

Social and Emotional Learning

Lesson Title: **Staying Calm**

Grade Level: **Middle School**

Project and Purpose

Students create mantras to help them stay calm.

Essential Question

How do mantras help us to stay calm?

Materials

- Calming Mantras slide/handout
- Art supplies and paper OR a poster maker program

Teacher

1. Ask your students what they do or say to help them get “pumped up” or excited for an event. Do they listen to music? Do they move around? Why does this work for them?
2. Then ask them what they do to prepare before doing something special. Why does this work for them? Some examples might include:
 - Singers practice scales and produce other sounds as a vocal warm up
 - Tennis players hit practice shots and serves before a match
 - Actors often warm up their voices and bodies before a performance
 - Basketball players practice free throws and layup shots
 - Musicians prepare their instruments and practice special sections of the music
 - Dancers and skaters stretch and run the challenging portions of their choreography
 - Swimmers, runners, and other athletes stretch and shake out their muscles
3. Ask them if they have any phrases or speeches they give themselves before these events. What do they say? Why? Where did this speech come from?
4. Write the word “mantra” and ask students if they have ever seen, heard, or used this word before. People who use mantras explain that they are phrases or positive statements that you say to yourself for self-supporting reasons, such as to motivate yourself, to validate your feelings, remain calm, etc. A mantra can be favorite saying, a quotation, a song lyric, a proverb—any group of words and phrases that suits the purpose you are using it for. A mantra is easily repeatable and can be spoken aloud, repeated quietly in one’s head, or recorded for listening purposes. Quite often people write them down to add a visual component for resting the mind. A mantra is a personal statement; no mantra fits all people or all situations.
5. Use the Calming Mantras slide/handout to review several mantras and ask students:
 - What do they notice about the mantras?
 - When would this mantra be appropriate to say to oneself?
 - Why would this mantra work?
 - Would you ever use this mantra? Why or why not?

6. Explain that they are going to try a few of the mantras. Have students sit in their chairs or on the floor in their own space, not too close to anyone else, leaving at least a hand-span of space between the people around them. As a leader, you can sit in a chair and demonstrate, or you can quietly move around the room as you narrate the exercise. Use the following narrative as a script:
 - Sit quietly and get comfortable your chair. Close your eyes and listen to the rhythm of your breathing.
 - I will say one of the calming mantras, and you will repeat it, first silently to yourself, then in a very quiet voice. Repeat the mantra at least five times or more, taking deep breaths between each repetition. Do not worry about saying it at the same time as other people, just say it at your own speed. (Say one of the mantras.)
 - Repeat the mantra silently to yourself one more time, and continue to keep your eyes closed.
 - I will say a different mantra. This time, I want you to visualize the words in your head. (Say one of the mantras.) Think about the lettering or the font of the words. Think to yourself: Is it bold and big or soft and curved?
 - Repeat the mantra silently to yourself, then in a very quiet voice. Repeat the mantra at least five times or more, taking deep breaths between each repetition.
 - Repeat the mantra silently to yourself one more time, and continue to keep your eyes closed.
 - I will count backwards from five, and you will slowly open your eyes and remain seated calmly.
7. Ask students about the calming effect of the mantras and if they would like to try different ones. Ask how the visualization affected the way they thought about the mantra.
8. Tell students they are going to select a personal calming mantra and create a visual representation of it. They may choose one of the mantras from the slide/handout, or select something original.
9. Give them the rest of the session to work on their projects.

Conclusion

At the end of the class, ask students to share their calming mantras with a partner and talk about possible times they might use this calming mantra. Ask: How do mantras help us to stay calm?

Notes

Calming Mantras

I am the source of my own calm.

Inhale calm, exhale stress.

I am warm. I am calm.

I choose peace instead of this.

This, too, shall pass.

Just keep swimming.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Move on.

All will be well.

All is well.

Keep on keepin' on.

One foot in front of the other.

Let it go.

Be at peace.