

Navigating the Island of Aggression

Lesson 7: Three Skills for Calming Other People Down

Key concepts:

Remaining calm, listening, and showing care and concern are three powerful tools for de-escalating a conflict.

Learning Outcomes:

Students explore three skills for helping to calm others down in a conflict.

Profile of Graduate Standards:

- Upper Elementary, Collaboration:
 - (4.1) I am respectful to my team.
 - (4.2) I acknowledge and respect other perspectives and disagree diplomatically.
- Middle School, Collaboration:
 - (4.1) I am polite and kind to teammates.
 - (4.2) I listen to other points of view with kindness and respect.

Materials:

- Ship's Log
- Projector or other way to display a digital slideshow
- Slides and digital exit ticket available at peaceliteracy.org/navigation-curricular-materials

Vocabulary:

- final boss
- apathy
- escalate
- de-escalate
- bad blood

Lesson Procedure:

1. **Show** slide 1. Title slide
“We’ve talked about how persuasive, deceptive, and potentially dangerous Ares can be, and we’ve discussed three different forms of aggression that you might face in life. Our journey to the Island of Aggression has begun to give you another set of tools to use in conflict situations and in your life in general so that you can feel better prepared, more confident, and have more options for dealing with conflict. As you practice and develop these skills, you can level up and strengthen them even more. Also, there are more muscles and items we have not discussed yet. There is so much more you can learn.”
2. **Show** slide 2. Cover of the Muscles of Our Humanity Manual
3. “Today we are going to learn three specific tools that you can use to help calm people down in a conflict.”

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Lesson Procedure, continued:

4. **Show** slide 3. **Step 1) Be Calm** (Calm is Contagious)
5. “Often times, one person’s aggression causes another person to become aggressive, or to want to become aggressive. At the same time, when someone is calm, it can help the people around them feel calmer.
6. Show Slide 4. **Calm is Contagious** (click through the animated list)
“Remembering that calm is contagious can help us to practice remaining calm in a conflict. You don’t have to be 100% calm to make a difference. Every little bit of calm can help the situation.”
7. **Show** slide 5. **Step 2) Listen With Empathy**
8. “Raise your hand if you don’t like to be listened to.” Allow time for students to respond.
9. **Questions** for students:
 - a. Can you think of a time when you felt angry because you felt someone wasn’t listening to you, or you saw someone become angry because they felt someone wasn’t listening to them?
 - b. How do you think listening to someone who is showing aggression could help to de-escalate the situation?
9. **Show** slide 6. **Step 3) Show Care and Concern**
10. “If you are just calm in a conflict, people might mistake that as a sign you don’t care. You want to listen, but you also want to express your concern for how the other person is feeling.”
11. **Questions** for students:
 - a. If you were upset, how could someone show care and concern (by what they say or do) to help you feel better?
 - b. Have you ever had that experience before?
12. “Even when these three skills (remaining calm, listening, and showing care and concern) don’t completely calm others down, these three skills make it far less likely that you will escalate the situation, and also far less likely that you will create bad blood. Bad blood is when people remain angry, mistrustful, or resentful long after a conflict is over.
13. **Read out loud:**
“It will take time and effort, practice and patience to begin to feel confident and calm when facing aggression and other struggles, but as you practice, you will gradually gain strength and skill. As you gain strength and skill, you will find yourself having daily victories over aggression that comes in different shapes and sizes. Aggression can be a powerful adversary, and extreme rage can be like a big end-game **boss** in a video game.”
14. **Show** slide 7. Final boss
Note to teachers: Ask the students if they know where the image comes from. This image depicts the final boss from The Legend of Zelda, Breath of the Wild.

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Lesson Procedure, continued:

15. Question for students:

- “Can anyone explain what a final boss is?”

If no students can explain, let them know it is a very difficult adversary at the end of the game that requires you to have leveled up to a high degree in order to overcome it. Books and movies can have the equivalent of final bosses, like Voldemort in Harry Potter, and Darth Vader in Star Wars. Luke Skywalker must level up to a high degree to overcome Darth Vader, and Harry Potter must level up to a high degree to overcome Voldemort.

16. Show slide 8. What makes final bosses so difficult to overcome?

17. Show slide 9. Muscles of Our Humanity Manual page 1

18. “We started our journey facing powerful adversaries: Deimos and Phobos, representing the Fear of Human Aggression, and their father Ares, representing Aggression itself. Human aggression has been and continues to be a difficult problem that countless people face. But as you know now, there are different kinds of aggression and different levels of aggression. **Some kinds of aggression can be like low-level adversaries, and some can be like a final boss.** You have to level up your skill to overcome different levels of aggression. You are learning powers and skills like the 3 skills for calming others down that you can begin to use to make a positive difference in your friendships, in your families, and in your communities

19. Activity for students:

- a. Draw a picture of your aggression as a boss character in a video game. What might your aggression look like? Now add words around your boss. Draw yourself as the character facing this boss. What skills do you think you have learned, what powers have you earned that will help you face this adversary? Add words around yourself as well.
- b. In a few minutes we will regroup and share.

Digital exit ticket:

1. Why is aggression like a final boss in a video game?
2. What are three skills you can use to calm someone down in a conflict?

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Activity 7: Tactical Breathing

Key Concept:

Tactical breathing helps train the body to remain calm in conflict situations.

Learning Outcomes:

Students practice tactical breathing as a tool for remaining calm

Profile of Graduate Standards:

Middle School, Creative Thinking and Problem Solving:
(5.) I understand that my actions affect not only myself, but also my family and my community.

Materials:

- Ship's Log, plus a way to display a digital slideshow
- Slides available at peaceliteracy.org/navigation-curricular-materials

Vocabulary:

- tactical breathing
- influence

Procedure:

1. **Show** Slide 1. Title Slide
2. “We have spent time talking about how calm can be cultivated through confidence, it can be cultivated through your environment, such as the people around you being calm, listening to you, and showing care and concern toward you (and you can be part of the solution in this), and it can be cultivated through a physical practice that we will talk about called tactical breathing.”
3. **Question** for students:
 - a) Have you ever felt so angry that you had a physical response, such as shaking, feeling your heart pound, or feeling hot?
 - b) Or have you ever seen someone experience something like that when they got angry?
 - c) Why do you think that happens?
4. “Our body reacts to stress by sending adrenaline through our system, getting us ready to respond, and respond quickly if necessary. Adrenaline increases your blood circulation and your breathing and heart rates. Adrenaline can also be produced when you are scared, and can make it hard to be calm, to sit still, or to control your impulses. Your body is ready for action!”
5. **Show** slide 2. Rollercoaster
6. “Our brain and our feelings are closely linked.”
7. **Show** slide 3. Brain and lungs

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Activity 7: Tactical Breathing

Procedure, continued:

8. “Fortunately, our brain and our breathing are also linked. When we are stressed, angry, or afraid, our breathing gets faster and more shallow. We can use tactical breathing to slow down our heart rate and calm our body when it is ready for action, whether we are angry, afraid, or even just restless. When we calm our bodies down, our minds can think more clearly. Remember how easy it is to be influenced and misled by aggression. Ares is persuasive!”
9. **Show** slide 4. Influence
10. Tactical breathing can help you resist being overpowered by the persuasive and deceptive voice of Ares. You can use your eye of empathy and see the fires or distress beneath aggression. When you can think more clearly in a difficult situation, you are better able to better rely on all the skills you have learned so that you can de-escalate the conflict, or at least keep it from from escalating, and increase the likelihood of creating a positive outcome for you and others.
11. **Show** slide 5. Tactical breathing
12. “In tactical breathing you breath in comfortably for four counts, hold gently for four counts, breath out comfortably for four counts, then hold gently for four counts. Before breathing in and starting the cycle again. Let’s try it together.”
Note: Students might have difficulty being quiet together, even for a brief time. If so, without judgement, ask students to notice, and let them know that often it is difficult to slow ourselves down when we are not used to it. Take the exercise as far as you can, reasonably without losing student focus. If the class is extremely resistant, stop the exercise, and suggest it may be easier to try outside the classroom setting.
8. “Soldiers, martial artists, and other people who deal with enormous struggles use tactical breathing to keep their minds thinking clearly. But tactical breathing can help with all kinds of struggles. Practicing tactical breathing can help you to feel calm, comfortable, and focused. When you are calm, you can use your eye of empathy to see the fires beneath aggression, and you are more empowered to make choices in your life, rather than having Ares make choices for you.”
9. **Show** slide 6. Breathing
10. “Tactical breathing does not replace the need for leveling up! If you haven’t done any preparation for a test, sporting event, or musical performance, tactical breathing will not replace the confidence and calm that comes from thorough preparation and leveling up. But the calm that comes from training, leveling up, and confidence, along with the calm that comes from tactical breathing, can work together to help you to deal with struggles and conflicts, both big and small.”
11. **Show** slide 7. Calm and confident