ON MY OWN TWO FEET

FEELINGS
FEELINGS

This book is one of seven constituting
“On My Own Two Feet”
Educational Resource Materials
for use in Substance Abuse Education

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ISBN No. 086387 044 9
© 2nd Edition 1997
CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 4
GRID OUTLINING MATERIALS 10
LESSON 1 HOW WOULD YOU FEEL? 14
LESSON 2 FEELING CARDS 18
LESSON 3 IDENTIFYING MY FEELINGS 21
LESSON 4 FEAR IN A HAT 24
LESSON 5 THE RELAXATION RESPONSE 26
LESSON 6 RELAXATION FOR ANXIETY 32
LESSON 7 UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS 35
LESSON 8 FEELINGS THERMOMETER 40
LESSON 9 EXPRESSING YOUR FEELINGS 44
LESSON 10 DEALING WITH ANGER 48
LESSON 11 SIDE-STEPPING ANGER 55
LESSON 12 CONSEQUENCES 58
LESSON 13 CHILDREN AND ALCOHOL 62
LESSON 14 LIZ 69
LESSON 15 TRANQUILLISERS: THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS 74
LESSON 16 WHAT SHOULD I DO? 80
THE ABILITY TO deal with our feelings is essential to mental health and to positive interpersonal relationships. It is an area with which many people have great difficulty. Drugs are often used as a prop in situations in which people are experiencing some anxiety, whether it is social anxiety due to low self esteem and poor social skills or, in more serious case, where a person may be using the drug to anaesthetise themselves from deeper emotional pain.

An inability to express and deal with feelings can lead to stress which, when experienced over a period of time, can lead to a variety of stress related illnesses or maladaptive coping mechanisms, as, for example in the excessive use of headache remedies or the reliance on alcohol to relax. Over forty physical and emotional disorders have been linked to stress. These include heart disease, high blood pressure, ulcers, headaches, back pain and depression. Studies of cancer patients have also linked onset of cancer with a behaviour pattern characterised by denial and repression of anger and other ‘negative’ emotions. In fact, the notion of ‘negative’ emotions is a reflection of the value judgements we make on certain feelings, e.g., anger, grief, fear, while not on others – love, joy, and happiness. The expression of emotions of fear, anger, grief and hurt is part of the healing process and is a prerequisite for healthy and ‘happy’ living.

We can pretend not to feel, but we still have feelings anyway. However much we ignore, pretend or hide them away, feelings will find their way out somehow. For example, if we are hurt by someone, if we feel angry but don’t do anything about it, we may find ourselves getting back at them in sneaky ways later – we may gossip about them, tell stories and ‘backbite’. This is called ‘leakage’. Another way we handle unfinished feelings is to push them down and hold them in physically. Holding feelings in by stopping ourselves breathing properly and by tightening those muscles, which are involved, uses up energy and makes us tired. We suppress the body’s natural mechanisms for releasing tension. It also uses up a lot of energy that could be used more productively.

What exactly we do with our unexpressed feelings is different for each one of us and is related to the messages we received growing up about what was acceptable or unacceptable. The small child knows instinctively how to ‘let go’ and finish with a situation. S/he cries, has a tantrum, clings to an adult or does whatever s/he needs to do to discharge the distress. This enables the child to move on with fresh vitality to the next experience. This same process is seen again and again in counselling or even in the everyday notion of ‘have a good cry, it will make you feel better’. Having got things
‘off one’s chest’ one is able to cope better, see things in perspective, sleep more deeply and work better.

Small children are allowed to express their feelings up to a certain point or age because they aren’t expected to be able to control their feelings. However, they soon learn that many of their feelings are not acceptable. ‘Big boys don’t cry’ or ‘don’t let them see you crying’ are common admonitions. While it is absolutely essential to be in control of how we express our feelings (we can’t just lash out at someone every time we’re frustrated), in our society we go too far and we spend a lot of energy ‘sitting on’ feelings, holding in and pushing them down. We are frightened of strong feelings. This is understandable in the case of anger, especially, if we have been at the receiving end of violent expressions of anger. However, anger is also a positive force – it is an indication that something is wrong in the way we’re being treated, it fires action for justice, it energises us to work for change. It is possible to teach people how to express anger constructively, in a way which is respectful of the other person and which helps to resolve difficulties when they happen, thus preventing a build-up which leads to explosive outbursts, whether physical, verbal or against property. ‘People are not for hitting’ should be a central message of the work.

When others cry we often feel awkward and embarrassed. We don’t know what to do or say. We may feel helpless, we may not be able to undo whatever has caused the tears and we wish we could. Just listening and being with the person doesn’t seem enough, and giving them a hug or holding them close is something we’d be embarrassed to do. For men there is a particularly strong ‘taboo on tenderness’. Many men believe that to be manly, you shouldn’t show any ‘weak’ feelings, so a strong man isn’t supposed to cry, to feel hurt, to be scared, to need help, to feel lonely. Trying to be such a man is very lonely. You have to pretend not to be upset, you have to hide the ‘real’ you. And eventually some men learn so well that they lose touch with themselves and do not feel anything much anymore.

Another reason feelings are neglected is that people are too busy. We don’t have as much time for each other as we might have – time to listen and so we get the message that our feelings are not very important. Instead of sharing our difficulties with friends and family, many people end up seeking counselling. We need to re-discover the potential for mutual support between people, the richness of real contact with others, the healing power of listening.
Because society does not encourage the expression of certain feelings and, indeed, imposes such a strong taboo on those feelings, a clear and calm approach to this section is very important.

It should only be undertaken by teachers who are themselves at ease with, and comfortable with, the expression of feelings. Attendance at workshops where teachers have the opportunity to deal with their own feelings and to understand the importance of expressing them is the key to removing the fear, which some people experience in dealing with this area.

It should only be undertaken with a class in which a good level of trust and cohesion has been established and for many exercises, the group size should not exceed 16.

While it is not the aim of the exercises to elicit deep feelings, it is possible that a topic may touch a child in such a way that they may cry or share painful experiences. The teacher needs to be ready to deal with tears or expression of deep feelings without panicking.

In a group, which is concerned with the exploration of personal experiences and in which people are encouraged to be open and honest about the expression of the accompanying feelings, it is likely that from time to time strong feeling will be expressed. Sometimes these may be positive feelings of warmth, love and friendship. Not all people find it easy to manage these feelings, but, on the whole, most of us find them easier to cope with than the expression of negative feelings such as anger, sadness or embarrassment.

The feeling which group leaders commonly face which are sometimes difficult to deal with are anger and sadness. Anger can be frightening, but usually involves verbal rather than physical energy. The fear is that it will get out of hand. However, the chances are that the anger will be within limits, and provided it is contained, may well be cleansing both for the individual or the group. If it happens in your group, the best advice is to stay calm. Even if you get angry yourself, you should remind yourself that there are different ways of expressing anger. Jumping up and down, shouting or thumping the arms of your chair are not the most appropriate ways to express your anger. Find some way to express your anger in a more measured fashion.

Sadness expressed in crying can also be difficult to cope with. People feel embarrassed about it. Culturally it can be regarded as a sign of weakness, particularly in men. As with anger it is
important for you to stay calm and to accept the person’s tears as an expression of how that person feels. It is important to reassure the person that crying is alright and that they need not feel embarrassed, and may well be doing the group a service by expressing feelings, which others share. The person can be encouraged to talk about what is making them upset or cry, if they so wish.

Whatever the feeling, the cardinal principle is ‘don’t ignore it’. This is not likely to help at all. Indeed it is inimical to the principles of openness and honesty, which are integral to the development of healthy relationships. Give time and support for the person to talk about their feelings, for group members to share their response. Encourage, but at the same time, don’t push for more disclosure. Respect a person’s wish to stop. Ask a question like “Do you want to talk about it anymore just now?” or “Is that enough for now?” if you sense the student needs this. Make sure the person makes eye contact with at least two or three others in the group before the focus is moved from them, as they may feel embarrassed or ashamed of their feelings. Eye contact with others, especially supportive and accepting group members, helps them feel OK about being ‘seen’ to be sad, hurt, etc., and they will not tend to ‘hide’ from others emotionally after the session.

Always be sure to begin closing a more moving or sensitive session in good time. This will allow for a final round of ‘How I feel at the end of this session’ or offers of support or even something on a light note so that pupils are ready to go on to the next class feeling the discussion was adequately closed.

In the pilot phase, it was the experience of teachers that pupils have a great capacity for compassion and support and are well able to handle such situations sensitively.

It is important, nevertheless, to remember that it is not the intention of this section to create a counselling group, rather to give pupils the opportunity in a safe situation to learn and practise positive ways of handling their own feelings.

The caring structures available in the school and community should be engaged where pupils need further help, e.g., referral to the guidance counsellor, tutor, chaplain or participation in support groups, e.g., Al Ateen or bereavement groups available in the school or community. For more serious problems the teachers needs to be willing to follow through and help the pupil contact the relevant agency.
SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR THE EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS

For the school as a whole it is worthwhile examining the extent to which we allow the expression of different feelings in relationships. Is there an awareness of the extent to which children have suffered or are currently experiencing loss, whether through death or family breakdown? The impact of loss on the child’s attention in school can be considerable and teachers need to make allowances, offer support and help the child to obtain help. Similarly, the disruptive or withdrawn child may, in their different ways, be expressing anxiety or anger through their behaviour. Disruptive children are often very angry children and if we knew what they were feeling deep down we might be far more understanding. This is one reason why there is a considerable amount of time devoted to the expression of anger in these materials. The withdrawn child may also be experiencing anger but turning it back on themselves. In some schools of thought this is regarded as the mechanism, which causes depression.

How are feelings dealt with among staff? Is conflict brought out in the open in an honest and open way, thus facilitating the resolution of difficulties or is it hidden, creating blocks to the effectiveness of staff meetings, communication, and decision making? Is there validation, recognition of effort, and expressions of appreciation for teachers, pupils, and management? All these factors are related to the ability to deal with feelings constructively and affect the climate of the school.

OVERVIEW OF THE MATERIALS

The first stage, in Lessons 1 - 4, and Lesson 8, involves helping students learn a language for expressing feelings. The nuances and intensity of feelings can be difficult to communicate clearly and people sometimes find it difficult to even know what they are feeling. So the aim of these early lessons is to give students opportunities to identify, name, own and publicly acknowledge a wide range of feelings.

The next stage involves learning skills for managing feelings. These include skills for dealing with anxiety in Lessons 5 and 6, and for expressing feelings in Lesson 9, 10 and 11. Practice in the expression of feelings will also have begun in the earlier exercises.

Lesson 7 attempts to give students some understanding of the cultural taboo on feelings.
The latter part of the section deals with drug-related situations in which feelings feature as a cause or result of misuse of substances.

**LAYOUT OF THE MATERIALS**

The Grid

A grid outlining the materials in this book is provided. The lessons identified, as *core* material should be given priority in planning a programme. Lessons identified as *optional* or *reinforcer* may be adapted to meet the needs of particular groups for a different approach or to revisit a topic.

The lesson plans are a guide. Individual teachers are encouraged to adapt them to take account of the particular needs of their class and their own teaching style.

In most lesson plans additional material is provided. Pages labelled ‘Handout’ are to be copied for distribution to students. It is useful for each student to have a folder for social, personal and health education in which materials can be kept. Other material is for teacher reference. References for additional materials on the area addressed in this book can be found in the School Handbook.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE/THEME</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>METHODOLOGY</th>
<th>LINKS WITH</th>
<th>CORE OR REINFORCER</th>
<th>SUITABLE FOR</th>
<th>DRUG CONTENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Identifying My Feelings</td>
<td>Developing ability to share and listen to feelings.</td>
<td>Situation cards. Small group. Class discussion.</td>
<td>Most ‘Feelings’ exercises</td>
<td>Reinforcer</td>
<td>Any established Group</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. The Relaxation Response</td>
<td>Management of anxiety and relaxation technique.</td>
<td>Mime Breathing exercise Class Discussion</td>
<td>FE 6 ‘Relaxation for Anxiety’ DM 15 ‘Tranquillisers: The Search for Happiness’</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>AG</td>
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J = Junior Cycle, S = Senior Cycle, V = Verbal, LV = Less Verbal, AG = All Groups
In General exercises for JLV will work with older, brighter groups, but those marked S or V will not work with younger or less verbal groups
# FEELINGS – AT A GLANCE!

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. What should I Do?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Drugs are sometimes used as a prop for low self esteem.</td>
<td>Advice column. Small groups. Class discussion.</td>
<td>ID 13 ‘Think Positive’ ID 16 ‘Accepting positives’ AC 7 ‘Joining In’ AC 11 ‘Saying “No”’ AC 15 ‘Criticism’ INF 5 ‘Peer Pressure’</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>AG</td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
</tr>
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In General exercises for JLV will work with older, brighter groups, but those marked S or V will not work with younger or less verbal groups
CORE CONCEPT:  *To express our feelings adequately we need the right words.*

**HOW WOULD YOU FEEL?**

**PURPOSE**

To help pupils develop a vocabulary for expressing feelings.
To help pupils begin to acknowledge feelings and their importance.

**PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This exercise must be used with a group, which is working well. It can be used a number of times using different cards each time. The cards can also be used simply as discussion triggers. Smaller groups facilitate more personal sharing.

Space on the floor or a desk so that pupils can gather round the paper and be able to write on it is necessary.

*Links with:* Most ‘Feelings’ exercises, [ID 10 ‘That’s Life!’](#), [ID 11 ‘Sunshine’](#).

**Materials**

Several sheets of poster paper for each group
Crayons for each group, in a range of colours
Cards from the list of ‘How would you feel?’ situations
**Outline**

1. Introduction
2. Group drawing
3. Display and discuss
4. Repeat steps 2 & 3
5. Sum up

**Detailed Procedure**

1. Introduction

   We are going to look at different feelings and at the words we use to talk about them. It is very important to be able to talk about our feelings – to be able to tell people about the good feelings we have, to thank others for helping us feel good, to show our love for others and our appreciation or admiration. It is equally important to be able to sort out our difficult feelings – sadness, anger, and disappointment. But first of all we must have the right words for talking about them.

2. Group Drawing

   Ask pupils to form groups of four. Give one sheet of poster paper to each group. Tell them to have a pile of cards with different situations on them. Ask someone to select a card from the pile and read it out. When you hear the situation, each person in your group is to write words or sentences, draw pictures, make scribbles, or use colours which show how you would feel in that situation.

   You can write,
   - a single word – ‘I feel good/angry/delighted’
   - a phrase – ‘I’m down in the dumps’/’I’m on top of the world’
   - what you would like to do? – ‘I’d like to hit him’/’I’d like to cry’/’I feel like giving up’
   - how you would feel in your body – ‘heavy/warm/cold/shaky, etc’?
You do not have to discuss what you want to write with anyone else – though you can if you want to. Everyone can put in any words or colours that occur to them. Each person knows how he or she would feel. Even if you cannot think of a word, just take a colour that feels right for the situation and make a shape or mark with that colour.

3. **Display and discuss**
   After a short time, post all the posters on the blackboard. Discuss the words and colours used, give time for explanation and questions about what is on the posters and point out the similarities and differences in the reactions people have to the same situation.

4. **Repeat Steps 2 & 3**
   Move on fairly quickly to the next card and repeat the process – the point at this stage is mainly to give permission for the expression of feelings and vocabulary for doing that.

5. **Sum up**
   Sum up: “we have been looking at words for talking about feelings. We will be coming back to this in other sessions, and especially looking at what you can do to get in charge of your feeling and handle them well so that you do not hurt yourself and do not hurt others either.”
Everyone forgot your birthday?
You lent a tape to a friend who now says you didn’t?
Your younger brother/sister was allowed to do something you weren’t allowed to at his/her age?
You ripped the sleeve of a very expensive shirt the first time you put it on?
You came in after school and discovered your parents kissing on the couch?
You were told you have won a two-week holiday in London for two with €500 to spend?
You came in after school and found your mother at the table crying?
Your father shouted at you?
Your girlfriend/boyfriend broke it off?
A close friend was going to die?
You saw a mother really hurt a small child?
You did really well in your exam?
Your father said, “I love you very much”?
Your mother said, “I love you very much”?
Your friend stopped calling for you?
You were caught mitching?
A group of people jeered at you as you passed by?
You did something to please someone and they didn’t even notice?
Someone close you broke a confidence?
You were wrongly accused of something?
You wanted to do something and nobody wanted to do it with you?
You heard someone making a sarcastic remark about you that you were obviously meant to hear?
Your favourite uncle gave you a big hug?
A teacher, who usually gives out about your work, praised you highly?
CORE CONCEPT:  

Awareness and acceptance of our own and others’ feelings promotes emotional health and improves our relationships.

FEELING CARDS

PURPOSE

To help pupils become aware of feelings.
To help pupils use a feeling vocabulary.
To help pupils become accustomed to sharing and discussing feelings.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This will only work well in groups of 15 or less and where some trust has developed. This whole exercise could be done in smaller groups if you think there are pupils who would be so nervous or anxious in the large group that they would get little out of it. You may need to explain certain words. Alternatively, remove cards that may be too difficult for your particular group e.g., overwhelmed, enthusiastic, irritated, defeated.

Links with: Most ‘Feelings’ exercises.

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Group share responses to Feeling Cards
2. **Discussion**

**Detailed procedure**

1. **Group share response to Feelings Cards**
   The class are seated in a circle. Each person in turn picks up a card and completes the sentence.
   For example:
   
   ‘I feel embarrassed when…’ or relates true experiences
   ‘The last time I felt embarrassed was when …’

   Remember that people have the right to ‘pass’

2. **Discussion**
   - What was it like to do that?
   - Did anyone find it very hard to share the feeling they picked out?
   - What made it hard?
   - What did you learn/notice during that exercise?

**VARIATIONS**

- Save pictures of different facial expressions from magazines/newspapers. Give one to each student or group and ask them to identify how the person is feeling and why they think this.

  For weaker pupils: Feeling’ Words could be written on cards and words matched to pictures.

- Groups make a collage showing different feelings
- Give out five cards to each group and have them make up a story in which the characters are feeling these feelings
FEELINGS

Embarrassed  Thrilled
Nervous  Lonely
Frustrated  Defeated
Pressured  Weak
Contented  Joyful
Overwhelmed  Guilty
Respected  Happy
Strong  Proud
Envious  Angry
Sympathetic  Free
Stupid  Enthusiastic
Satisfied  Confused
Worthless  Responsible
Clumsy  Tense
Foolish  Anxious
Afraid  Annoyed
Ashamed  Superior
Relieved  Sad
Amazed  Irritated
Grateful  Accepted
Energetic  Warm
CORE CONCEPT: Awareness and acceptance of our own and others’ feelings promotes emotional health and enhances our relationships.

IDENTIFYING MY FEELINGS

PURPOSE

To give students an opportunity to become more aware of their feelings.
To give students practice in listening to feelings and accepting them.
To develop group cohesion through sharing.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This exercise requires that a good level of trust has developed. It can be carried out in sub-groups of four upwards. The size of groups will depend on the ability of the class to be self-directed and responsible. If the group you are working with is small (15 or less) carry out work with the whole group.

It is important that ample time is given to the discussion of each card. There will be a natural tendency to move on to the next card out of impatience, curiosity, interest or embarrassment on the part of some students.

Links with: Most ‘Feelings’ exercises.

Materials

Feelings cards. Devise additional cards yourself.
PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Group shares responses to feelings sentences
3. Discussion

Detailed procedure

1. Introduction
Sometimes we are unaware of our feelings in a situation or don’t let ourselves show them because we’re afraid of how others will react. They may be embarrassed, hurt, annoyed or they may not know how to react. So because of our need to be accepted, we sometimes ignore how we feel and say nothing. This exercise is to help you become clearer about how you feel and help you become better at expressing feelings.

2. Group shares responses to feelings sentences
The pack of cards is placed on a stool or table in the middle of the group. Each person in turn picks up a card, reads the sentence silently and thinks about how s/he would finish it. If s/he wishes, s/he can ‘pass’ by returning the card to the bottom of the pile without disclosing what was on it. If anyone chooses not to share, this must be respected by the group. Otherwise each person makes the statement out loud and talks a little more about. Encourage other members of the group to respond by accepting the other person’s statement, asking more about the person’s experience and, if they so wish, by sharing their own feelings. The round continues until ten minutes before the end of the session.

3. Discussion
• What did you learn about yourself? About others?
• What was the quality of listening like in the group?
• Did other people accept your feelings? If yes, how did they show this?
FEELINGS

When someone ignores me
I feel sad when

It annoys me when
I feel irritated when

You would know someone loves you if
The last time I felt important
The last time I cried

When someone I like gives me a big smile

Unhappy people
Being alone
I’m happiest when
When I’m left out of something I

The worst thing that could happen to me is
If people really knew me

I feel excited when
I hate

The thing I’m most afraid of is
The thing that could hurt me most is

When I’m anxious about something
If someone I love died
If someone I fancied told me they liked me
CORE CONCEPT:  
*Sharing our feelings validates ourselves and others.*

FEAR IN A HAT

**PURPOSE**

To give pupils the experience of sharing and discussing their fears.
To let pupils see that we all have fears.
To give pupils practice at trying to understand other peoples’ fears.

**PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This exercise can facilitate a review of the dynamic currently operating in the group. Pilot teachers suggested using it early in the life of a group as an adjunct to formulating group rules.


**Materials**

Pencils, slips of paper, a hat or box
PROCEDURE

Outline
1. Individual writing
2. Sharing
3. Discussion

Detailed Procedure
Class sits in a circle

1. Individual writing
Everyone – including the leader – completes (anonymously) on a slip of paper – ‘In this class I am afraid that...’ Then put the slip of paper in the hat in the centre. Shake them up and then pass the hat around.

2. Sharing
Each person takes a slip of paper, reads it out and says some more about what s/he thinks the person was feeling, e.g., ‘in this class I am afraid people will think I am stupid’. The person reading out might continue ‘………… because that happened to me once and now I feel nervous when I want to say something.’

Continue around the circle. Everyone just listens and no comments, remarks or questions are allowed.

3. Discussion
• - What did you learn?

VARIATIONS

• Use the same method for embarrassment, enjoyment, anger, reassurance and trust.
CORE CONCEPT:  *We can take charge of our feelings.*

THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

**PURPOSE**

To help the pupils to become aware of their usual breathing pattern.

To teach the pupils the idea that deep breathing is a quick and easy way to relaxation.

**PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

For this exercise space for pupils to move round freely and to lie down is needed.

A mat, towel, rug or sleeping bag for each pupil, if possible. Otherwise, it should be done in a carpeted room.

*Links with:* FE 6 ‘Relaxation For Anxiety’, FE 15 ‘Tranquillisers: The Search for Happiness’.

**Materials**

Flip-chart or blackboard

**PROCEDURE**

**Outline**

1. Mimicing contradictory feelings
2. Teacher input
Detailed Procedure

1. Mimic contradictory feelings

Ask pupils to stand up and to mime ‘feeling anxious’. They are to exaggerate all the bodily aspects of feeling anxious and to move around ‘anxiously’ in the group. Let this go on for three or four minutes, encouraging people to stay in the ‘anxious’ posture.

Ask for feedback while they are still in this position.

- What are you doing with your body?
- What does it feel like?

List on the blackboard the physical characteristics of feeling anxious (tight or stiff muscles, hunched shoulders, holding breath, tight neck, frowning). Ask students to say out any words that come to mind that describe how they are feeling and list all these on the board too.

After a minute or two of this, tell students you now want them to mime ‘feeling completely relaxed’. Again they can exaggerate the feeling (even to the extent of lying down on the floor – though you should not suggest this.) Encourage quietness and make sure that those lying down are not walked on.

Repeat the feedback procedure as for ‘feeling anxious’ (loose muscles, breathing deeply, yawning, floppy arms, etc.).

Now tell them you want them to mime being anxious and relaxed at the same time.

Ask for feedback.

- Was anyone able to do that?
2. **Teacher input**

Write the following statement on a flip-chart or blackboard:

- You cannot be anxious and relaxed at the same time!

and ask students whether or not this is true.

**Input:**

This statement is, in fact, the basis of all stress reduction methods. When the body is relaxed, breathing is slow and deep; the heart rate decreases; muscles relax and return to their normal resting state; blood-flow to the extremities (feet and hands) is increased – in brief, your whole system is slowed down. If you can induce even one of these ‘signs’ of relaxation through the use of one of the exercises in this part of the programme, you can break into the stress reaction and produce (write on board) what is called instead –

‘THE RELAXATION RESPONSE’

The relaxation exercises we are going to learn can be used as either preventive measures or as corrective ones if you are already feeling stressed.

The most essential part of learning to relax is learning to breathe the FULL DEEP BREATH, so that is the first thing we are going to practise. It may seem strange to say that we need to learn how to breathe, as we all must be breathing if we are still alive! However, many if not most people do not know how to breathe properly. We have been taught to hold our tummies in and push our chests out. This actually prevents proper breathing. We wear clothes, which are often quite constricting so we might have to open a button to be able to breathe fully.

Why the deep, full breath? Breathing properly is healthy: when you are tense or upset, your breathing becomes shallow and irregular, and your heart rate tends to speed up. When you are relaxed your breathing deepens and your heart rate slows down. Breathing is the easiest part of the stress response to control. If you can trigger the deep, slow breath essential to relaxation, then you can trigger the rest of the characteristics of the relaxation response.
3. **Demonstration and practice of the FULL DEEP BREATH**

Tell pupils you are now going to do an experiment – *How do you breathe?*

Ask them to lie down on the floor and read out the following instructions or demonstrate with one pupil first and then continue.

- Place one hand just below the rib cage (above the stomach). Take a deep breath and, as you breathe in, notice the movement of your hand.
  
  *… Does it move in or out?*
  
  *… Does it move at all?*

- If you breathed properly your hand moved outward. Be aware of how deeply you breathe.

Imagine that your lungs are divided into three parts. (Draw on blackboard when demonstrating). Close your eyes and see the three parts in your mind. In the full deep breath the lowest part of the lungs fills with air first; then the middle part fills and the chest expands; then the upper part fills with air and the shoulders may move slowly upwards.

Take another breath and imagine this happening – the lowest part, then the middle of your chest expands and finally the upper part.

- *Is this the way you usually breathe?*

Take another deep breath. Do you breathe in through your nose or through your mouth? How do you breathe out? Do you breathe out fully and completely? In breathing for relaxation remember to breathe in through your nose and fill your lungs completely. Breathe again, breathing in through your nose. Picture your lungs filling slowly with air; feel your abdomen pushing out your hand. Then breathe out through your mouth and feel the warm air leave your body. You may feel a bit uncomfortable breathing in just through your nose. Find what suits you, what feels right – but do begin to breathe the deep, slow, relaxing breath rather than the rapid-shallow-shoulder-chest breath.

Breathe in, and hold your breath for ten second, feeling the tension in your throat and chest. Breathe out through your mouth with a slight sigh and feel the ‘sigh of relief’ release the
tension. The calmest or quietest time of the breath is between breathing out and breathing in again. If you can feel the calmness at that moment directly after breathing out, at the end of the sign, then you are learning how to relax.

Breathe in again; breathe out with a soft sigh. As you breathe out fully and completely, feel the tension melting away out of your body. Take note of this quiet time in your body. When you are feeling tense or anxious, remember this and try to recapture that moment of peace and calm.

4. Discussion
- What was it like for you? Difficult or easy? What did you discover about the way you breathe?

- How are you feeling now? Is there any difference between the way you feel now and how you felt before doing the deep breathing?

- Can you think of situations where it would be helpful to take a full, deep breath?

Do not forget the calming effect of the deep breath. When people become tense they often forget to breathe – breathing properly can help you to cope better with stressful situations. It can also help to prevent tension building up – try to take a deep breath many times during the day, even if you are not feeling stressed.

- What signal or even could you use to remind you to take a deep breath? (the bell for the end of class; a clock chiming; whenever you are waiting for something, like an exam paper or in a bus or supermarket queue are some examples).

5. Homework
Every day during the coming week, take 10 minutes to practise the full deep breath. Also, try to use it at moments when you notice yourself getting tense.

Some Points:
- Find a regular time and a quiet place to practise these exercises. Your health and feeling of well-being are important, so do not be afraid to tell people not to interrupt
It takes regular practice to get so good at doing these that you can just use them at the drop of a hat.

- Practise on an empty stomach.
- If you feel you are really stressed or feel you may have a medical problem, have a medical check up.

**VARIATION**

- Get pupils to work on the breathing exercise in pairs.
CORE CONCEPT: We can take charge of our feelings.

RELAXATION FOR ANXIETY

PURPOSE

To teach pupils a relaxation technique.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ideally, this should be done in a large, comfortable and quiet space with plenty of room for pupils to lie down. However, it can also be done sitting in a chair. This exercise is quite long for weaker junior cycle pupils. The instructions can also be put on tape and participants could copy the master tape and use it for practice at home. After they have used the tape five or six times, they could try the procedure without the taped instructions and use the relaxation procedures when approaching, or during anxiety arousing situations. Once they have learned the basic idea, it is easier to use brief methods (like deep breathing) in unexpected situations.


PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Progressive relaxation
3. Discussion
Detailed Procedure

1. Introduction

Sometimes we get so worried or anxious that we cannot think what to do or say, or we cannot get down to what we want to do. Sometimes we do not even know what is making us so tense. Perhaps our minds are racing or we get overtired and cannot get to sleep. We can use many different methods to reduce anxiety and today we are going to learn a relaxation exercise. At first, you may find it difficult to get the hang of it but, with practice, you will gradually be able to do it yourselves in situations where you need to.

2. Progressive relaxation

Anyone who has contact lenses should take them out before we start. Now, make yourself as comfortable as possible, loosen any tight clothing, and get comfortable in your chair. Close your eyes and just focus (concentrate) on your body and feel the tension flowing out as you relax more and more.

Now, stretch out your legs, lift them slightly off the floor, and point your feet back towards your face as much as you can. Tighten your toes, your ankles, your calves and your thighs – tighten and tighten, as tight as you can (about 10 seconds.) Now, relax … feel the warmth of relaxation in your legs and feet as you relax. Feel how pleasant it is to feel that warmth as it flows through your legs even to your toes (relaxation should be 15 to 20 seconds).

Now tighten your buttocks (bottom) and stomach as hard as you can. Tighten and tighten. Hold it a bit more (again 10 seconds total). Now, relax … and let yourself feel the warmth flow into your buttocks and stomach. Notice the difference between the relaxed feeling you have now and the tightness you felt a minute ago. Take a deep breath now. As you slowly let it out, also let out the remaining tension in your feet, legs, buttocks and stomach. Continue to take deep breaths and let them out slowly as we go on (again 15 to 20 seconds of relaxation).

Now tighten your back muscles, your chest and the muscles just under your armpits. Harder, harder. Hold it a little bit longer (10 seconds). Now relax. Let yourself feel the tranquil flow of relaxation as it moves up your body into your back and chest. Imagine the word ‘calm’ or the word ‘relax’ and think that word to yourself slowly about ten times. Take a deep breath and let it out slowly as the tension drains away (45 seconds of relaxation).

Stretch out your arm and make two fists, tighten your upper arm, your forearms and your fists. Hard, really hard. When I say relax, let your arms fall gently to your lap (10 seconds).
Now relax … feel the tingling sensation of relaxation in your fingers and hands. Feel the warmth in your arms. Enjoy this beautiful relaxation. Imagine a peaceful, tranquil scene that is really relaxing. Picture that scene and how warm and comfortable that picture is for you (45 seconds of relaxation).

Now, hunch up your shoulders as though you are trying to touch them to your ears. Tighten your neck, too. Tighter and tighter! Hold it just a bit more so that your neck actually shakes (10 seconds). Now, relax. Feel the heaviness in your shoulders and the warm feeling of relaxation. Take a deep breath and slowly let it out. Imagine saying to yourself, ‘I am calm and relaxed’. Enjoy the comforting feeling of being tension-free (45 seconds).

Now open your mouth as wide as you can. Wider. Hold it a bit more (10 seconds). Now, relax. Feel the warm, tingling sense in your face. Let your moth hang open as it relaxes. Breathe deeply (15-20 seconds). Now tighten your forehead and tighten your cheek muscles into a tight grimace. Tighter. Hold it (10 seconds). Now, relax. Feel the flow of warm relaxation enter your face and eyes. Enjoy the wonderful feeling of relaxation through your entire body.

Now take a deep breath and hold it (hold for 10 seconds). As you let it out fully, let any tension drain from your whole body. Imagine that your body is sinking into a warm pool and the water in the pool will absorb any tension which is left. Feel your body sink little by little into this pleasant water and the tension seep from your body. First your feet and legs, then the rest of your body – right up to your arms, your neck and your head. Breathe deeply and enjoy this relaxed feeling. (Pause for a few seconds). I will count to three. On three, you will open your eyes and be refreshed and relaxed. One … two … three.

3. Discussion

Discuss how pupils felt during and at the end of this exercise.

Suitable cassettes: ‘Interludes’ (Range of soothing sounds)
‘Mountain Stream’ – Steven Grustein
‘Ocean Echoes’ Produced by Robert Stag
‘Tranquillities’ Great American Audio
‘Snow Dreams’
‘Relax with Nature’ – New World Cassettes

Available from main book stores.
CORE CONCEPT: Society does not encourage the expression of feelings. Understanding this will help us take charge of how we express them.

UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

PURPOSE

To help pupils understand how the expression of feelings has come to be so frowned upon.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is quite a long teacher input in this exercise, as the taboo on feelings is so strong that a clear alternative position or model must be presented which pupils can understand. Note that this is intended for more verbal classes. It is too wordy for other groups. The focus is more on ‘negative’ feelings than ‘positive’ ones, for the very reason that ‘negative’ ones are those, which cause the difficulty. Refer to the introduction to this book for further background on Step 3.

Links with: All exercises in the ‘Feelings’ section.

Materials

OHP, transparency or blackboard listing words from Step 4.

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Brainstorm – how a child expresses feelings

3. Input

4. Pairs list ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ feelings

5. Group discussion/teacher input

**Detailed Procedure**

1. **Introduction**

Feelings are like a thermometer – they let us know what is happening, what we need to do to take care of ourselves, what is important to us. We can pretend not to feel, but we still have feelings anyway. They do not go away. However much we ignore, pretend or hide them away, feelings will find their way out somehow. For example, if we are hurt by someone, if we feel angry but do not do anything about it, we may find ourselves getting back at that person in sneaky ways later – we may gossip about them, tell stories or even tell lies. Another way we handle unfinished feelings is to push them down and hold them in. This uses up a log of energy that could be used much more productively. It can also give us stomach aches, headaches, and back-pain and there is evidence that it can even predispose us to cancer and other serious illnesses. What exactly we do with our unexpressed feelings is different for each one of us.

We are going to look at how it is that we are so bad at handling feelings well. The toddler or small child knows very well how to express anger, joy, sadness, and fear. We are going to look quickly at how they do this.

2. **Brainstorm – how a child expresses feelings**

Form groups of four and ask them to identify what toddlers or young children do:

- **When they are happy?** (Smiling, cooing, gurgling, bouncing, and energetic).
- **When they are afraid?** (Clinging, crying, showing fear).
- **When they are sad or lonely?** (Crying, sobbing, and showing their needs).
- **When they are confident?** (Exploring, ready to leave mother).
- **What do small children do when frustrated or angry?** (Kicking and thrashing about, screaming, stamping).

Take feedback and list on blackboard.
3. Input

This physical release of the feeling is the body’s way of healing or releasing the hurt. It helps the child to ‘finish’ with one situation and go on to the next with full energy and attention. Expressing feelings lets the energy flow. Holding them in (by stopping ourselves breathing properly and by tightening those muscles, which are involved) uses up energy and makes us tired. Small children are allowed to express their feelings up to a certain point or age because they are not expected to be able to control their feelings. However, they learn very fast that many of their feelings are not acceptable. While it is absolutely essential to be in control of how we express our feelings – we cannot just lash out at someone every time we are frustrated – in our society we go too far and we spend a lot of energy ‘sitting on’ feelings, holding in and pushing them down. In holding them in we tighten our muscles and stop ourselves breathing properly – we suppress the body’s natural mechanisms for releasing tension. This can do both ourselves and others a lot of harm. Others can be hurt, emotionally or physically, when feelings, which have built up, are suddenly expressed in an ‘explosive’ fashion. So we need to find ways of teaching the growing child, and ourselves, more constructive ways of taking care of our own feelings while not just dumping them on others. This is why we will go on in these sessions to practise both getting in touch with and expressing our feelings and discovering that doing so will contribute to better health and improved relationships.

4. Pairs list ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ feelings

Put the following words on an OHT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BROKEN-HEARTED</th>
<th>ANGRY</th>
<th>SAD</th>
<th>FREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JOYFUL</td>
<td>RELAXED</td>
<td>LOVING</td>
<td>CALM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPRESSED</td>
<td>RESENTFUL</td>
<td>ENTHUSIASTIC</td>
<td>LIGHT-HEARTED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZESTFUL</td>
<td>LONELY</td>
<td>FEARFUL</td>
<td>LEFT OUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SURE OF YOURSELF</td>
<td>FULFILLED</td>
<td>HAPPY</td>
<td>REJECTED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCEPTED</td>
<td>GLEEFUL</td>
<td>POPULAR</td>
<td>LOVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPPRESSED</td>
<td>ANXIOUS</td>
<td>NERVOUS</td>
<td>TEARFUL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TENDER</td>
<td>UPSET</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ask students in pairs/fours to sort them into two columns.

**IT’S OK TO SHOW THESE.**  **IT’S NOT OK TO SHOW THESE**

Take feedback.
Are any of them OK for boys but not for girls and vice-versa?
Which ones?

5. **Group discussion/teacher input**
Ask the pupils in their groups to discuss the following questions:

**ANGER**
- *Can you think of reasons why we do not want others to show their anger?*
- *Were you ever in a situation where someone was very angry with you?*
- *What was it like?*
- *How did you feel?*

Feedback and class discussion

**Possible input:**
We are frightened of strong feelings. This is understandable in the case of anger. If someone is raging at you, you will be afraid that they are going to hit you. Indeed, you may already have been beaten and hurt by that person. So anger is a very strong feeling and in such a case you would be perfectly right to be afraid of anger. In this example, anger has been expressed aggressively.

**GRIEF/SADNESS**
- *Can you think of reasons why people are not encouraged to cry?*
- *What can you remember being told about crying?*
- *Were you ever called any names for crying? What names?*
- *Does this happen to boys and girls or to one group more than the other?*
- *Why do you think this is?*
- *Do boys and girls, men and women; have different needs and different feelings?*

Feedback and class discussion
When others cry we often feel awkward and embarrassed. We do not know what to do or say. For example, if someone is crying and crying, we may feel helpless. If something very bad has happened to them we may not be able to undo that and we wish we could. Just listening and being with the person does not seem enough, and giving them a hug or holding them close is something we would be embarrassed to do – especially between men or boys.

Many men believe that to be manly you should not show any feelings, so a ‘strong’ man is not supposed to cry, to feel hurt, to be scared, to need help, to feel lonely. Trying to be such a ‘strong’ man is very lonely. You have to pretend not to be human because human beings need to cry if they are hurt. You have to not let people see the real you. And eventually you learn so well that you may not feel anything much anymore.

Another reason we do not express our feelings is that people are too busy. We do not have as much time for each other as we might have. We do not want to listen for too long and so we get the message that our feelings are not very important.

We need to re-learn how to stay in touch with, show and share our feelings in a way that does not harm us and does not harm others.
CORE CONCEPT: 

Awareness and acceptance of our own and others’ feelings promotes emotional health and enhances our relationships.

FEELING THERMOMETER

PURPOSE

To enable pupils to become aware of, and identify, feelings of differing degrees of intensity. To enable students to learn that others may have different feelings in the same situations.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Suitable for all groups. Many school-related issues may come up – let them. Expression of the problem is the goal here, not finding a solution.

Teacher suggestion: For weaker students only use situations on ‘Feeling Thermometer’ – leave out ‘How do I Feel?’


Materials

A sheet of drawing paper, pencil, ruler and red pencil for each student. Flipchart of blackboard

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Students brainstorm in small groups
2. List and grade on flip-chart
3. Introduce idea of ‘Feeling Thermometer’
4. Individual ‘Feeling Thermometer’ completed
5. Small group sharing
6. Large group discussion

**Detailed Procedure**

1. **Students brainstorm in small groups**
   
   Ask students to form groups of 4/5 and to list, as quickly as they can, the kinds of things that make them angry.

   Allow 5-7 minutes for this.

2. **List and grade on flip-chart**
   
   List them on a flipchart or blackboard and discuss briefly.

   *Do any of them make you feel only slightly irritated?*
   (Mark some of these on the board).

   *What happens in your bodies?*

   *What signals does your body send out to match the feeling?*

   *Do any of them make you ‘boil’ or make you ‘hopping mad’?*
   (Mark these also).

   *How does your body react? What do you feel like doing?*

   If pupils have difficulty, ask them what a toddler does when in a tantrum – scream, shout, kick, flail arms, jump up and down, hit out, and go red in the face!

3. **Introduce idea of ‘Feeling Thermometer’**
   
   Introduce the idea of the ‘Feeling Thermometer’ by drawing one on the blackboard and putting some of the things which made people boil at the top end and mild irritants at the lower end of the scale.
Discuss briefly and check to see if everyone has understood the idea.

Ask students to draw their own ‘Feeling Thermometer’ down the centre of the page and to put the heading ‘Situation’ on the left-hand side and ‘What I Feel Like Doing’ on the right-hand side.

4. Individual ‘Feeling Thermometer’ completed
Then instruct them to make a list, on a rough sheet of paper, of 8-10 situations, which make them angry.

When this is complete, ask them to enter them on the left-hand side of the ‘Feeling Thermometer’ page, in order, from things that make them mildly angry to things that make them boil – if anything! On the right-hand side they should enter the physical symptoms of their feelings and what they feel like doing.

5. Small group sharing
When they have listed the situations, they should take turns in sharing them in their small groups.

Remind pupils to share the time equally and not to pressurise anyone to share more than they want to.

6. Large group discussion
Discussion:
- What did you discover?
- What were the similarities among you?
- What were the differences?
- Did anything that made one person rage, make another only irritated?

Sum up by saying we will look at what to do about your anger in another session.

NOTE: This exercise can also be used for anxiety (fear): sadness (grief and loss): happiness (joy): loving and being loved.
SAMPLE FEELING THERMOMETER
ANGER

Situations

My mother grounds me for coming in late.

My sister/brother won’t help with the washing-up.

A teacher accuses me of something, unjustly.

A friend loses my tape and refuses to replace it.

A friend is late for a film we’re going to.

How do I feel?
What I feel like doing?

Feel like hitting, kicking, shouting.
Heart pounding.

Shoulder hunched, mutter verbal abuse the other person cannot hear.

Tense shoulders, tight mouth, and tight stomach.
Feel like cursing.

Tight lipped, chest tight, resentful. Feel like complaining loudly.

Slight tensing of body.
Foot tapping. Feel I impatient and irritated.

0
25
50
75
100

Boiling
Angry
Very annoyed
Annoyed
Slightly irritated

Very
annoyed

Slightly
irritated

Angry

How do I feel?

What I feel like doing?
CORE CONCEPT: **Expressing feelings appropriately is important for emotional well-being and for good relationships with others.**

EXPRESSING YOUR FEELINGS

PURPOSE

To give pupils practice in expressing their feelings

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Make a chart – appropriate to your class – of steps involved in expressing feelings (based on Teacher’s Notes.)

*Links with:* Most ‘Feelings’ exercises.

Materials

Markers, paper.

Chart of steps involved in expressing feelings. (Teacher’s notes)

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Warm-up
2. Teacher input on handling feelings
Detailed Procedure

1. **Warm-up**
   
   Introductory warm-up

   Ask students to stand up and mill around.

   People express different feelings in different ways. I am going to name a feeling and you should show the feelings physically or verbally.
   - You are really happy and joyful. How would you show that?
   - You are feeling anxious and fearful. How would you show that?
   - You feel extremely sad
   - You are extremely angry

   Give enough time for people to feel each feeling and show a way of expressing it.

   Review the experience. Ask the class to list any other methods for expressing the feeling. Emphasise the need to find ways of finishing or dealing with feelings in a healthy way.

2. **Teacher input on handling feelings**

   There are usually three choices when it comes to deciding how to handle your feelings.

   - **Notice how you are feeling let yourself feel it** and notice what is going on. No one else need be told. You can decide what to do – leave the room, breathe deeply, tell yourself you can handle it. A good example of this would be: a teacher is giving out to you unfairly and you are feeling upset. You might want to cry, but feel embarrassed in front of the class. So you could say to yourself – “I’m really fed up with this but this isn’t the place to cry. I can handle it. It is not the end of the world”.

   **45**
• You can say **how you are feeling** if you think it is suitable e.g., “I feel very annoyed”, “I’m feeling nervous about this match”, or “I’m delighted you could come”.

• You can **release the feeling physically** – crying if you are sad; going for a run or playing squash to let anger off; shaking if you are afraid; jumping and shouting for joy, etc.

3. **Drawing and discussion in pairs**

Drawing: allow about 5 minutes for drawing.

Ask students to draw situations as follows: (emphasise that artistic ability is not necessary).

• *A recent occasion in which you felt joy.*

• *A recent occasion in which you felt fear or anxiety.*

In pairs, discuss how you felt on these occasions. Elaborate on how you reacted and explain why you reacted as you did.

4. **Teacher input**

Display the chart/overhead of the **steps** involved in expressing feelings. Refer to each step elaborating on each one. Stop, look for feedback and clarify points as you’re going along, especially when working with less able pupils.

5. **Pairs**

Students are then asked to refer back to one of their pictures/situations and consider any changes they would make in the way they reacted. Whatever their choice, it should include doing something to take care of the feeling rather than suppressing or denying it.

### VARIATIONS

- Use only 3 feelings – mad, sad, glad for weaker pupils.
# STEPS INVOLVED IN EXPRESSING FEELINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Points for Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Stop and think of how you feel. Remember to tune into your body.</td>
<td>Remind them of previous exercises on knowing your feelings or post lists of feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decide what it is you are feeling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Think about your choices:</td>
<td>Emphasise that they always have a choice – they can take charge and make a good decision - one that is good for themselves and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Say nothing. It is not the right time or place.</td>
<td>Discuss appropriateness, e.g. if the other person was very angry and might hit you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Walk away for now</td>
<td>This is a good way to calm down if you are feeling too upset or angry, of if you are afraid you may hurt someone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Say to the person ‘I Feel…’</td>
<td>Emphasise starting with ‘I…’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Express your feeling in a safe way.</td>
<td>Discuss having a good cry, talking it over with someone, letting off steam in a safe way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Act out your best choice.</td>
<td>If the feeling is anger, and the pupil is too angry to handle it well, s/he would wait until they have cooled down before acting on their best choice. With other situations it is best to say how you feel to the person immediately in order to clear up the situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CORE CONCEPT: Anger is a natural feeling and can be expressed constructively and appropriately.

DEALING WITH ANGER

PURPOSE

It is useful to teach people to express anger as a build-up of anger can lead to emotional behavioural problems. There is a taboo in society on expressing anger and therefore it is essential to give people positive ways of releasing it.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This exercise is suitable for any age group. If time is limited cut out and distribute only one/two situations to each group. ‘Feeling Thermometer’ on anger should be done in a previous session.


Materials

Poster or OHT of spider diagram, showing possible strategies for dealing with your anger and dealing with another’s anger.
Copies of Handout 1 – ‘Dealing with Situations’
OHP if needed
PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Brainstorming strategies, display chart
3. ‘Dealing with Situations’, individual work
4. Small group
5. Feedback and large group discussion

Detailed Procedure

1. Introduction

   Introduction: link to experience in FE 8 ‘Feeling Thermometer’
   
   (a) **Controlling your own anger**
       
       It is important to control your anger. That does not mean that it is wrong to get angry. But to use your anger effectively, you must let people know why you are angry. Anger is something we all feel at times. It can be as inappropriate to suppress your anger, as it can be to let it erupt in a violent outburst. There’s no harm in showing you’re angry. It’s the way you do it that matters. However angry you are, try to keep your temper. Try to find a way of expressing your anger so that you let people know how you feel without losing control and without attacking them personally.

   (b) **Coping with someone else’s anger**
       
       Point out that it is very difficult to cope when another person is very angry. Whether they are right or wrong in directing their anger at you, it is best to give them time to get it off their chest before starting to discuss the matter. People can be so bad at handling anger they often save up a whole lot of it from different situations and then dump it all at once, so sometimes you get more that your fair share.

2. Brainstorming strategies, display chart

   Brainstorm possible guidelines for dealing with anger and put suggestions on a spider diagram on the same lines as chart given.
Display chart given and discuss all strategies which are constructive.

3. ‘Dealing with Situations’, individual work

Give pupils one page of Handout 1 – ‘Dealing with Situations’ and ask them to,

“First, decide individually how you could deal constructively with each situation and write down your decision”.

4. Small group

Then, form groups of 3/4 and discuss your individual decisions with other members of the group. Try to come up with a group decision for each situation.

5. Feedback and large group discussion

Report your decisions to the rest of the class. Three possible ways of dealing with each situation are suggested, but there are other possible ways. Suggest another course of action, if you think it would be the best way of dealing with a situation.
FE Lesson 10
Spider diagram for chart or OHT

STOP AND COUNT TO 10

DO SOMETHING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM SITUATION

DO SOMETHING TO GET RID OF THE TENSION, RUN, DO SOME DEEP BREATHING, BEAT A PILLOW, PAINT YOUR ANGER, WRITE A LETTER AND TEAR IT UP

WALK AWAY FOR NOW

SUGGEST A SOLUTION

TELL THE PERSON IN WORDS WHY YOU ARE ANGRY

LISTEN TO WHAT THE PERSON IS SAYING

KEEP LISTENING

LET THE PERSON KNOW YOU ARE LISTENING

ASK WHY S/HE IS ANGRY

DEALING WITH ANGER
NOTES FOR EXPLANATION OF ‘DEALING WITH ANGER’ CHART

(a) Stop and count to ten: discuss the importance of allowing oneself time to cool off and think.

(b) Think about choices: remember you always have a choice.

(c) Tell the person in words why you are angry:
   - Discuss how to tell the person in a way which will not make things worse, e.g., start with “I feel ... when you ... ”.

(d) Listen to what the person is saying:
   - Discuss the importance of allowing the other person to finish. Try not to interrupt or start making excuses or defending yourself. Tell yourself “I can handle this.”

(e) Keep breathing if you’re getting very upset. Look at the person. Nod or use other body language to show you’re listening.

(f) Let the person know you are listening: e.g.,
   - “I can see you are really angry”, or “I understand what you’re saying”.

(g) Ask why s/he is angry if they have not said it already. Clarify anything you’re not clear about.

(h) Suggest a solution if you can think of one, e.g., if it is somehow your fault, offer an apology or offer to replace something.

(i) Walk away for now if appropriate – though if it were a teacher or a policeman or an angry parent, you would be better to wait. Do not continue to confront the person as you may be in a no-win situation.

(j) Do something to get rid of their tension, e.g. run, do some deep breathing, beat a pillow, or paint your anger. Finding a way of letting go of the physical/emotional tension prevents anger building up.

(k) Do something to solve the problem situation: ask for help if necessary. Venting anger is not sufficient - the underlying problem needs to be resolved.
DEALING WITH SITUATIONS

Here are ten situations, which might make you angry. What’s the best way of dealing with them?

1. A group of you are messing about in class. You feel that you are all equally to blame but the teacher singles you out and punishes you.

   **What do you do?**
   
   (a) Get so cross that you start arguing with the teacher and get into even more trouble
   
   (b) Regard it as a bit of bad luck that you’ve been singled out and just accept the punishment and get on with your work.
   
   (c) Control your anger and decide to talk to the teacher about it at the end of the lesson

2. You are playing in an important match. Someone commits a nasty foul, which leaves one of your team lying on the ground in agony.

   **What do you do?**
   
   (a) Do nothing and leave the referee to sort out the situation.
   
   (b) Try to stop anyone on your side from doing anything that might make the situation worse.
   
   (c) Rush across and get involved in an argument or a scuffle with the person responsible.

3. A relative, such as an aunt, starts criticising your behaviour to one of your parents.

   **What do you do?**
   
   (a) Angrily tell her to mind her own business and leave the room in a temper.
   
   (b) Calmly let her have her say and then politely but firmly defend yourself.
   
   (c) Get up and leave the room without saying anything.

4. You are walking through the school playground when someone starts calling you names and insulting you.

   **What do you do?**
   
   (a) Start calling them names and insulting them back.
   
   (b) Carry on walking and ignore them.
   
   (c) Lose your temper and start to threaten them.
5 Your next door neighbour comes round one day while your parents are out and starts complaining about the noise you and your friends are making and about how loud you’re playing your CDs.  
What do you do?  
(a) Listen to their point of view and try to reach an agreement about what is an acceptable level for your music.  
(b) Apologise to them and say you will stop playing your CDs so loudly.  
(c) Start arguing and have a shouting match with her/him.

6 You are told that someone in your group has been spreading rumours about you.  
What do you do?  
(a) Check that the person has been spreading rumours about you. Then either see them and ask them to stop or tell a teacher about it and ask for advice.  
(b) Go rushing off to find them and tell them unless they stop you’ll beat them up.  
(c) Decide that the best thing to do is just to ignore it.

7 Something has been vandalised at school. You are being questioned about it and you get the impression that for some reason the vice-principal thinks you were involved and won’t believe you when you say you weren’t.  
What do you do?  
(a) Start angrily defending yourself and threaten to get your mum or dad to come to the school.  
(b) Start being uncooperative and sullen because you can see you are not being believed.  
(c) Patiently go on explaining what you were doing at the time to prove that it couldn’t have been you.

8 You are outside a shop when a group of people your own age come rushing out pursued by an angry shopkeeper. They run off, but the shopkeeper mistakes you for one of them, grabs you and starts shouting at you, accusing you of causing a disturbance in the shop.  
What do you do?  
(a) Wait for the shopkeeper to calm down and then say s/he has made a mistake.  
(b) Start shouting at the shopkeeper and tell him/her to leave you alone because you haven’t done anything.  
(c) Struggle to get free, then run off down the street shouting insults at him/her.

9 You are watching your favourite TV programme when your mother brings a visitor into the room and ask you to turn the TV off?  
What do you do?  
(a) Get up complaining loudly; turn the TV off and storm out of the room.  
(b) Refuse to switch the set off and have an argument with your mum in front of the visitor.  
(c) Get up politely, do as you mum asks and make an excuse to leave the room.

10 Your elder brother or sister starts teasing you about something to do with how you look.  
What do you do?  
(a) Treat it as a joke and start teasing them back about something.  
(b) Just ignore it or calmly tell them that you don’t find it funny.  
(c) Get so upset that you end up shouting at them and going off to your room in a sulk.
CORE CONCEPT:  *Anger is a natural feeling and can be expressed constructively and appropriately.*

SIDE STEPPING ANGER

All of the strategies considered here involve doing something *consciously* in the presence of anger. Most often, we react unconsciously when we are attacked, thus playing the same game as our attacker. Giving people a conscious action to perform in the presence of anger can give them that split second that is needed to put the situation in perspective.

PURPOSE

To teach pupils a method of protecting themselves emotionally from an aggressive attack from another person.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS


**Materials**

Flipchart or overhead project for listing steps.
PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Teacher input
2. Outline strategies
3. Role play
4. Discussion and homework

Detailed Procedure

1. Teacher input

Young people receive a lot of verbal hostility from parents, teachers and peers. Hardly a day passes in which someone does not tell you to sit down, shut up, eat your beans, go to hell or not to do that again as long as they live! Often, these demands are made in angry or hurtful ways. One of the interesting things about anger is that it is often misdirected: we get mad at one person or thing and take it out on another. This exercise suggests a simple strategy for dealing with anger which is either misdirected at you or is expressed in an aggressive or destructive way.

Sometimes it is better to step aside rather than argue back or try to defend yourself. For example, what would you do if a bullet was coming towards you? You would duck – no point in trying to face up to a bullet! The destructive energy of a bullet is better ducked than confronted!

Similarly, the best way to defend against a hostile attack is to step aside emotionally, let the attacker blow off steam and do not ‘take it on board’. This is best because if we resist and fight back, we use up our own energy and are likely to bring further abuse or another attack on ourselves.

2. Outline strategies

Teach pupils any of the following techniques for dealing with an unwarranted or aggressive verbal attack. Role playing games are helpful in learning how to use these techniques.
**Things to do when people say bad things to you,**

- Imagine the bad thing like a breeze that you can feel go by you.
- Imagine the bad thing is like an arrow that sails by as you step aside.
- Ask (if it is safe!) ‘Are you sure you are mad at the right person?’
- Say, ‘It hurts when I get yelled at.’
- Make a circle with your thumb and forefinger.
- Imagine you are a duck, and the bad things slips off you like water off a duck’s back.

Can you think of others?

3. **Role play**

   Ask students to suggest situations where they have been heavily criticised, yelled at, etc., and role play trying one of the above. The pupil should say out loud which method they are using.

4. **Discussion and homework**

   Discuss whether they would use these ideas and ask them to practise during the week.
CORE CONCEPT: Understanding the effects of alcohol is essential if one is to make responsible alcohol-related decisions.

CONSEQUENCES

PURPOSE

To help students understand some effects of excessive use of alcohol.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS


Materials

Copies of Handout 1 – ‘Consequences’ – one for each small group.
Copies of Handout 2 – ‘How Would You Feel?’
Copies of Handout 3 on Alcohol from DM 11.

PROCEDURE

Outline

1. Present Handout 1 – ‘Consequences’
2. Brainstorm consequences
3. Individual work/small group discussion
4. Large group discussion
5. Work on Handout ‘Alcohol - The effects’ in small groups. Feedback and discussion.

Detailed Procedure

1. Present Handout 1 – ‘Consequences’
   Divide class into groups. Present Handout 1 to the class, one sheet to each group. Ask the groups to read them and to make a list of other situations where alcohol is involved in getting young people into trouble.

   Report back to the class and discuss.

2. Brainstorm consequences
   Ask students to brainstorm the consequences of excessive alcohol use – include consequences for the individual who drinks the alcohol and for other people.

3. Individual work/small group discussion
   Ask students to individually complete Handout 2 – ‘How Would You Feel?’ and, in groups of four or five, to discuss their responses.

4. Large group discussion
   In large groups, identify situations which the students would least like to be in and discuss the implications of these situations.

5. Work on Handout ‘Alcohol - the effects’ from (DM 11) in small groups. Feedback and discussion.
   Ask students in their small groups to consult Handout 3, DM 11 and to find an explanation of how alcohol contributes to creating these undesirable situations.

   - What effect does it have on different parts of the body?
   - How long do these effects last?
   - Is there any difference in the effects on boys and girls?
   - If so, what is the difference?

   Take feedback from each group and discuss.
CONSEQUENCES

1. I am 16 years old and I go to discos and concerts quite regularly. Before going out, myself and my friends always get drunk. About two months ago, we met some fellas at a disco and Debbie really fancied one of them. She went off with him and now she’s up the walls – she’s missed her second period since then and she’s certain she’s pregnant. She hasn’t seen the guy since.

2. The Junior Cert results came out yesterday and myself and Ann went down the town to join in the celebrations. We met my boyfriend Tom and some of his mates and we all got drunk. Ann started dancing real close with Tom. I couldn’t believe it. I just walked up and slapped her in the face. She started screaming and a big fight broke out involving more of the lads. The police were called and now we’re sitting in the Garda Station waiting for my parents. My Da will kill me.

3. Since Christmas we had all been looking forward to the Valentine’s disco. We had all the arrangements made and we were looking forward to getting drunk. When we got there I offered to buy my girlfriend a pint. She refused and went into a sulk. I bought myself a pint and sat down with her. She was in a right ripper of a mood and turned around and had a go at me about drinking. I just kept drinking and got completely drunk. On the way home she started moaning again. I just went mad and hit her really hard. Now she won’t go out with me.
**HOW WOULD YOU FEEL?**

Indicate how you would feel if you had too much to drink and one of the following things happened.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Would You Feel?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Couldn’t Care</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were sick over your boy/girlfriend at a party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were sick in front of your parents after getting home late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were picked up by the Gardaí.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You got into a fight with one of your friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You got into a fight and injured another boy/girl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You made a fool of yourself in front of your friends by doing something stupid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You could not remember what you did at the party the night before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You got pregnant or got a girl pregnant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add other situations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FE Lesson 13
Core
Any Established Group

CORE CONCEPT:  *Understanding how family members are affected by alcohol dependence is important in dealing with alcohol dependence.*

**CHILDREN AND ALCOHOL**

**PURPOSE**

To heighten understanding of the effects of alcohol dependence on family members.

**PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**NOTE:** It is very likely that one or more of the students in the class is living with an alcohol dependent parent or family member and the issues raised could bring the emotions they are feeling to the surface. Be prepared to deal with this.

Have telephone numbers/information about helping agencies available immediately. Check how to contact local AA, Al-Anon and Al-Ateen groups.

A second session will be needed if having a visitor.


**Materials**

Copies of all handouts

**PROCEDURE**

**Outline**

1. Stories on Handouts 1, 2 and 3 discussed in small groups
2. Large group feedback and discussion
3. Handout 4 – ‘The effects of Alcohol Dependence on Children’
4. Where to get help

**Detailed Procedure**

1. Stories on Handouts 1, 2 and 3 discussed in small groups.
   Divide class into groups of four. Distribute Handouts 1, 2 and 3, one to each group and have them read them and answer the questions on the back.

2. Large group feedback and discussion
   Take feedback from each group and discuss. Raise the questions:
   - How is the alcohol dependent person affected?
   - How is the family affected?
   - How can an alcohol dependent person be helped?
   - How can the children be helped?

   Present Handout 4 – ‘The effects of Alcohol Dependence on Children’. Invite comments/reactions. If appropriate, present Handout 5 ‘ ‘Alcohol and Alcohol Dependence’.

4. Where to get help
   Outline where to get help.

**Additional activity:** Visitors – Al-Anon and Al-Ateen.
It could be useful to bring in members of Al-Anon and Al-Ateen support groups at this stage. If this is to happen, time needs to be given to the class to prepare for visitors - to look at the issues they wish to raise. Direct contact with the people who will visit is also necessary so that they understand the programme that is being covered with the class.

See School Handbook, Resource Section for useful Videos.
DAVE’S STORY

‘The exams are just finished and there’s a school trip coming up. All my friends are going. I asked Dad for the money and he promised to pay if I passed my exams.

The results arrived today, I passed! I waited in to tell Dad when he came home. But when he came in the door I knew at once that he’d been drinking. I told him about the exam and asked for the money. He exploded and started shouting, “Where the hell do you think all the money round here comes from? I haven’t got it to give to you”. I shouted back. Mum didn’t even stand up for me. I suppose she didn’t want a clatter.’

Discuss the following questions:

1. Why did Dave’s Dad behave like this?
2. Had Dave a right to be angry?
3. Could the fight have been prevented?
4. How?
5. Is this situation going to affect Dave’s relationship with his Dad?
6. How?
7. How is Dave feeling?
8. What can he do to cope with these feelings?
GER’S STORY

‘I’m really in trouble now! I just couldn’t take anything else, so when Ms Clarke said my homework was careless, I got really aggressive and told her what I thought. She’s such an old cow! She hasn’t a clue what it’s like in my house.

Mum and Dad came in drunk again last night and had a terrible row. They woke us all up and I couldn’t get back to sleep. It’s getting worse and I don’t know what to do.’

Discuss the following questions:

1. Why did Ger attack the teacher?
2. Had she a right to be angry with Ms Clarke?
3. What else could she have done?
4. How is she feeling now?
5. What can she do to cope with these feelings?
6. What can she do about the whole situation?
'My home is different from that of my friends. I never know what is going to happen. My Dad drinks and we never know what sort of a mood he is going to be in. Sometimes he is nice; other times he is awful. He says very mean things that hurt. You just cannot talk to him about anything that matters. He has a good job and we should have enough money, but sometimes there is not even enough for food. The fighting is nearly worse than the alcohol. Mam gets on to him about his drinking and they have terrible rows. I hate it. Nobody feels good in my home. Mam looks awful and she gets into bad moods. David stays out as much as he can. He disappears to his room if he is at home. He does not want to be involved.

Trish and I often get blamed for rows. Sometimes if we say anything to help, we get blamed and Dad says really nasty, mean things to us.

I feel different from my friends. I do not bring them home much as I just don’t know what might happen. I would be afraid that Dad would be nasty to them or that Mam would be in a bad mood. My friends don’t know what it’s like at home as Dad has usually been so nice to them. They wouldn’t believe what it’s really like. I wish I was old enough to go and live in a flat.'

Discuss the following questions:

1. What are the problems for Lee and for the family?
2. What parts of the family's life are affected? How?
3. How is she feeling?
4. What is her life like?
5. How does she see things?
6. What kind of future does she have?
7. What can she do?
8. Can you explain this father’s behaviour?
THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE ON CHILDREN

The effects of alcohol dependence spread throughout a family. Children are the real innocent sufferers of the alcohol dependent parent. They observe a home life that is often very different from that of their friends. They are often afraid to bring friends home. At times they can sense the resentment, rage and hopelessness of their parents. It can be a baffling, complex and frightening experience. Probably the most baffling aspect of the child’s life with the alcohol dependent parent is the sheer inconsistency of their relationship. The alcohol dependent person can be the most loving of parents at times. S/he can laugh with the family and take an interest in their welfare. Then s/he can change from the loving parent into an inconsiderate and selfish drinker. The fact that the children are never sure just what behaviour they are going to meet makes for an uneasy life. Most families experiencing the effects of alcohol dependence have ongoing feelings of tension, anxiety and hopelessness. What is going to happen next? Are Mum and Dad going to fight tonight? Will s/he make a fool out of her/himself again?

In some families where there is alcohol dependence, violence occurs. In some situations the alcohol exaggerates an already violent situation. In others, the person is only violent when s/he drinks and then becomes vicious. So both partner and children may go in fear and terror of what the person will be like when they arrive home or what kind of state Dad or Mum will be in the morning.

A common feature in many homes where alcohol dependence is a problem is that few such families engage in direct, honest communication about it and that as the problem progresses, the family becomes more isolated. They withdraw from each other and avoid contact by staying away from home or in one’s room. Real contact with friends and acquaintances is often reduced.

Children cannot ask their friends into a home in which there may be chaos and constant crises. They cannot talk freely about the home situation because they feel that this involves negative comparison with the home life of their friends. They often cannot enjoy school life because they are, through worry, unable either to concentrate or relax in class.

This is a baffling, frightening experience for children. The love that should be theirs is often denied them, or if it is given, it is in such a manner that it just cannot be understood by the children. They may feel responsible for the alcohol dependent person’s change of moods and feel that they are wrong or have to be different. It is important for families in this situation to understand alcohol dependence and how behaviour changes with alcohol.
ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

How alcohol affects behaviour
Alcohol is absorbed very quickly and starts to have effect within 5/10 minutes. Many factors influence how alcohol affects you, but the most important one is the amount of drink taken. With small amounts of alcohol, a person feels relaxed, less inhibited and more talkative. With an increase in drink taken, co-ordination begins to diminish and there is slurring of speech. More drinks can result in staggering, double vision, less self-control and more extreme responses (being aggressive, picking fights, crying more easily), followed by unconsciousness.

Alcohol Dependence
Alcohol is addictive. Most people drink in small, irregular amounts; they decide when and how much to drink. Some, even young people become dependent on alcohol. They find that they cannot control their drinking and feel a craving to drink. They no longer drink for pleasure but drink to feel ‘normal’. They feel that they cannot cope with everyday problems without alcohol. Most alcohol dependent persons do not know that they are alcohol dependent. They often convince themselves that they do not have a problem. As the alcohol dependency process goes on, the person’s behaviour changes. The alcohol dependent person feels bad about him/herself. Relationships with family/friends/workmates suffer and financial problems often occur. With increasing use, the alcohol dependent person may have memory lapses (not remember what happened). S/he becomes pre-occupied with alcohol.

Alcohol dependence destroys self-confidence. To the alcohol dependent person, the need to use alcohol takes precedence over family, work and social life. Their whole lives are out of focus; the need help.

Organisations from which people with problems related to alcohol may get help:

(a) Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), 109 South Circular Road, Dublin 8 or your local group.
(b) Al-Anon Family Groups and Al-Ateen, 5 Capel Street, Dublin 1 or your local group.
(c) Treatment facilities in each Health Board area.
CORE CONCEPT: The feeling of grief is the natural response to loss and expressing it is essential to the process of 'letting go'.

LIZ

Death is a part of life. Every family experiences loss and many children begin to experience difficulties in school after the loss of someone important – a parent, grandparent or other significant person. Some schools organise very successful bereavement groups. This is an important aspect of a school’s caring response to the ‘whole person’. This session provides a way of recognising and validating the child’s experience of loss. While it concentrates on loss through death, you may also wish to extend it to loss through family breakdown.

PURPOSE

To introduce the topic of death and loss and how to cope with it.
To enable pupils to identify grief as the emotion associated with death and loss.
To enable pupils to discuss ways in which people express their grief.
To help pupils analyse society’s different expectations of the response to grief for men and women.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

N.B. Check before doing this exercise whether there is anyone in the class who has had a recent loss and whether they want to participate. Do not assume that you should not do it – this may be colluding with the cultural taboo on death and if the group has a good level of trust and support this may be very helpful to the pupil. Just check and respect the needs and wishes of the pupil concerned. Make sure there is time to help and that you are comfortable with the topic yourself. This exercise is more suitable for groups of 10-15.

Materials
Copies of Handout 1 – ‘How to Help Someone Who Has Been Bereaved’.

PROCEDURE

Outline
1. Introduction and show of hands to check experience of loss
2. Read story
3. Small group discussion with feedback to large group
4. Handout on ‘How To Help’

Detailed Procedure
1. Introduction and show of hands to check experience of loss

   Seat the class in a circle and introduce the topic:
   We will be discussing death and grieving in this section. Talking about death affects us all differently and so it is important to be sensitive to each other. We are now going to look at our own experience of death and loss. We’ll start by doing a brief check of how many of us share the experience of loss. I will ask some questions. We won’t spend time discussing them at this stage. Each person should just raise his or her hand to show “Yes”.

   • Who has ever experienced the death of someone quite close?
   • Who has lost a pet they were very fond of?
   • Who has ever experienced grief?
   • Who has ever been to a funeral?
   • Who has ever found it difficult to know what to say to someone who is experiencing grief?
   • Who finds it difficult to cry or express their feelings when grieving?
Who would like the opportunity to discuss and talk about how people grieve and how to be of help to a friend during this experience?

Note the numbers responding positively to each question to see how much shared experience there is.
Give students the opportunity to share their reactions and their feelings after this initial check.

2. **Read story**

Read the following story:

*Liz is 15 years old. Her father died when she was just 13 and starting Secondary School. She was very upset at the time but everyone was pre-occupied with her mother who was feeling very low and had a lot of financial worries – a young family to bring up, no job and a mortgage to pay off on the house. Liz started doing badly at school. She dropped from the top half of the class right down to the bottom. Now she is about to do her Junior Certificate and is very anxious and upset about it. She cannot study at all and feels she is very stupid because she often has to ask teachers to explain things several times. Even though they are mostly very helpful, she is afraid they will think she is a nuisance and more and more frequently she just gives up trying.*

3. **Small group discussion with feedback to large group**

Ask the class to break into groups of three and to discuss all the different feelings you think Liz has experienced in the last two years.

In large group take some feedback. Then return to small groups and discuss:

- What might have helped Liz?
- What could Liz have done when her father died?
- What could other people have done?

4. **Handout on ‘How To Help’**

Introduce Handout 1 – ‘How to help someone who has been Bereaved’.
VARIATIONS

- If the group is supportive and interested and you feel comfortable with this yourself you could continue with the following.
  The following statements could be completed and discussed in small groups.
  Death is ______________________________________________________
  If someone I loved died today, I would feel __________________________
  When someone close to me died, I felt ______________________________
  When I grieve, I ________________________________________________
  Something that helped me live through the grieving experience was _______
  ______________________________________________________________

  In a large group give students an opportunity to share their reactions and feelings.
- Additional discussion triggers on Society’s Reaction to Death for older/brighter pupils:

SOCIETY’S REACTION TO DEATH

- Men do not experience grief as intensely as women. Discuss

- Society expects and encourages men and women to express their grief in different ways. What do women do? What do men do?

- Do you think the topic of death is kept quiet in this society? What about this class? How do you feel now as we are discussing it?

- Is this similar to what happens in wider society?

- In what other groups have you ever discussed the topic of death and grief?

- Do your religious beliefs affect your understanding of death? How?

- How do they influence the way we cope with grief?
HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN BEREAVED

- Be careful not to avoid the person. Make a point of seeing them and saying “I’m sorry”. If you find this hard to do, send a card or letter first. Bereaved people say that cards and letters of sympathy are a great comfort.

- Give the bereaved person the opportunity to talk, and let them cry. Listen carefully. Try not to join them in making judgements like, “Yes, the doctor didn’t do enough”.

- Try to understand that guilt is often part of grief. For example, a bereaved parent might say, “If only I hadn’t let him have such a powerful motorbike”. Just listen – don’t try to persuade them otherwise.

- If you feel overwhelmed by the strength of the person’s emotions, then back off a little. Remember you are not the cause of the grief. You are simply helping them by letting them express their feelings.

- Offer to do some practical tasks like the shopping, housework, babysitting.

- Don’t worry if the person is full of self-pity. This feeling is an important part of the healing process.

- If the bereaved person goes away for a while, contact them when they return.

- Try to encourage them to take reasonable care of themselves, such as eating enough and getting enough sleep. Don’t stop inviting them to take part in things, but don’t pressurise them to join if they refuse your invitations.

- People who have been bereaved feel particularly low at Christmas and other joyous holidays and on the birthday and anniversary of the day of death of their loved one. Encourage them to write down thoughts and feelings at such times, or send them a special bouquet of flowers. These actions often help them.

- If they cannot seem to cope, encourage them to contact a professional counselling service, e.g., school guidance counsellor, Childline, The Samaritans (with phone service at any hour of the day or night). You can leave names and phone numbers of suitable organisations by the phone as a gentle hint, and to make it easy for them to ring.
CORE CONCEPT: There are alternatives to drugs for coping with many of life’s problems.

TRANQUILLISERS: THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

PURPOSE

To enable pupils to examine and assimilate information about tranquillisers.
To help pupils identify the resources they have available to them to cope with stress.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This exercise is in two parts and may take two lessons depending on the length of the class period.


Materials

Poster paper, felt-tip pens, a copy of the quotations for each pupil.

NOTE: Part 2 would be most useful if at least some of the following sessions developing certain skills have been done first, e.g., relaxation and breathing exercises; positive self-talk, positive posters; positive feedback; expressing feelings, etc. Assertiveness skills can be presented as an additional resource pupils can develop for dealing with all kinds of stressful situations.
**PROCEDURE**

**Outline**

*Part 1*

1. Read Handout 1 and discuss in small groups
2. Design posters
3. Display and discuss

*Part 2*

1. Drawing
2. Pairs exercise
3. Homework

**Detailed Procedure**

*Part 1*

1. **Read Handout 1 and discuss in small groups**
   
   Ask pupils to get into groups of four and distribute Handout 1 ‘Tranquillisers: The Search for Happiness’ to each group. Tell them they are to read the quotations and discuss them. They should list the points with which they agree and those with which they disagree.

   Take feedback from the groups and discuss.

2. **Design posters**
   
   Now ask them to design two posters with guidelines on the management of stress and the use of tranquillisers – one for doctors with regard to the prescription of tranquillisers and one for patients. They can refer to Handout 2 –‘Tranquillisers – Some Facts’ for additional information.

3. **Display and discuss**
Part 2 – My Own Resource Bank

1. **Drawing**
   Distribute poster paper and ask pupils to draw shelves on the paper. They are then to imagine it is a strong room in a bank (their own resource bank). ‘My Own Resource Bank’ should be written on the top of the poster. Each shelf can be stocked with anything that helps you to cope with stress. The shelves can have different labels, e.g.:
   - People to whom I can talk – who will listen and both support and challenge me. (Include young people and adults, family and teachers, youth workers, etc.).
   - Relaxation and pep-up exercises I can do.
   - Messages I can give myself about my own inner resources (refer back to exercises in the section on self esteem – pupils can consult their journals).
   - Leisure activities I pursue which help relieve stress.
   - Helping processonals and agencies.
   - Healthy living habits I have developed.
   - Physical exercises I can take.

2. **Pairs exercise**
   Discussion in pairs: one acts as client, one as helper. Sharing your drawing ask each other the following questions:
   - Do you use your resources to help and support yourself?
   - *Which ones do you use frequently? Which ones seldom or not at all?*
   - What can you do about this?
   - Do you want to do it for yourself or do you want other to do it for you?
   - What can you do for yourself? What can you ask for help with? Who could you ask?

3. **Homework**
   Decide on one thing that you will do this week to support yourself or develop your ability to support yourself, e.g., practise a relaxation exercise or do some positive self-talk in a difficult situation.
TRANQUILLISERS:
THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

The following quotations are reprinted with kind permission of Body Talk: printed as part of IT, Irish Tatler Magazine, October 1987.

“Of course people will demand pills from their doctors in a society where problems are solved on television in 45 minutes and people refuse to believe that some suffering is part of life … Many of the problems brought to your average GP are blown out of proportion and are things our parents dealt with as ‘life’ … Mind you, I think something like Valium can be a great short-term crutch.”

(Eastern Health Board doctor).

“Family doctors say that half of the patients they see are not physically sick, but suffering from emotional stress. We have, as a society, developed the habit of going to the doctor when our hearts are broken, our marriages fall apart, our husbands lose their jobs, we land in debt or we find ourselves redundant. What can a doctor do? Sometimes, if he has the time, the doctor will try to listen. Usually the patient wants a prescription, a little relief, at least.”

(Additional note: the average GP consultation lasts 7 minutes).

“A tranquilliser can be effective and useful to help a person going through an acute period of stress. There are not many patients like Anne Mc Stay, mother of 13, and not many doctors like her Ballyfermot doctor who appeared on RTE’s Live at Three during Women’s Health Week one season. Anne told how she had asked her doctor for Valium to ‘help me through it all’. His prescription was for her to go back to school and finish her education as the beginning of taking her life in her own hands, strengthening herself permanently, ‘instead of limping along on pills’. She found the courage to do as suggested, going from strength to strength with her education and has never since ‘darkened any doctor’s door looking for Valium!’.”
TRANQUILLISERS - SOME FACTS

Tranquillisers are drugs, which fall into two main groups. One group is used to treat serious mental illness and the other group is used to control anxiety and/or stress or to induce sleep. We are more familiar with these tranquillisers, e.g., Valium, Librium, Dalmane, and Mogodon. They come mainly in tablet or capsule form.

These drugs can only be sold by a pharmacist in accordance with a doctor’s prescription. Therefore, it is illegal to possess them without a prescription or to sell them or to give them to someone else. If somebody is using tranquillisers they should always keep them locked away, or with them and out of the reach of children. Also, if somebody has been taking Valium for a month or more their doctor should reassess their condition and their continued use of the drug.

Some people sell tranquillisers illegally. They can be seen as drugs to experiment with or a means to getting stoned. It is very important to know the effects of tranquillisers both short-term and long-term. They can be very dangerous.
Short Term Effects:

- You become less alert.
- Your mental activity is depressed.
- You may become drowsy.
- You may forget things.
- Complicated tasks become difficult.
- Co-ordination becomes reduced.
- Sleep inducing drugs can cause a hangover effect.

N.B. If tranquillisers are mixed with alcohol the effects are magnified.

While under the influence of tranquillisers there are other potential dangers, which may occur. You may fall and/or injure yourself, be sick or become unconscious.

Your performance at school, socially or at home will be affected as will your ability to make responsible decisions.

Long Term Effects:

- Even after short periods of taking tranquillisers on prescription (4-6 weeks) withdrawal symptoms can be serious, e.g., headaches, sweating, insomnia, anxiety and depression, psychotic reactions.
- A tolerance for the drugs can be built up, therefore increasing the risk of severe physical and psychological dependence.
CORE CONCEPT:  *Feelings affect behaviour.*

**WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

**PURPOSE**

To enable pupils to see how drugs are sometimes used as a prop for low self confidence.

**PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Copy and cut out letters from Handout 1.


**Materials**

Copies of a ‘Dear Anne’ letter for each group

**PROCEDURE**

**Outline**

1. Pupils read a ‘Dear Anne’ letter from Handout 1.
2. Small group discussion.
3. Feedback and discussion.

**Detailed Procedure**

1. Pupils read a ‘Dear Anne’ letter from Handout 1.
   Ask pupils to form groups of four. Distribute a ‘letter’ to each group. Ask them to read the letter or read it out loud with less able pupils.

2. Small group discussion.
   Ask pupils to discuss some or all of the following in their small groups:
   - What problems does this person have?
   - What ‘solutions’ are they thinking of?
   - Are these real solutions? Will they work?
   - Would alcohol or cannabis make you feel better? If yes, how?
   - What information is your answer based on?
   - Write out a few points you would put in a reply to this letter.

   Use the facts on Alcohol and Cannabis from ‘Understanding Drugs’ to make sure your advice is based on the real facts.

3. Feedback and discussion.
Dear Anne,

I am very shy and lack confidence in myself. I have been invited to my first party. I’m dying to go but at the same time I’m nervous. I’m going with Carol – she always seems very sure of herself.

She keeps criticising me. “Don’t wear that!”, “Your hair’s awful that way”, “Those shoes look so old-fashioned, haven’t you any other ones?”

By the time we’re leaving I usually feel terrible and don’t feel like going. When I say this, she always says, “come on, one or two drinks and you will feel grand – you won’t be worrying about a thing.”

That’s another problem – I don’t know whether to drink or not. I promised Mum not to but everyone else says they have promised too, and still they drink!

What should I do?

Dear Anne,

I feel left out from the rest of the class but I try to cover up my feelings and put them to the back of my head and go on with my life. I feel shy when a girl comes up to me and might ask me out. I get all flustered and go red in the face. Maybe it is my imagination but I don’t think so. When I go out I might drink or smoke just to get into a group of people. Just because they smoke I feel that it is right to do so. Sometimes I drink too much and then I worry that people are talking about me.

What should I do?
Dear Anne,

I feel overweight, no matter how hard I try to diet or exercise I haven’t the willpower to keep up battling to lose pounds. I love eating and find it hard to stop eating. What can I do to lose weight – especially on my thighs and bum?

When I find out that a boy I fancy also fancies me, I get embarrassed and nervous in his company. I blush an awful lot and because of this I’m unable to talk to him and we end up not talking to each other.

Recently I became involved with a group who regularly smoke dope. I don’t want to take drugs but I felt so stupid I took some. I felt much more relaxed and was laughing and enjoying myself so much I even chatted someone up. I don’t want to get into the habit.

What should I do?

Dear Anne,

I am very shy and find it hard to face a group of people or go somewhere new where I wouldn’t know anyone. A lot of my friends drink and smoke but I don’t and so I tend to feel isolated. I have no wish to drink or smoke and I know none of my friends expect me to but I feel left out just because I’m “different”.

I also find it hard to talk when I know a lot of people are watching and I get flustered and confused and sound like an idiot when I know in my head exactly what to say. This annoys me a lot.

What should I do?