Just Relax

Summary

Students will identify the benefits of relaxation and recognize ways to relax the body and mind in this lesson.

Main Core Tie

Health Education I (7-8)

Strand 2: MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH (MEH) Standard HI.MEH.1:

Materials

Finger trap toys (optional)

- Handout :
  "Just Relax"
- Worksheet:
  "My Top Ten Ways to Relax"

Intended Learning Outcomes

Identify the benefits of relaxation and recognize ways to relax the body and mind.

Instructional Procedures

Lesson at a Glance

Discuss the benefits of relaxation and ways to relax the mind and the body.
Have students participate in different relaxation activities.
Discuss other ways to relax using the "Just Relax" handout or overhead.
Have students complete the "My Top Ten Ways to Relax" worksheet.

New Vocabulary

progressive muscle relaxation
autogenic
imagery
meditation

Introduction (Setting Focus)

Discuss the following:

Relaxation won't solve problems, but it can relax the mind and body and provide an opportunity to build reserves and coping power.
Some studies show that people who practice daily relaxation actually recover from stress more quickly and don't get as stressed while under pressure. Relaxation also helps relieve the symptoms of stress, relieves stress related illnesses, reduces likelihood of contracting stress related diseases, lowers blood pressure, lowers pulse rate, reduces muscle tension and improves immune system functions.
Relaxation allows the body and mind to become rested, refreshed, and restored.
Relaxation can be achieved by relaxing the mind or relaxing the body.
Relaxation helps people feel better and reduces stress-related disease symptoms.

Optional Demonstrations:

Use a finger trap toy to help students understand the concept of relaxation. Pushing in on either end of the finger trap will loosen the other end and allowing the person to escape the trap. If the body becomes relaxed, the mind will follow. If the mind relaxes, the body will follow.

The teacher stands rigid, feet shoulder-width apart and flat-footed. A student uses the index finger and pushes the teacher with a shoulder tap. If the teacher resists the push, the teacher will lose balance and fall. Do the demonstration a second time with the teacher in a relaxed stance. Place the feet shoulder width apart but one foot is slightly behind the plain of the shoulder. The teacher's body moves with the push instead of tightening against it. This time, the teacher will maintain balance with no apparent off-balance effect from the push.

If stress registers mainly in the body, activities that break up physical tension may be most beneficial. Some ways to relax the body are:

deep breathing exercises
progressive muscle relaxation
swimming, biking and other physical activities
soaking in a hot tub
massage
yoga
stretching

If stress is experienced mainly in the mind, effective methods engage the mind completely and redirect it. Some ways to relax the mind are:

meditation
reading
imagery/visualization
games
vigorous exercise
hobbies and crafts
listening to calming music
mindfulness
autogenic
talking to friends

Explore, demonstrate and experience various ways to relax.

DEEP BREATHING: Deep breathing is a basic relaxation technique. It can be done anywhere and at any time. During deep breathing, the individual inhales through the nose with the stomach expanding. Exhale through the mouth with the stomach deflating. Hold breath for two seconds. Repeat three to five times.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION: Lay down or sit in a comfortable position, with the feet flat on the floor and slightly apart and eyes closed, deep breathing. Tighten each muscle group (feet, legs, stomach, buttocks, hands, shoulder, and face) for a few seconds and release. Continue until the entire body is relaxed. Sit quietly and enjoy the feeling for a few minutes. Specific progressive muscle tension and relaxation: Tighten each muscle, then relax slowly. Example: Make a fist with your right hand. Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze...now relax slowly. Now make a fist with your left hand. Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze, now relax slowly. Notice how good your relaxed muscles feel.

IMAGERY AND VISUALIZATION: Take a mini vacation in the mind. Get in a comfortable position, with the eyes closed, and start with some deep breathing. Have someone describe or imagine a relaxing scene. Focus on the details of images, e.g., lying on a warm beach listening to the waves, walking through the woods, being in a green field on a warm spring day, sitting next to a waterfall and feeling the crisp, cool, air of the mountains. Enjoy these good feelings for a few minutes.

AUTOGENIC: Lay down or sit in a comfortable position, feet flat on the floor and slightly

apart. With eyes closed, begin with some deep breathing. Concentrate on a phrase such as, "My hands are feeling heavy and warm. I am feeling relaxed." Repeat the phrase in your mind for several minutes. Practice for 5--10 minutes.

MINDFULNESS: Keep your mind in the moment--only the moment. Do not let your mind wander. Keep your mind less cluttered. Take a 10-inch piece of sewing thread, tie in a knot, place a small paper clip on the thread. Hold the thread by the right hand, steady your arm with your elbow on the table. Say in your mind: "Swing," or "Swing in a circle," or "Swing right, swing left." Continue until the thread begins to move.

YES SET: Students draw or visualize a triangle. As students inhale, visualize climbing to the top of the triangle, then, exhale and visualize sliding down the triangle. In their mind have them say, "Relax," over and over, as they visualize crossing the bottom of the triangle. Repeat this process three to four times.

PUSH-PULL: Students to grasp the seat of their chair and push down on the seat with their weight as they pull up with their arms. Hold this position for 10 to 15 seconds. Repeat three times.

MEDITATION: Students lie down or sit in a comfortable position, feet flat on the floor and slightly apart. Close the eyes and begin deep breathing. Continue the relaxed breathing and say the word "one" silently. Say the word "one" over and over in the mind. As distracting or stressful thoughts enter the mind, return to the word "one." Continue for 10 to 20 minutes.

Closure (Wrap-Up and Extensions)

Study and discuss the "Just Relax" handout. Brainstorm other positive ways to relax. Explain that there are lots of ways to relax--no one technique is better than another. The key is to find what works and then do it on a regular basis.

Have the students complete the "My Top Ten Ways to Relax" worksheet and share their ideas with the class.

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