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Increasing Kindergarten Students' Emotion Regulation Skills

Jennifer D. Lopez

A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

Increasing Kindergarten Students' Emotion Regulation Skills

Introduction

Many young children have not yet developed emotion regulation skills. Children who develop these skills from an early age demonstrate better social skills and improve their potential for school success. Therefore, I created a three-day lesson on emotion regulation for Kindergarten students at Castroville Elementary School, Castroville, California.

Needs Statement

Children have undeveloped emotion regulation skills, which are important skills that young children should be taught. Emotion regulation is the process of regulating expressions according to what is appropriate in that situation (Wang & Saudino, 2011). Young children may not know appropriate ways to express negative emotions, which can impact different aspects of their lives whether it be academically, socially, or both. Children who come from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, in particular, may benefit from learning emotion regulation skills that can be of help in the future to express and decrease negative emotions since low-income children are more vulnerable to emotional problems. Emotional problems like a decrease in children's emotional regulation when they move or live in a high poverty neighborhood can come from the exposure of stressful environments (Roy, McCoy, & Raver, 2014).

Emotion regulation skills can influence the child's behavior in the future. When children are able to express positive and negative feelings appropriately, they gain social skills (Wang & Saudino, 2011). Children who gain strong skills with developing emotion regulation tend to have fewer behavior problems and get along better with their peers (McCoy & Raver, 2011). A child

who is having trouble with regulating his or her emotions can expect to have behavioral problems such as antisocial behavior and aggression (McCoy & Raver, 2011). One study explained that elementary school children who regulated their emotions, demonstrated greater academic function in literacy and math (Kwon, Hanrahan, & Kupzyk, 2017). According to Kwon, Hanrahan, and Kupzyk (2017), emotion regulation plays a large role in children's academic learning because it can increase the child's academic success. Emotion regulation skills are beneficial for children to develop since a child who can regulate their emotions can have higher levels of academic achievement.

In recent studies, preschool children who lived in poverty had low levels of self-regulation since their families experienced more hardships than those families who were not living in poverty (Roy, McCoy, & Raver, 2014). Children who moved or lived in high poverty neighborhoods had more exposure to stressful environments (Roy, McCoy, & Raver, 2014). Troy, Ford, Merae, Zarolia, and Mauss (2017) explain that individuals who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds have less control over their environment and effective emotion regulation is beneficial for their psychological health. Individuals who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds can benefit the most from emotion regulation compared to other individuals who come from a higher socioeconomic background (Troy, Ford, Merae, Zarolia, & Mauss, 2017). Emotion regulation skills are a need for children who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds because they experience more stressful situations than what other may children experience.

There is a need for children, especially young children that come from a low socioeconomic background, to learn and become more aware of emotion regulation skills.

Children who are taught how to solve problems that deal with specific emotions develop emotion regulation (Morris et al., 2011). Children need to learn how to regulate their emotions by knowing skills that will help them relax on their own account when they experience an emotion that is negative (Berkovits, Eisenhower, & Blacher, 2017). Some examples of emotion regulation skills are to self-talk and exhale (Nuske, Hedley, Tseng, Begeer, & Dissanayake, 2018). Parents and caregivers, like teachers, should teach children emotion regulation strategies so that the children can have a positive impact on their school success (Nuske, Hedley, Tseng, Begeer, & Dissanayake, 2018).

Given the importance of regulating emotions and emotion regulation skills for children, I have created a three-day interactive lesson on emotion regulation for Kindergarten students at Castroville Elementary School, Castroville, California.

Theory Application

According to Bandura, in his Social Learning Theory, children tend to observe and model others within their environment which can then influence the way that children act or behave. Since children are observing others and behaving in a similar manner to what they observe, it would be beneficial to provide children effective strategies to manage their challenging emotions. Young children look and get real life experiences from their relationships with parents and family that later have an influence on the child's behavior (O'Connor, Matias, Futh, Tantam, & Scott, 2013). The children who are observing negative actions from family members can also act on those negative actions in the future. Modeling is another element of the Social Learning Theory. Children who observe others tend to model those same behaviors. Like parents, teachers can also be role models for children which can influence their social behavior by modeling skills

that are either positive or negative (Weyns et al., 2017). Weyns et al. (2017) also described that children learn from how other people model behaviors and children can then model those actions or behaviors among their peers when they feel that certain emotion. Children who learn from teachers how to model behaviors like anger and show ways to cope with anger can influence the child's future behavior when they feel that emotion. Therefore, I am creating a series of lessons and activities to help Kindergarten students identify appropriate ways to cope with challenging emotions like anger.

Consideration of Diversity

My project will be conducted in a Kindergarten classroom at Castroville Elementary School. According to Public School Review (2020), Castroville Elementary School is 93% Hispanic and 7% White. Castroville Elementary School is also placed at the top 20% of the largest number of students who are eligible for free lunch with 70% of students eligible for free lunch, and 13% eligible for reduced lunch (Public School Review, 2020). Children who are eligible for free lunch come from low-income families. Therefore, the ethnic backgrounds and family income level of the student participants will reflect that of the whole school. The lessons I will be conducting will be in English. For that reason, English proficiency will be needed in order for the students to understand my lessons and be able to participate in the activities. Since the lessons will require physical movement, the participants should be able bodied so that they can participate in the different emotion regulation techniques. My project could also be tailored to fit other specific audiences. The content of the lessons could be translated into Spanish for other student participants who are not proficient in the English language. I would translate the

information that I give the students from English to Spanish. The content of the lessons can also be modified to fit participants who are older by using materials that are appropriate to their age range. For example, I would show a different YouTube video for the older participants instead of showing them a video that is tailored for the younger participants.

Learning Outcomes

I intend to teach three, 30-minute interactive lessons to Kindergarten students on emotion regulation at Castroville Elementary School.

By the end of the project, participants will:

1. identify one appropriate way to cope with anger.
2. indicate one coping technique they use.
3. demonstrate one anger management technique.

Method

Day 1

First, I introduced myself and told the Kindergarten students that they are going to talk about emotions. Then, I asked the class if they had ever felt angry before. Once they had talked about the emotion of anger, I told them that I was going to read a book that talks about anger. After about 15 minutes of reading the book, *Cool Down and Work Through Anger* (Meiners & Johnson, 2017), I asked the students to reflect on what the main character did to cool down. I wrote down the students' answers on a large piece of paper which took 10 minutes. In the end, I handed out smiley face stickers.

Day 2

On the second day, I refreshed the memory of the students about the book I had read. I took out the piece of paper with the students' answers that was done the day before. Then, I told the students about the way that I cope with my own anger and asked the students how they cope with anger. I listed these ideas down on the paper. Afterwards, I handed out a piece of blank paper to each student and told them that they each had 15 minutes to draw a picture of a coping technique that they use to manage their anger. I asked some students to share out, then I proceeded to collect the papers. At the end, I gave each student an emoji pencil.

Day 3

On day three, I asked the students to again share some of their coping techniques that they will use in the future to manage their anger. I then proceeded to show the students other techniques that they can use. I showed them a *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* video from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFojWGH-I-c>. I played the song once so that they could listen to it and then I played it again and asked the students to sing and follow along. I also taught them yoga poses called, child's pose and butterfly pose. I first demonstrated both poses and then asked them to do it with me. After the yoga poses, I showed some stretching and breathing techniques like stretching their arms up, leaning from side to side, inhaling and exhaling. In the end, I asked the students if they liked participating in the different techniques and if they would use them in the future when they feel angry.

Results

Learning outcome 1 was that participants would identify one appropriate way to cope with anger. In Figure 1, I have provided a photograph of the sheet of paper where I recorded the

participants' responses. Table 1 is a transcription of their responses. In total, they identified 20 different ways that the character from the book coped with anger. From the book I read and the participants' responses, they did list all of the main things that the character did in the book to cope with anger and then some. I believe this learning outcome was met since there was a general consensus of the answers, even though three participants did not respond.

Learning outcome 2 was that participants would indicate one coping technique that they use. In Figure 2, I have provided a photograph of the sheet of paper where I recorded the participants' responses on the different coping techniques that they use when they are angry. Table 2 depicts their responses. The responses varied from participant to participant and some participants had similar responses. Some of the responses were not what I was intending to receive. Some students missed the first day. I think that they were confused with what I was asking which may reflect on certain responses that were given. From the drawings that I asked them to draw regarding their own coping technique, one participant out of 21 participants did not draw a technique. See Figure 3 for the results of drawings. However, all other participants did draw a coping technique that they use which is evidence that this learning outcome was met.

Learning outcome 3 was that participants would demonstrate one anger management technique. When I played the Daniel Tiger's Youtube video, two participants out of the 16 participants were not following along to the breathing exercise within the song. Once I started to show the participants other different coping techniques that they can use, the majority of the participants were demonstrating the techniques that I was showing them. Most of the participants were paying attention and participating. See Table 3. All in all, I believe that this learning outcome was met.

Discussion

Overall, I believe that this project was successful. The participants demonstrated that they met all three learning outcomes which means that they learned from the interactive lessons that were given. According to Bandura in his Social Learning Theory, young children tend to observe and model others within their environment. I think that the project really focused on having the participants observe and learn coping techniques. By reading what the character did in the book to cope with anger, it also helped the participants see how they can implement those techniques in their own life when they deal with that same emotion. When I modeled the different coping techniques that the participants can use when they feel angry, they were able to recognize that there is a variety of different types that they can do. The learning and observation of these coping techniques can influence the way that children act or behave in the future. I think that the project did do the job of providing the participants different techniques that they can use when they cope with a challenging emotion like anger.

In regards to the diversity, I think that my project could have been more diverse. I would have liked to have an older age group of participants. I know that emotion regulation techniques can be beneficial to participants of different ages. Older participants may experience stress or encounter stressful situations and the use of emotion regulation techniques may be of benefit to them. For this reason, I would like to have a class where there are different ages or grade levels involved so that different participants can have the knowledge to use different emotion regulation techniques.

If I had to do this project again, I would increase the interactivity in my lessons so that the participants can gain an even better learning experience from my lessons. Although the

lessons were already interactive, I think that there could have been more interactivity among the participants. I would have also liked to figure out different techniques to keep the student participants engaged throughout the lessons and to minimize distractions. In the end, I do strongly believe that the participants enjoyed the lessons and learned many new techniques to cope with a challenging emotion.

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Table 1

List of responses of what the character used to control anger

Count to 10 by using fingers	Going down the slide	Breathing (taking slow/deep breaths)
Being kind	Talk with someone (mom, grandma) - 3 responses	Sharing
No cutting in line	Picnic inside the house	Playing tag
Swinging on the swing	Let him play	Run outside
Apologizing (saying sorry)	No pushing	Having fun
Went somewhere quiet	Read a book	Sang a song
Draw- 2 responses	Play with other people (friends, family) - 2 responses	

Table 2

List of responses of the techniques that the participants use to cope with anger

Play board games	Go on electronics (iphone, tablet, television, Xbox, Nintendo) - 5 responses	Play with toys (dolls) - 2 responses
Count to 10	Play at the park	Walk to the park
Paint	Color	Hug family (mom, dad, sister, brother)
Play with pets (dog, cat, bunny) - 3 responses	Go to the beach and watch the waves	Go somewhere quiet
Sing a song		

Table 3

Percent of participants demonstrating anger management techniques

Technique	% of participation
Count to 4 - Daniel Tiger's Youtube video	88%
Butterfly pose	81%
Child's pose	81%
Inhale/exhale	81%
Stretching from side to side	81%

Figure 1

Results of the responses of the coping techniques that the participants said happened in the book

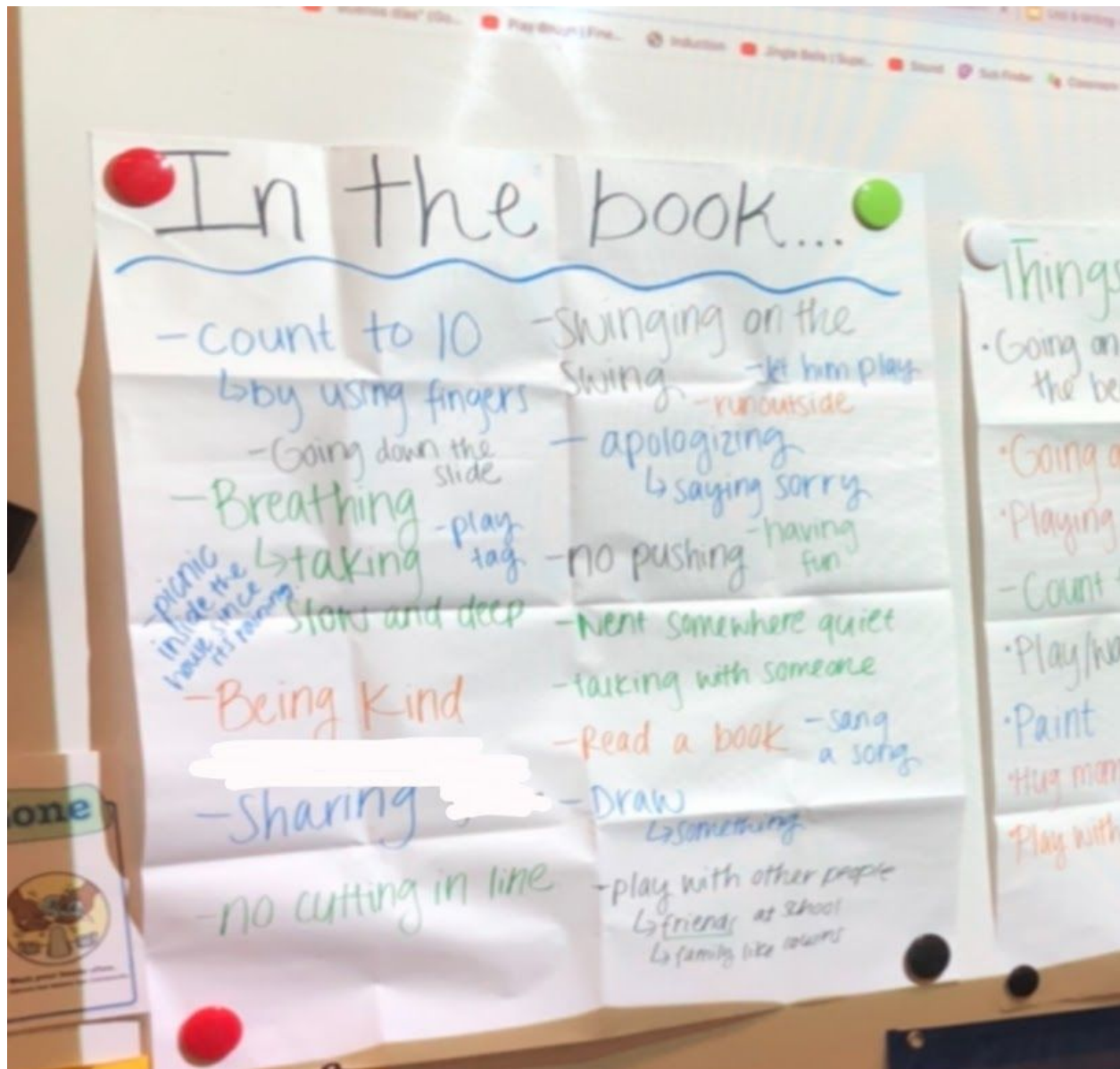


Figure 2

Results of the responses that the participants said they use to cope with anger

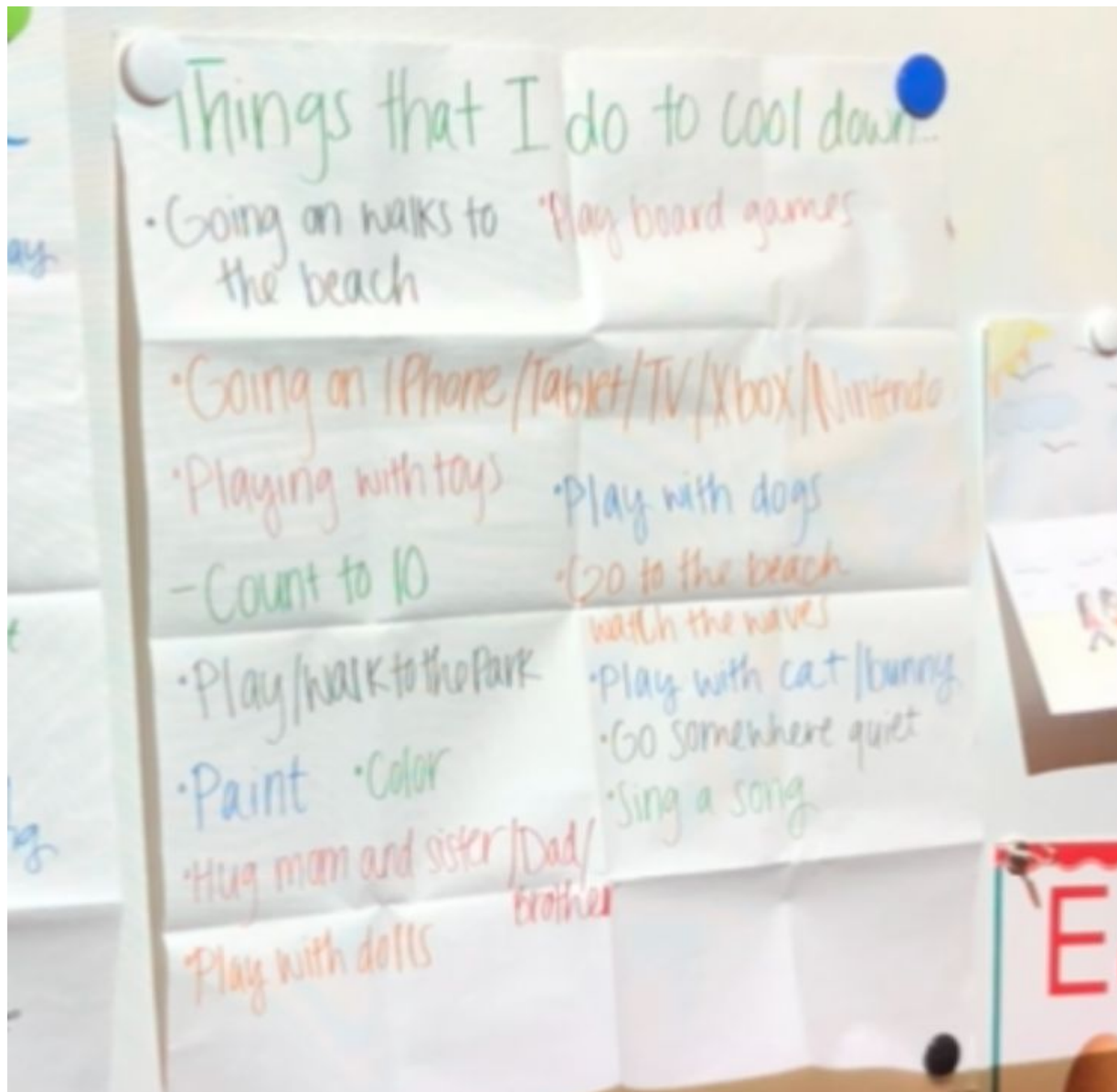
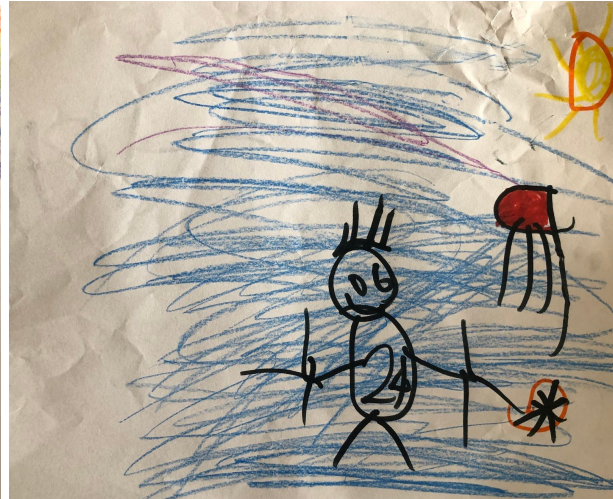


Figure 3

Results of participants drawings

Appendix A

Capstone presentation

Increasing Kindergarten Students' Emotion Regulation Skills

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Jennifer D. Lopez

Need

- Undeveloped emotion regulation skills
- Impacts young children academically, socially, and/or both
- Low socioeconomic backgrounds are more vulnerable for undeveloped emotion regulation skills

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory

- Children observe and model others within their environment
- Beneficial to provide children with effective strategies to manage challenging emotions

What? Whom? Where?

- Teach three, 30 minute interactive lessons on emotion regulation techniques
- Kindergarten students
- Castroville Elementary School, Castroville, CA.



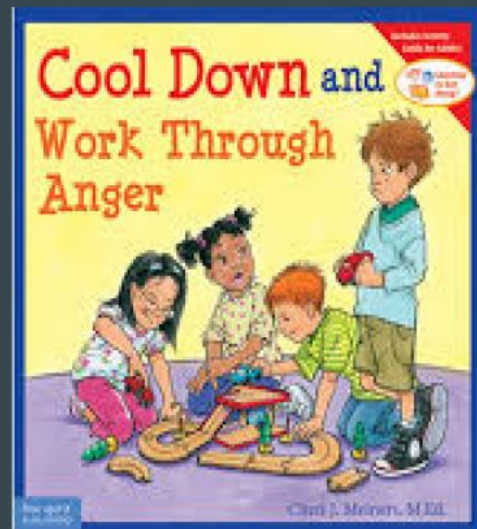
Learning Outcomes

By the end of the project, participants will:

1. identify one appropriate way to cope with anger.
2. indicate one coping technique they use.
3. demonstrate one anger management technique.

First Day

- Read, *Cool Down and Work Through Anger* by Cheri J. Meiners
- Ask students what coping techniques were used in the book

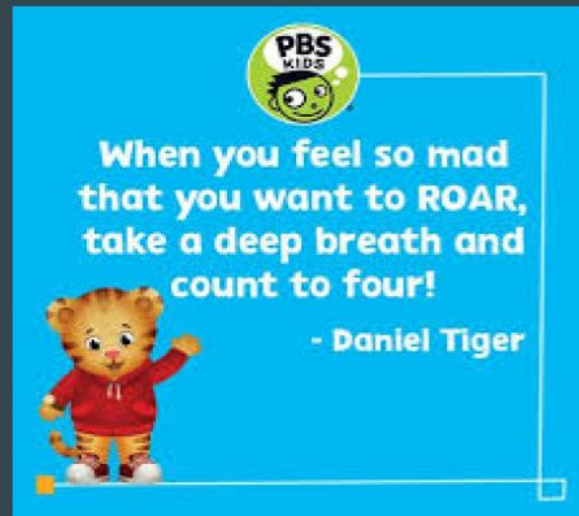


Second Day

- Ask students to describe one coping technique they use
- Students draw a picture of themselves acting on their technique

Third Day

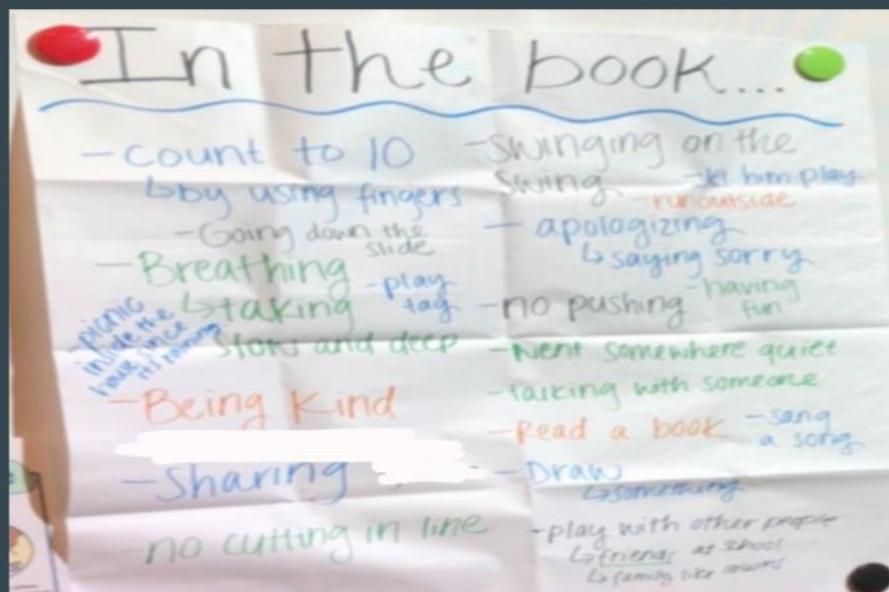
- YouTube video from Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood
- Stretching, yoga, and breathing exercises



Results

LO 1: Identify one appropriate way to cope with anger:

- Met
- Participants' responses listed all of the main things that the character did to cope with anger and then some
- 3 participants did not give a response, but there was an overall consensus on the responses

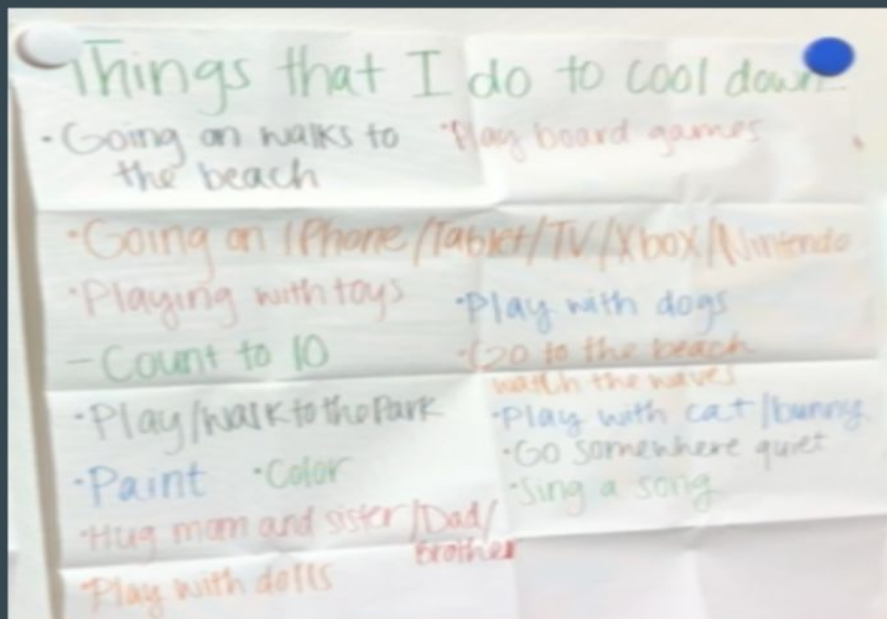


Some responses of what the character did to control anger:

- Count to 10 by using fingers
- Apologizing
- Went somewhere quiet
- Talk with someone (mom, grandma)
- Picnic inside the house
- Read a book
- Play with other people (friends, family)
- Breathing (slowly/deep)

LO 2: Indicate one coping technique they use:

- Met
- Participants responses on the different coping techniques varied
- One participant did not draw a technique, but the rest of the participants did draw a coping technique they use



Some responses of techniques that the participants use to cope with anger:

- Play board games
- Count to 10
- Go on electronics (iPhone, tablet, television, Xbox, Nintendo)
- Play at the park
- Go to the beach and watch the waves
- Play with toys (dolls)
- Go somewhere quiet
- Paint/Color





LO 3: Demonstrate one anger management technique:

- Met
- Majority of the participants were demonstrating the techniques that I was showing them

Technique	% of participation
Count to 4 - Daniel Tiger's Youtube video	88%
Butterfly pose	81%
Child's pose	81%
Inhale/exhale	81%
Stretching from side to side	81%

Discussion

Overall, my project was successful since all three learning outcomes were met by the participants.

Things I would do differently:

- Increase the interactivity in the lessons
- Figure out techniques to keep the participants engaged throughout the lessons

Thank You! Any Questions?

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Jennifer D. Lopez