

Amy Arnold- Module 5 Application Activity

In my current classroom I can see the benefits of using stress management techniques with many of my students. I have one student in particular who could utilize these techniques both while at school and at home. The student that I am referring to (I will call him John for this purpose) has Prader Willi Syndrome. One of the common characteristics of this syndrome is a struggle with change. These students **tend** to rely on having a routine and they like to know what to expect. Luckily, for John, my classroom is very structured; all of my students benefit from this. I have a visual schedule displayed in the front of the room and I always prepare the schedule at the end of the previous day. By doing this, the students know what the plan is for the next day (or as I always say, after one sleep). This seems to really help reduce stress and anxiety in my classroom.

Although I try to prepare my students in advance there are times that the day just does not go as planned. Sometimes I get sick and cannot be at school or our bus breaks down so a planned CBI does not work out. These situations are out of my control, but they still have a big impact on the day of my students, John in particular. Whenever I am absent John really struggles, even though I have my two aids there that are familiar to him. This behavior is very annoying to my aids because they have formed relationships with John and they do not know where this anxiety is coming from. John really relies on me to provide the structure, lessons, and directives each day. So, when I am not there John often 'breaks down'. He refuses to do anything, claims to have numerous illnesses and injuries, cries the whole day, and ignores anyone around him. There have been a few times that his parents had to come get him from school when I was absent. Although John is very social, he does not like having his picture taken or speaking in front of a group. On school

picture day, he often refuses and becomes very anxious. In both situations described above, I feel that John could really benefit from some stress management techniques.

One technique that would be easy and functional for my room would be the diaphragmatic breathing. I like the idea that the text suggested, calling it "belly breathing" (356). I could teach John that when he starts to feel anxious (we would describe this feeling and write down what it looks like and sounds like, i.e. getting red hot checks, feeling funny in your tummy, etc.) he could calm down by taking in deep breaths from his belly. I could support this for my students (or any student with a disability) by providing visual cues throughout the room. I could make posters using Board Maker that states the steps of belly breathing:

1. Take a full breath
2. Pause, relax, count to 5
3. Breath out naturally
4. Pause, relax, count to 5...and so on

I also like the idea of using clay, stress balls, or play dough when John is feeling anxious. I already have a sensory area where these objects are located. I just need to teach John the steps of when to know that he needs to distress and use one of these objects. The Larrivee text describes having the students close their eyes and imagine all of the things they could mold with the clay for one minute. This gives the students time to come down.

Both of the strategies described could benefit not only John, but my whole class. I could teach my whole class these strategies and provide visual cues on the walls so that they have reminders. I would also role play situations in which these relaxation techniques could be utilized. This way the expectations and procedure are demonstrated. I would evaluate the success of these techniques by monitoring if they are effective and helpful.

If John does one or both of the described techniques and they are not effective then I may have to try a different conflict management technique. Overall, I believe that using these stress management techniques could really help to reduce John's anxiety. If they prove to be helpful we could work on generalizing these techniques out of the classroom.