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Physical Strategies

Animal Stretches

Purpose This strategy can be used as a preventative exercise, or as a coping skill. When the body is physically stressed, it helps to engage large muscle groups on both sides of the body and move them in smooth, patterned and repetitive motions. For optimal outcomes, this strategy should be taught while the child is calm so that he/she can utilize this skill in a stressed state to prevent further escalation.

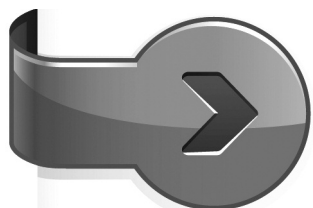
Materials • Animal Stretch Worksheet and drawing utensils

- Process**
1. Present the child with the worksheet and let him/her know that you are going to be doing some stretches that look like animal movements. Ask the child to choose one of the animals listed on the worksheet.
 2. Ask the child to draw the animal and how it moves in the blank space provided.
 3. After the child has drawn his/her animal, use the following script to describe the process of the animal stretch.
© YouthLight, Inc. → “We are going to pretend that you are the character you have chosen from the handout. Take a deep breath, close your eyes and imagine how your character looks, moves, and sounds. First, imagine how your character moves, now move your body in the same way. Take another deep breath and hold the movement as I count to 5..... 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Now relax your muscles and take one last deep breath.”
 4. Repeat this process until the desired calming effects have been achieved. You may want to ask the child to rate on a scale of 1-10 how tense their muscles feel at the beginning of the exercise and then ask them to re-rate how tense they feel after the exercise.
 5. Feel free to choose more than one animal to try.

Variations

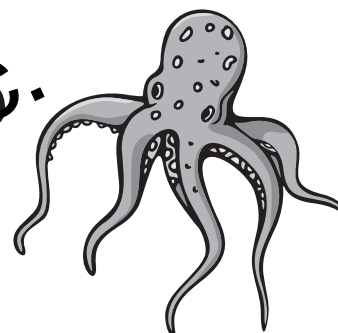
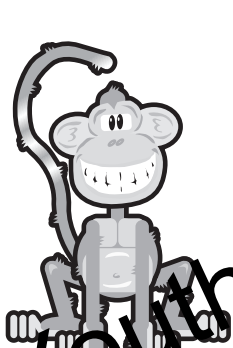
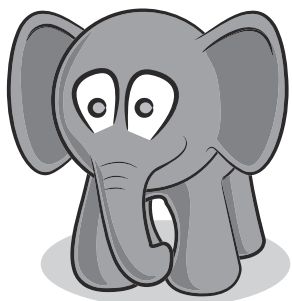
- This activity can be utilized for small groups or classrooms to start, end or transition from one activity to another, promoting a calm relaxed environment.
- Use the internet to find a video clip of the animal the child has chosen to see how the animal moves.





Animal Stretches

Pick one of the animals and draw it moving in the blank box below.



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Emotional Strategies

You Can't Make Me Laugh

Purpose Children struggling with self-regulation often do not understand the power they have over their own emotions. This strategy is designed to show children that they themselves have control over their own emotional responses. Others do not dictate how we feel or behave. We have the ability to control our own emotions and behaviors. Understanding this concept is critical for the development of self-regulation.

Materials • You Can't Make Me Laugh Worksheet

Process This strategy is to be used when the child is calm and in a good frame of mind to learn.

1. Use the handout and the following script to introduce this activity:

→ “Today we are going to play a game. We are going to try to make each other laugh. We will not be able to touch each other or say anything that is inappropriate. We can tell jokes, say funny words, or make funny faces. We will take turns. First, I will try to make you laugh, and then you will try to make me laugh. When I try to make you laugh, I want you to try not to laugh and when you try to make me laugh, I am going to try not to laugh.”

2. After a few rounds, you begin to discuss how you are able to control yourself when the other person is trying to make you laugh. You might say:

→ “Wow, I wonder how you were able to keep from laughing at those funny things I was doing. How did you do that?”

→ Lead the child to figure out that they were making a conscious decision to control their emotions. Maybe they were thinking of something else, or ignoring you. Use the space provided on the handout to write down the different strategies the child used. This is valuable information to discuss with them and build upon to increase self-regulation.

3. After processing the strategies say, “What if we had changed the game to where we were trying to make each other Angry? Would we be able to use the same strategies to control our emotions?” Process this situation utilizing the strategies the child identified.



Emotional Strategies

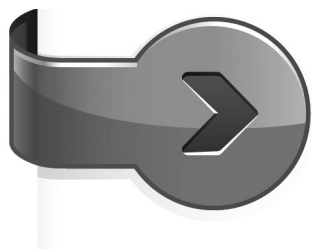
You Can't Make Me Laugh (continued)

Process 4. End the exercise by reinforcing the fact that we control our own emotions and behaviors. Connect the lesson to real-life examples. Stress that others cannot make us feel happy, sad, scared, or angry unless we choose to. We have the power!

- Variations**
- Small group – Split into groups of two and complete the exercise. Share strategies and process together as a group.
 - If you are lacking in comedy skills, or feel uncomfortable with trying to make a child laugh, you can replace that portion of the activity with watching a funny video clip, possibly from Youtube™, together while trying not to laugh. With this variation, you can also count how many times the child laughs the first time you watch the video. Then repeat the exercise with the same video at a later time and discuss how he/she was able to laugh less the second time.

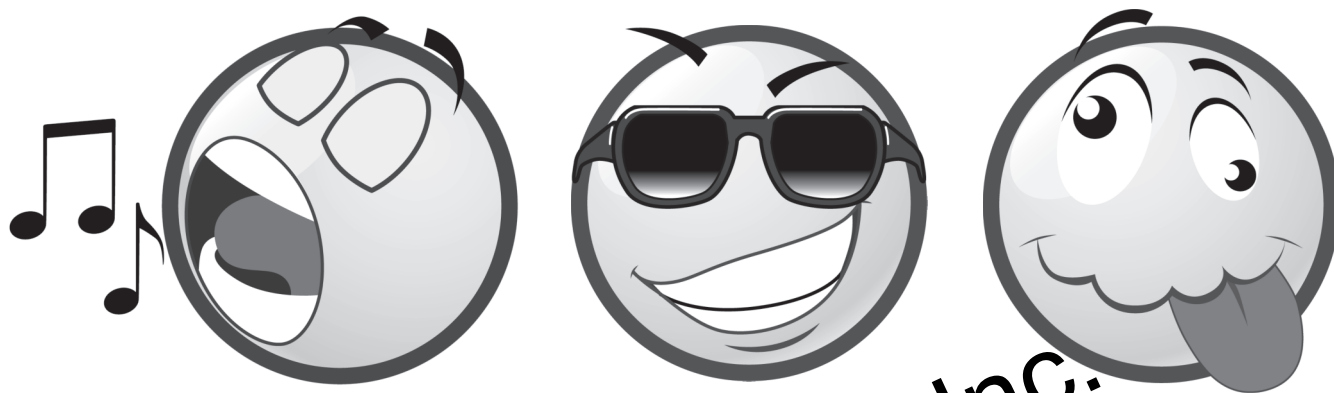
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You Can't Make Me Laugh

Take turns using funny words, stories, faces or actions to try to get each other to laugh.



Time limit:

Each person gets 30 seconds to get the other to laugh.

Rules:

1. No touching or invading personal space during this game
2. Keep words and actions appropriate
3. Have fun!

Strategies used:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____