



Tool 1.3

Moving to reduce climate anxiety

CLARITY Competence Area:

Taking care of climate emotions and trauma

GreenComp Competence Area:

Acting for sustainability

Why use this tool?

This tool can provide practical ways to address overwhelm, stress and anxiety for an individual or a group, either preemptively or when they arise. Most of the suggested activities will be most effective if practiced on a regular basis, as they help expand our own window of tolerance to multiple emotions over time. All activities can be done in groups or individually. As a teacher, you may want to practice them regularly so as to help you regulate your emotions. Once you know the activities well, it will also be easier for you to judge which activities to suggest to your students when a need arises.

Activity 1.3.2

Soothing body movements

Overview

A series of simple movements that can be made by learners when they feel anxiety, distress or overwhelm because of climate change.

Curriculum linkage

Arts, Physical Education & Health, and as an exercise that can be practiced in any class where climate change is discussed.

Competences built

Emotional regulation

Prep Work

Practicing the exercise beforehand, to anticipate any of the difficulties that could arise for a specific group.

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:

Breathing exercises (1.3.1)

Steps in the activity

1. Try out in class
 - a. Butterfly Hug Technique
 - b. Shake, Stretch, Soothe
2. New Habits

BASIC INFO

**Age range:**

7+

Duration:

5-10 minutes

Group size:

Open

Level of difficulty:

Basic

Materials/space required:

None

Location:

Classroom

Engagement of external stakeholders:

None



Step 1: Try out in class

a) Butterfly Hug Technique

Guide learners through the following Butterfly Hug technique, by using the script below:

1. Let's begin by finding a comfortable seated position. Allow your body to relax, and when you're ready, close your eyes or keep them softly focused on a spot on the ground in front of you.
2. Now, cross your arms over your chest, with the tips of your fingers pointing toward the sky. Let your hands rest comfortably where they naturally fall, feeling the rise of your collarbones beneath them.
3. Next, hook your thumbs together, creating the body of a butterfly with your hands and fingers forming its wings. Your two hands together are the butterfly.
4. As you keep your butterfly resting on your chest, begin to lift each wing one at a time. Let the hand that represents the right wing rise and fall, followed by the hand representing the left wing rising and falling. Right, left, right, left. Feel the tips of your wings tapping lightly against your collarbones, with each movement a reminder of the delicate balance between effort and ease.
5. Continue this gentle tapping, allowing your wings to move freely and effortlessly. As you do, bring your attention to your breath. Inhale deeply, filling your belly with a calm, nourishing breath. Exhale slowly, allowing your belly to soften and empty completely.
6. Repeat this breath for five or six cycles, keeping your movements soft and rhythmic. With each breath, allow yourself to sink deeper into relaxation, feeling the peaceful rhythm of your wings and breath working together.
7. Now, as your butterfly wings continue to tap softly, let your mind drift to a place where you feel completely relaxed and safe. It could be a real place you've visited or a place from your imagination. Picture this special place vividly in your mind.
8. What does it look like? What sounds do you hear? What can you smell or feel around you? Allow yourself to fully immerse in this place, exploring it with all your senses. You are free to do whatever you feel like in this safe space—rest, play, or simply be.
9. For the next few minutes, let yourself enjoy this time in your special place, feeling the comfort and safety it offers. Keep your butterfly wings gently tapping, anchoring you to this serene and peaceful state.
10. As your time in this place comes to a close, allow your butterfly wings to rest. Let your arms slowly come down by your sides. When you feel ready, softly open your eyes, bringing yourself back to the room.
11. Take a moment to notice how you feel, carrying the peace of your safe place with you.



b) Shake, stretch, soothe

This simple series of movements can be practiced by teachers and learners alike to self-regulate. The series includes the following steps:

1. Invite your learners to stand up and shake their bodies in whatever way they feel comfortable. It is good if you do the exercise with them. You can shake your hands, arms, upper body, lower body and legs, separately or together. Feel free to add any sound that feels good while shaking in the moment. Shaking allows the stress to move through your body, and your body to relax. Do these movements for one to two minutes and pause.
2. Following the shaking exercise, invite your learners to stretch with you. Stretch as you would do when waking up in the morning. Feel free to yawn as you stretch. Stretching gives a direct message to your nervous system that you are safe, while stress makes us constrict ourselves. Do these movements for one to two minutes and pause.
3. After stretching, invite your learners to undertake some soothing movements with you. Soothing movements can include stroking one's upper arms rhythmically with our arms crossed, or oscillating from the left foot to the right foot for a few minutes. Do these movements for one to two minutes and pause.
4. Invite learners to take a minute to feel the calmness and relaxation they have invited to their body thanks to the exercise.

Level 2: New habits

Invite learners to keep practicing the Butterfly Hug technique when they feel stressed, distressed or overwhelmed.

Dos and don'ts

Adaptations

If your learners are unable to do or uncomfortable doing the Butterfly Hug technique, they can practice another breathing technique (1.3.1) or be invited to move freely, including outside.

For instance using a swing and feeling gravity and the woosh of air against the body can be highly regulating for some children and youth, including neurodivergent individuals.

Allowing guilt-free / shame-free access to playgrounds, outside of the classroom to "run off" an emotional moment instead of being told to sit still till recess are a huge part of the support needed by neurodivergent children.



We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how *you* want to be treated, but how *they* want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging

References

This activity introduces the Butterfly Hug of Leslie Davenport, as well as the shake, stretch and soothe movement series designed by Jo Mc Andrews of the Climate Psychology Alliance, which were adapted by One Resilient Earth.

Davenport, L. (2021.). All the Feelings Under the Sun: How to Deal with Climate Change. Magination Press. <https://lesliedavenport.com/books-articles/>



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