

Managing Strong Emotions with Mindfulness

Recommended Activity for Students In Grades K-5

All humans have feelings. They come and go. We can compare our feelings to the weather. When we are happy, it can feel like a warm summer day. When we are sad, it can feel like a gloomy rainy day. Today we are going to discuss our big feelings. Times when we suddenly feel a strong emotion and may need a plan for how to work through it safely.

Picture This: I'd like you to close your eyes, or gaze down while I read, visualizing the storm.

You are outside enjoying a warm summer day. Take a moment to note what that looks and feels like.

- What are you doing?
- How does the warm sun feel on your body?
- Where are you at?
- What emotions are you experiencing while participating in this activity?

All of a sudden, you look up to see a dark storm cloud in the sky. The air starts to cool, the wind blows strongly on the back of your neck. You hold your hand out and start to feel light raindrops on your fingers. Suddenly, lightning strikes and thunder booms. The rain starts to pour down on your head and you know you need to find shelter quickly. Luckily, you turn around and see a safe place to go to weather out the storm. What does this place look like? Maybe it is your home or a cave.

Note to Teacher: Pause here to ask a few students to share out loud or with an elbow partner a place that feels safe to them (real or imaginary).

When you run there you know you are safe and you sit for a while to observe the storm. You notice the sounds, sites, and changes in the atmosphere. The clouds are dark and moving quickly across the sky. To pass the time, you decide to do another activity to pass the time. Once the storm has passed, it feels safe again to go back outside.

Navigating strong emotions can also feel like sudden storms. They may hit out of nowhere and sometimes we are left without the right tools and supports to weather out the storm safely until the strong emotions pass. The steps below can help when a strong emotional storm comes on to keep you and those around you physically and psychologically safe.

1. Notice the emotional shift (the impending storm on the horizon).

- Your body may start to communicate the impending storm. Where do you feel the shift physically in your body? You may notice that you become hot or your muscles may be tight or sweaty. Maybe your stomach starts to feel funny. These can all be signs of an emotional storm entering your atmosphere.

2. Name the emotion.

- What emotion best describes how you are feeling?

3. Find a safe place to observe your strong emotions (weathering out the storm until it passes).

- It may not be fully safe to go about your normal routine until the emotional storm has passed.
- If possible, stop your activity and move to a place that feels safer.

4. Choose a calming activity to help the storm pass.

- Deep breathing, running, writing in a journal, or listening to music are some healthy options.

5. Do a self-check-in.

- Once the storm feels like it is dissipating, ask yourself how are you feeling now? Do you need to repair any harm that was caused during the emotional storm?