

Lesson Plan 3: Understanding Emotional and Sensory Regulation (Neuro-Affirming)

Theme: *Steadying the Storm – Exploring Emotions, Senses & Neurodiversity*

Duration: 60 minutes

Age Group: Upper KS2

Learning Objectives

By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to:

- Understand that people have different sensory experiences
 - Recognise emotional and sensory overload
 - Identify regulation tools that help with overload
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Resources

- Poem Displayed or printed
 - Fidgets or tactile items
 - Breathing techniques (<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/breathing-techniques-for-children-t-p-1651491999>)
 - Mindful colouring (<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/us-t-c-1551-mindfulness-coloring-pages-bumper-activity-pack>)
 - Paper
 - Pens/pencils/pastels
 - Grounding Exercises (<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/mindfulness-grounding-techniques-poster-t-lf-1711535509>)
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Starter Activity

Recap: **Steadying the Storm Poem Verse – Whilst exploring regulation tools**

Have available: fidgets, tactile objects, mindful colouring, breathing techniques etc, for the children to explore whilst listening. Give them time to look, feel, experience first and then choose something to do whilst listening.

When noises grow too loud
or the world feels too fast,
I reach for the strategies
that help calm things at last.
“I grab a fidget to settle my hands...”
“...or sit in a corner when I need to land.”
“Sometimes I watch calming videos instead,
or drink water,
or think of nice thoughts in my head.”
These aren’t escapes — they’re tools that I use
To steady the storm
and help me regroup.

No questions – just sensory experiences

Main Learning Session – Whole Class Discussion

When the world feels too loud or too fast, our bodies can feel overwhelmed. That’s called sensory overload. It can affect emotions, focus, and energy.

Link to poem:

“When noises grow too loud / or the world feels too fast...”

Ask:

- How might someone’s body feel in that moment? What words might describe the feeling?
Offer prompts: tight, buzzy, tired, wobbly etc

Regulation Tools Can Help

Focus on the poem’s strategies.

- Fidgets
- Quiet spaces
- Calming videos
- Drinking water
- Thinking calm thoughts

Ask:

- Why does the poet say “These aren’t escapes — they’re tools”?

Take suggestions of things they use or do to help feel calm.

Key message:

Tools help us regulate, just like coats help us stay warm.

Independent Learning: Building a Neuro-Affirming Classroom

Give pupils a ‘Steadying the Storm’ worksheet template (options: art & toolbox or just toolbox)

My Regulation Toolbox

- Use pens/pencils/pastels to visually express what a storm (overload) might feel like
- Draw or write in the toolbox ideas for: When I feel overwhelmed, these things help me

Key message:

Emotions change, and tools help us move through them.

No requirement to label emotions with words.

Plenary

Key Neuro-Affirming Messages

- All brains are different and valuable
- Sensory overwhelm is not misbehaviour and can happen to anyone – adults included
- Regulation tools can help learning - they are not rewards or escapes
- Tools support learning and wellbeing

Share children’s ‘Steadying the Storm’ posters

Finish with a grounding technique exercise



Extension Options

- Pupils write their own short poem about differences or feelings.
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Teacher Notes (Important)

- Avoid deficit language (e.g., “symptoms,” “disorder,” “normal/not normal”).
- Ensure no child is pressured to self-identify as autistic.
- Focus on empathy, acceptance, and celebrating diverse brains.
- Use identity-affirming phrases like “autistic person” only if that matches your school’s preference; many autistic people prefer identity-first language.