

Executive Function Skills: Managing Frustration and Modulating Emotion

Struggles with Managing Frustration:

- Difficult to communicate their feelings, wants, and needs
- Limited ability to identify different emotions
- Trouble understanding and reading the emotions and perspective of others
- Sensory struggles can impact self-management
- Overwhelmed by emotions
- Focusing on one feeling which excluding others (Smith-Myles, 2016) – they can be hijacked by one emotion
- Shifting from or between emotions

Struggles Modulating Emotion:

- Regulating emotions and behaviors to . . .
 - Match events
 - Match cultural expectations
 - Match the social expectations of the situation or environment
- Calming oneself
- Remaining calm
- Identification of a strategy to manage emotion (positive or negative emotions)
- Difficulty distinguishing between minor and major offenses or events

Common yet **INEFFECTIVE** Coping skills for students with Autism and or Executive Dysfunction:

- Withdrawal or self-isolation (elopement)
- Self-injurious behavior – hitting self, biting self, hitting other objects
- Self-stimulating behavior – spinning, flapping, pacing, rocking etc . . .
- Vocalizations – humming, self-talk, echolalia of preferred sounds or lines from a movie, other random sounds
- Obsession over preferred or favored objects
- “Excessive avoidance or intense seeking of a particular sensory experience” (Rinaldi, nd).

Teach students to identify how they feel

- Teach students to identify feelings – teach emotional vocabulary
 - For younger students start with 2 – happy/sad, hot/cold, tired/excited
 - The add different emotions and categorize
- Play videos or songs and talk about how they make the child feel
- Play clips from movies and talk with the students about how the characters feel
 - Pause and highlight facial expressions, the reactions of other characters, body language: (some samples include)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZAF75hwPUQ>
 - [Anger and Disgust clip from Inside Out](#)
 - [Sadness from Inside Out](#)
- Incorporate areas of interest “specialist subjects” into the lesson

- Catch and target talk different emotions during the day, with the child and other family members as well as with others in the community
- Reward and reinforce when your child identifies and/or labels their feelings and emotions
- Work with the student to identify how their body feels with the different emotions and feelings
 - Understand and identify when these feelings and emotions begin
 - Understanding when these emotions intensify
 - Identify situations that trigger these different emotions

Then . . .

- Work with the student to identify how their body feels with the different emotions and feelings
 - Understand and identify when these feelings and emotions begin
 - Understanding when these emotions intensify
 - Identify situations that trigger these different emotions
- Identify coping strategies for the different emotions
 - Make this visual
 - Create with the child, incorporating their ideas and interests
 - Use lists or visuals of different coping strategies to prime or prompt ideas
 - Share your list of coping strategies with your child

Teach Deep/ Calming Breathing

- “Incorporate breathing techniques into the regular classroom routine as a preventative measure in controlling behavior as well as to help calm the student whose nervous system has become charged up” (Forbes, 2012).
- Hobermann Sphere: Have students slowly inhale while you slowly expand the Hoberman sphere and then exhale as you slowly shrink the sphere back to its original size. This is also a great way to demonstrate the expansion of the lungs.
- Back to Back: Have students sit on the floor back to back. One student begins by inhaling deeply. The other partner should feel the expansion in their partner’s back as they breathe deeply. Take turns back and forth.
- Objects on the stomach: Have students place a small stuffed animal or object on their stomachs. As they breathe deeply, they should feel the stuffed animals or objects rise and then fall when they exhale. For younger students, you can tell them their job is to rock the stuffed animal to sleep using the rise and fall of their stomachs.
- Pinwheels: Have students practice deeply inhaling and then using the exhale to control the speed of the pinwheel.
- Flower and candle breathing: smell the flower, blow out the candle

Incorporate Movement:

- For some children, repetitive motor movements can be key in helping with regulation. Movements that are patterned, rhythmic and repetitive settle and activate the brain (Forbes 2012).
- John Ratey, *Spark-The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, stated “Exercise is like taking a little bit of Prozac and a little bit of Ritalin because, like the drugs, exercise elevates the same neurotransmitters.”
 - When you exercise at the cellular level, the brain is drenched with serotonin, glutamate, norepinephrine, dopamine and growth hormones, all wielding a powerful influence something like Miracle-Gro for the brain.”

- Methods to incorporate movement:
 - Quiet and calming brain breaks
 - Break Break Cards individual small group and/or whole group
 - Minds in Motion methodologies
 - Yoga
 - Online Resources for movement
 - Move to Learn
 - [Cosmic Kids Yoga](#)
 - [Adventuretofitness.com](#)
 - [Fit Factor Kids – YouTube workouts](#)
 - [Zumba Fitness Kids](#) *(more difficult and faster moves)
 - <http://www.healthetips.com/jam-program.php> - Jam School Program (1 minute videos)
 - <http://5-a-day.tv/> (subscription required)
 - Gonoodle.com
 - Apps:
 - Super Stretch Yoga – (free) super hero stretching and yoga
 - Jump Froggy Jump – (free) – exercises that coordinate with movements between the student and the iPad which creates an interactive game Yuvi
 - Story Aerobics – (free version = 1 episode), \$7.99 all episodes and reinforcement. This app creates exercises to go along with different stories. Students can earn virtual stickers for completing episodes which can build to a larger reward.
 - NFL Play 60 – (free) -exercise while collecting coins which allow players to unlock other characters
 - MotionMaze – (free) - this is a puzzle game where you help the captain find the hidden treasure with different exercises
 - Kids Yogaverse: I am Love - \$3.99

Links and Resources for teaching Emotion

- [Teaching emotions to students with autism/aspergers](#)
- [Happy or Sad? Emotion flash card quiz for children with ASD](#)
- [Learning Time Fun You Tube video to teach emotions](#) (6 min)
- [Sesame Street Name that Emotion YouTube](#)
- [Kids Vocabulary for Feelings Video](#)
- [Feelings and Mood](#)
- [Controlling Emotions](#)
- [The Feelings Song](#)
- [Emotions Bingo Video, Emotions Bingo Card](#)
- [Free emotion flash cards with activities](#) – from Super Simple Learning
- [Free emotion flash cards](#) – free photographs – from Have Fun Teaching
- [Teaching Feelings and Emotions](#) - free printable flashcards and posters characters
- [Robot emotion flash cards](#) – free
- [Emoji emotion flash cards](#) - free
- [Conscious Discipline How do you feel? Chart](#)
- [Lego Faces Feeling Chart](#)

- [Do2 Learn Emotions color wheel and activities](#)
- [Do 2 Learn Emotions Check in/Check out](#)

Resources to Teach Coping and Calming Skills

Apps to Assist with Managing Emotion and Frustration

- [Nag](#) – Free, set alerts and repeating reminders
- [Fluid 2](#) – Free – Turns the iPad into a pond, can relax with the water, make wishes, change water color etc . . .
- [Stop Think Breathe](#) – Free –
- [Breathing Bubbles](#): Free – gage emotion, release a worry or receive a joy
- [Calm](#) -
- [Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame Street](#) –
- [Breath Pacer](#)- Free
- [Guided Breathing with Jacob the Frog](#) - \$.99
- [Relax Melodies](#) – Free
- [Sand Draw](#) – Free
- [Gloop](#) – Free
- [Autism 5-Point Scale](#) – Free
- [Autism 5Positive Penguins](#) - \$.99 - Positive Penguins app is a resilience-building app for all children. Added a simple 5-minute guided meditation for children to learn to sit, relax and let go of the thoughts as they come into their heads.

References:

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- Autism Speaks. (2012). Challenging Behaviors Tool Kit. Retrieved 3/2/2017 from: http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/challenging_behaviors_tool_kit.pdf
- Self-Regulation One Breath at a Time - <https://themindfulclassroom.wordpress.com/category/deep-breathing/>
- Forbes, H. (2012). Help for Billy. Boulder, Colorado: Beyond Consequences Institute, LLC.