

BAM! Student/Teacher Resilience Lessons

Lesson 3: Actions (10+ minutes)

NOTE: Links to all videos, webpages, worksheets, and other materials mentioned in this lesson can be found at at.apa.org/resilience-bam. A full suggested script is also available online as a guide through the material in this lesson.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to consider how their values inform their actions.
2. Students will be able to explain helpful actions they can take to reduce stress.
3. Students will be able to apply deep breathing and/or muscle relaxation to relax their bodies when they feel stress.

LESSON MATERIALS

- Optional: Progressive Muscle Relaxation Video (youtube.com/watch?v=rQVpkZACGCE)

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction (2-3 minutes)

Welcome and Recap

- Welcome everyone back to the lesson.
- Remind them about the impact of stress on the body and how their values inform their choices and can help them better cope with stress.
- Ask who remembers the Just Breathe exercise.
 - » Remind students of the basics and practice with three sets of deep breathing:
 - » Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, and breathe out for 6 seconds.
 - » See the Progressive Muscle Relaxation exercise detailed below as an alternative here or if time allows, practice both techniques.

Actions Activity (3-4 minutes)

- Discuss with students the way we respond to stress and anxiety through our actions.
- A little bit of stress can help us and motivate us to take action. Too much, however, leads to distress. The things we do when we are in distress are called our “coping mechanisms.”
- Introduce the Actions part of the BAM! model and ask students to consider the ways that the actions that we take when stressed can be unhelpful or helpful. Have students list examples of both unhealthy/unhelpful actions and healthy/helpful actions on whiteboards or discuss them in groups.
 - » Examples of unhelpful actions: withdrawing from friends and family; laying in bed all day; putting off responsibilities like homework or chores; drug or alcohol use, etc.
 - » Examples of helpful actions: connecting with friends; taking a walk, running, or engaging in some other movement; talking to someone about our challenges; engaging in problem-solving; engaging in an action you value or an action consistent with your personal values, etc.
 - » Ask students to keep in mind how their personal values can help inform healthy and helpful actions. For example, they can use their personal values to make decisions about what they want to do and how they want to spend their time.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION ACTIVITY

Optional Activity (5 minutes)

- Introduce a progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) technique and have students practice it.
- The key to PMR is noticing what the muscles feel like when they are tense, and slowly relaxing the muscles so that you begin to notice the difference in how they feel when they are relaxed. The more you practice this, the more quickly your body can relax. When muscles are tense, they might even hurt.
- Students can start by clenching their right fist as tight as they can without hurting themselves. They should be instructed to make a fist and hold it for 10 seconds and then slowly relax for 6 seconds, noticing the difference. Next, they can bend their arms at the elbow and tighten without clenching their fist, working through other muscle groups next (i.e., neck, stomach, face, legs, toes).
- If at any moment students feel uncomfortable, encourage them to sit quietly rather than feel obligated to participate.
- A step-by-step description on how to do this is provided in the full suggested script. You may also use this video link to a one-minute relaxation practice for additional support: youtube.com/watch?v=rQVpkZACGCE

Discussion (3 minutes)

Ask students:

- Who would like to share their thoughts about the activity/activities, or about healthy and helpful or unhealthy or unhelpful actions you or others have taken in response to stress?
- How can being active relieve stress and improve mood?
- What is causing you the most stress today/this week?
- What activities are you doing to reduce that stress? What actions have you seen other people do to relieve their stress (helpful or unhelpful)?
- How do your values inform your actions?

Closing (2 minutes)

Summary

- Remind students how helpful actions can reduce stress.
- Discuss how students can evaluate if their actions are helpful or not. It can often be hard to tell if our actions are helpful or unhelpful at the moment. Something you can ask yourself is, “When I did that, did it work, or did it not work?” Some unhealthy coping activities may work in the short term but not in the long term. In other words, ask yourself if your actions helped you work through your stress/solve your problem, or did it do the opposite? Helpful actions can allow us to get through whatever situation we may be facing.

Practice

- Have the class engage in deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation exercises.
- Encourage students to:
 - » Practice deep breathing and/or PMR at least once a day
 - » If time allows for a discussion about gratitude, have students thank a person who has supported them in the past or consider starting a gratitude journal or writing a gratitude letter. A lesson on a gratitude journal can be found here: apa.org/ed/precollege/topss/teaching-resources/practicing-gratitude-lesson.

Note: Optional activities and discussion questions are provided in the full suggested script to allow you to expand the discussion and engage students further.

See the resource list at the end of this document for students who may need additional help.