



What to do about worry

In this lesson, pupils learn how to identify worry and actions that a person can take if they feel worried.



Recommended age group

10-11 (Year 6)

Learning objectives

In this lesson we are learning how to identify worry and actions that a person can take if they feel worried.

Learning outcomes

Pupils can:

- identify what worry might feel or look like
- describe actions that a person can take if they are worried
- decide which actions might be more or less effective in dealing with worry

Preparation

Before delivering the lesson:

- watch the video on slide 8
- read through the Rise Above classroom tips. Worry could be a particularly sensitive subject for pupils who often experience feeling worried or nervous, so make sure clear classroom guidelines are set.

Resources

- A piece of scrap A4 paper for each group/table
- A large piece of A3 paper for each group/table

Timing

45 minutes - 1 hour approximately

Key vocabulary

Worry, nervous, emotions, relaxation, resilience, managing, support, communication.



Lesson stimulus (3-4 mins)

Look at the two scenarios below.

1. It is the night before Sean's birthday. He is having a party and all his friends are coming!
2. Later today, Zara has a swimming competition. Zara's coach says that she and her team should win the relay race

What is similar about how these people could be feeling?

What is different about how these people could be feeling?

When discussing answers with the class, emphasize that both of these scenarios could cause positive emotions (like excitement) or negative emotions (like worry). Explore the difference between excitement and nerves/worry; reassure pupils that sometimes feeling nervous, worried or stressed is perfectly normal and this lesson will help them know how to spot the signs of worry, learn some skills they can use and know when to seek support.

Baseline assessment



How do you feel? (3-4 mins)

Show pupils the statements A-C and ask them to rate their confidence in each using a scale from 0-10 (0 = not confident, 10 = extremely confident). There are lots of ways you might do this activity. Pupils could respond to the statements individually by writing their three numbers down on paper, or verbally by discussing their feelings in pairs/groups. Alternatively, you could ask pupils to reflect silently, before holding up the relevant number of fingers in response to each statement.

How confident are you in:

- A. identifying worry? Including what it looks and feels like
- B. describing actions a person can take if they are worried?
- C. deciding which actions might be more or less effective in dealing with worry?





Core activity 1



All scrunched-up (15 mins)

Arrange pupils in small groups (four in a group works best) and give them an A4 piece of scrap paper. Using slide 4, tell pupils to draw a stick figure and imagine that this is a Year 6 pupil who has just moved up from Year 5 (or a pupil who is new to Year 7 if you are closer to the end of the school year). Pupils may want to give their stick figure a name and list three things they like doing.

Ask pupils to pass their figure around the group and as they pass it, say one thing that the pupil might be nervous or worried about in the year ahead, e.g. performing in a school play, doing a presentation in class. Each time pupils pass the figure on, they can scrunch it up a little bit (being careful not to tear it). They should keep passing it on and giving examples until it is a tightly scrunched-up ball.

Take some ideas from each group on what could be worrying the pupil and write these up on the board. Allocate one idea for each group to focus on.

Ask pupils to place their scrunched-up ball in the middle of a big piece of paper and write 'Thoughts', 'Feelings', 'Physical signs', 'Actions (or behaviours)' around the ball. Using their allocated example, pupils should consider the questions on slides 5 and 6.

Thoughts: What might the Year 6 pupil be thinking?

For example, will the work be harder or different to how it was in Year 5? Will they still have the same friends? What will the new teacher be like? Perhaps, they're excited and can't wait to get started! Or perhaps, they're thinking 'What if...?'

Feelings: What feelings might the Year 6 pupil have?

Think about positive and negative feelings that might be linked. *For example, excited, scared, hopeful, nervous, frozen, angry, restless, numb or empty.*

Physical signs: Where might the Year 6 pupil feel the worry in their body? What physical signs of worry might be seen? *For example, worry might be felt in the Year 6 pupil's stomach or tummy, chest, head or throat. Physical*

signs of worry might include a faster heartbeat, dry mouth, sweaty palms, fidgeting or difficulty concentrating.

Actions (or behaviours): How might the Year 6 pupil behave or act as a result of these thoughts, feelings and physical signs? *For example, they might be especially quiet or especially loud. They might seem distant or distracted, they might avoid situations or people that worry them or seek lots of reassurance from those around them.*

Ask pupils to make a list of the different signs of worry/nerves under each of the titles around the scrunched-up ball. Note, there is no incorrect answer.

Physical challenge: Ask pupils to scrunch themselves up into a ball on their seats before thinking about how it feels to be scrunched up. Next, tell pupils to totally relax their body (you may want to name some different body parts to help them with this). How do they feel now? Can they compare the feeling of being scrunched up and being relaxed?





Questions for discussion

All

Which of the four areas might be the strongest sign of worry and why?

This may depend from person to person but often worry can show up strongly in physical signs. A person might try to pretend they are not worried but sometimes their bodies and their actions let them know.

Why can it sometimes be difficult to tell if people are worried/nervous?

Sometimes people get worried about telling someone they are worried! This can be because they don't think

they should be worried, they feel shy, they don't want anyone to worry about them or they don't want to get themselves or someone else into trouble. Reassure pupils that everyone feels worried at times, it's a very normal feeling and it is always good to talk to someone you trust if you feel worried.

Further challenge

Do you think worries can ever be helpful? Explain your thinking.

This question can help pupils think about the fact that worries can have a purpose – sometimes, if we can do something about a worry, then the worry will encourage us to act and that can be a good thing.

Core activity 2



Un-scrunch me! (20 mins)

Tell pupils that in their groups, they are going to help the Year 6 pupil to un-scrunch and to deal with their worries. But first they need to come up with ideas! In their groups, can they think of any actions that could help the Year 6 pupil to 'un-scrunch' or feel less worried? Each group should note down their ideas on a large piece of paper.

Share the video on slide 8 and advise pupils to look out for any further actions that could help the Year 6 pupil to deal with their worries.

As a class, ask pupils to list any ideas mentioned in the video. They should continue to add these ideas to their piece of paper.

If pupils need further ideas, share the list on slide 9:

- Writing worries down: *Some people find this can get worries out of their head and onto paper. This could be done with a diary, with worry dolls, or with a worry box if you have one in the classroom*
- Speaking to someone trusted about worries: *Sometimes, by just speaking about worries, it can make them feel less scary and sometimes other people can help with the things you are worried about*

- Doing something about it (if possible!): *For example, if the worry is about forgetting homework, then an action could be to write a reminder*
- Scrunching up and releasing: *A bit like the ball scrunch activity pupils did earlier in the lesson, tensing and releasing different parts of the body can help to focus on the body instead of thoughts or feelings that might be causing worry*
- Being active (for example, running in the playground): *Again, this can help to shift the focus from thoughts and feelings*
- Learning something new (for example, getting lost in a book or starting a new club at school)
- Doing a favourite hobby
- Creating (for example, doing a piece of art, crafts or making a drama)

Once more, pupils can pass the scrunched-up ball, representing the Year 6 pupil, around their group. When a pupil gets the ball, they should pick an action from their piece of paper and read it out loud. As they do this they can un-scrunch the ball a little.



Questions for discussion

All

How might the Year 6 pupil feel now they are un-scrunched?

For example, relieved, confident, happy and calm.

Did you learn any new ideas a young person could use to deal with worry?

Further challenge

Which ideas were the most helpful for un-scrunching and why?

Do you think the person would have been able to un-scrunch on their own? Explain your answer.

Encourage pupils to explore both sides. Sometimes a person can have strategies to get rid of worry on their own and that can be really helpful. But there are also times when a person needs others to help them with their worries.

Optional relaxation activities

Explain to pupils that there are things a person can do even when they are not feeling worried to help them be better able to deal with problems and worries when they happen.

Ask pupils to try out some of the relaxation activities below and reflect on how they feel before and after.

These activities could be done as a whole class or alternatively, you could have pupils try out the different activities in pairs or small groups, feeding back on their favourite.

Note that these activities are also available as a print-out PDF.

Golden sand

Close your eyes and slowly imagine your body filling up with golden sand.

You might want to think about each part of the body in turn, starting from your toes and working all the way up to your head.

Un-scrunching

Curl up as tight as you can and hold!

Then completely let go and relax.

Repeat 3-5 times.

Petal breathing

Look at your hand. Imagine it is a flower and your fingers are the petals.

As you breathe in, close the petals so they touch and as you breathe out open the petals as wide as you can. Repeat 20-30 times.

Imagination

Use your imagination to create a place of total relaxation!

You might want to use paper or pens or words to create a calm, relaxing place.



Plenary



Advice station: (5 mins)

Pick one pupil scenario. What advice would you give to help the pupil with their worry?

1. Khairah has got a test coming up at school. She is feeling nervous and finding it hard to concentrate
2. Lauren has trouble speaking up in front of the class. She finds it hard to breathe and always thinks she's going to mess it up
3. James' cousin is moving house and James is worried that the move will affect their friendship. He thinks about it loads, especially at night time



Assessment for learning: (3-4 mins)

Show pupils the statements A-C from the initial assessment and ask them to rate their confidence in each using a scale from 0-10 (0 = not confident, 10= extremely confident) or whichever response method was used in the initial activity. It is an opportunity for pupils to reflect on what they have learnt in the lesson.

How confident are you in:

- A. identifying worry? Including what it looks and feels like
- B. describing actions a person can take if they are worried?
- C. deciding which actions might be more or less effective at dealing with worry?

Share slide 14 with pupils and remind them that everybody feels worried or nervous at times. It is always good to try out the different actions they have learned in the lesson, but if worries get too much it is important that they speak to a trusted adult and get some more help.

Explain to pupils that they can also speak to a trusted adult about making an appointment with the GP to get further support with worry, particularly if they are affected by it regularly. There are also lots of organisations that can give support, such as [Childline](#).

Extended learning projects

1. Class un-scrunching! Come up with a list of things that might make a Year 6 class feel 'scrunch-ed-up'. Then come up with relaxation images, positive words and actions or breathing activities that the whole class can do. Create a display and that can be used throughout the year.
2. Create a poem for someone to read to work through a time when they are feeling uneasy.
3. Complete The worry tree at home, as a personal reflection task. You could also use The worry tree to form a classroom display to remind pupils of this strategy for addressing worries. Note that pupils should not be encouraged to publicise their worries or add them to the class display. The Worry tree is available as a print-out PDF.