

Character and Life Skills: Self-Control

SEL Focus: Self-Management

Lesson Title: How Big Is My Problem?

Grade Level: 3-5



Project and Purpose

Students design a poster to illustrate levels of difficulty for problems and determine the appropriate way to manage their response/reaction to each.

Essential Question

What are some ways to manage our responses and reactions to daily problems and challenges?

Materials

- Example of **How Big Is My Problem?** poster with five categories of problems with a visual representation to the right:
 - Gigantic: blue whale
 - Big: elephant
 - Medium: buffalo
 - Small: dog
 - No Big Whoop: chipmunk

Teachers should consider units of study for other visual representations, i.e. birds, land forms, machines, insects, reptiles, dinosaurs, anime, plants/trees, etc.

- Poster sized paper
- Art Supplies
- **Challenges/problems:** print and cut out

Introduction

1. Make up a simple scenario of a very little problem/challenge that might come up in your everyday life. Examples could be: breaking a fingernail, dropping a breakfast spoon, finding a finger smudge on your glasses, pressing too hard on a pencil and breaking the tip, etc.
2. Describe your scenario to the students and tell them you are going to demonstrate a few ways to react and respond to the situation. Explain that reacting involves your body and responding involves your words.
3. Act out your scenario in an over-the-top, melodramatic fashion. Consider ways to melt down over the situation — cry, throw a tantrum, quote Shakespeare, beat your chest crying out, “Why me?” and in general pretend the world is against you.
4. Ask students to discuss if your reaction to the problem was appropriate or not and have them defend their answers.

Direct Instruction (I do)

1. Show your **How Big Is My Problem?** poster and explain each section using the following descriptors:
 - Gigantic/blue whale: something that needs a teacher to solve/can't be fixed by kids such as an injury on the playground or a lost student
 - Big/elephant: this needs teacher attention with kid input such as a fight in the hallway
 - Medium/buffalo: this needs a basic response from teacher such as what to do when a kid gets sick or forgets to bring lunch
 - Small/dog: A kid can refer to rules/norms to know how to respond/what to do, such as sharpening pencil in class
 - No Big Whoop/chipmunk: Any kid can handle alone such as tying a shoelace
2. Ask students to categorize the problem you demonstrated earlier AND to choose what level response you used.
3. How could a poster like this have helped you control your reaction?

Guided Exploration (We do)

1. Ask students about appropriate responses they could do that fit in the different categories of problems.
2. Tell students they will create their own **How Big Is My Problem?** posters with their own visual representations.
3. Brainstorm categories students might use for visual representations.

Independent Practice (You do)

1. Have students create their posters. (This can be done in class, continued as homework assignment, or done over several days.)
2. Explain that these posters will be mounted in the classroom for reference when they need to think about ways to manage their responses to everyday problems

Conclusion

Have students select one of the **Challenges/Problem** scenarios and categorize it by placing it on their poster and describing a appropriate way to respond. This can be done as a class or in small groups.

Notes

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Activity: Challenge/Problems Scenarios

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Directions

Cut out the scenario boxes for use in the conclusion of the lesson.

A classmate falls and scrapes a knee on the playground.	Someone drops lunch tray in cafeteria.	A student is being teased by other students.	A student presses too hard on a crayon and it breaks.
During recess, the ball is kicked over the wall and off school property.	A student gets to school and finds a tear in their shirt.	There is an explosion at a location very close to the school.	A student needs to use the rest room during reading.
A student accidentally tears a page from a book from the library.	A student breaks some of the math manipulatives on purpose.	A student burps very loudly in class.	