students (i.e. "Before I start my lesson today, Mrs. Jones wanted me to remind you that your research papers are due by the end of the day tomorrow.")
- Write the word 'stress' on the board, and ask the students to tell you how they feel physically in that moment (i.e. racing heart, sweaty palms, stomach churning); write their responses on the board, and label them 'How We Feel...'

Lesson #3 Stress and Coping Skills (continued)

- Write the word 'triggers' on the board, and ask the class to tell you the things that cause them to experience stress
- Write 'coping skills' on the board, and let students share the things they do to cope with stress
- Explain that you will be teaching them 2 more coping skills they can use when stressed

Lesson #3 Stress and Coping Skills (continued)

- Paper Airplane Activity:
 - Pass out blank pieces of paper to students, and instruct them to write down anything that makes them feel stressed out (i.e. too much homework, parents fighting, etc.)
 - Once students are done, they will fold their papers into paper airplanes and throw them into a trash can
- Guided Meditation:
 - Allow students to sit or lie on the floor, and read "The Big White House" meditation

Lesson #4 Yoga for Stress

yoga education supports brain-based learning by teaching skills and encouraging thought processes that promote learning in the brain

Lesson #4 Yoga for Stress (continued)

- Yoga increases readiness to learn
 - Yoga enriches the brain
 - Yoga creates new brain cells
 - Yoga combats stress
 - Controls physical and emotional feelings of being stressed
 - Increases self-awareness, attentiveness, and emotion regulation
 - Teaches students how to use their body to help them calm down
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Let's try it out

Story:

- Today we are going to explore the jungles of Africa.
- Put on your hiking boots, your backpack, a sun hat, binoculars.
- Don't forget your camera! Walk through the jungle, pushing the thick foliage out of the way. Squish through a swamp. There you find a frog (Frog Pose).
- As you squish your way out of the swamp you notice a giraffe. Creep through the tall grasses, pushing the tall blades aside. You see a cobra (Cobra Pose). Tiptoe away from the cobra to the trees (Tree Pose) in the jungle forest.

Let's try it out

Story:

- You use your binoculars to spy on the beautiful butterflies (Butterfly Pose) fluttering high in the sky above the tall branches.
- Take out your camera and take some final pictures in the jungle so we can have a lasting memory of our amazing trip. Squish back through the swamp to return to your camp. Take off your gear, drink some water, and get in your hammock for a rest.
- Joy breath
- Meditation

Yoga Tips

- MC Yogi
 - MC YOGI blends his love & knowledge of yoga culture with hip hop, electronic and reggae music
- Do Yoga with me
 - Free online yoga videos
- Cosmic Kids Yoga
 - You tube videos
- Go Noodle
 - Hundreds of video that activate kids bodies and brains
- Smiling Mind (meditation app)

Lesson #5 Calm Down Cube



- Begin by reading the book *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain
- Explain that sometimes we have feelings we don't like, and have students name a few, like sad, mad, and scared

Lesson #5 Calm Down Cube (continued)

- Show the “Calm Down Cube,” and tell the class that they will have a special cube in their classroom to help students find ways to make themselves feel better
- Tell the class that once they have permission from their teacher, students can roll the cube to find something they can do to calm down and feel better
- Go through each picture on the blocks and explain the meaning

Strategies to Get Time in the Classroom as School Counselors

- Ideas for scheduling classroom guidance lessons
 - Advocating for time in the classroom
 - Cross-curriculum lessons
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Reinforcing Lessons in Individual Sessions

- Complimentary activities
- Drawing on lessons for session content
- Coping skills to handle situations outside of child’s control

Q & A

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