Participating in Art
Situational Stressor

Triggers:
- Student is unable to keep up with instruction.
- Student has difficulty with visual perceptual or fine motor skills.
- Student has difficulty with noise or less structured environment.
- Student has aversion to smell or the feel of art materials.

Thinking Strategies:

Student Positive Affirmations
- My hands are strong.
- I can create anything.

Positive Adult Praise
- Anything is possible. One stroke at a time. (Appendix E, Reference 22)
- If you can imagine it, you can create it.
- The thoughts we choose to think are the tools we use to paint the canvas of our lives. (4)

Activities
- Mold Your Thoughts – Teacher passes out play dough or clay to each student. Teacher states, “Each one of us has the ability to control our thoughts. We can program our thoughts to influence how we think. Shape the dough or clay into the image of a brain. As you work, mold in feel good, calming and relaxing thoughts.” Explore with students descriptions of positive thoughts as they mold.

- Paint A Picture – Prior to completing a project, ask students to relax your eyes, body muscles, and mind. Imagine yourself in a quiet bright white room. There are several paint jars in the room and you are holding a magic paintbrush. Dip your brush into the first jar of paint and paint green grass, trees, and plants. Dip your brush into the next jar and paint red flowers, cardinals, and apples in some of the trees. Dip your paint into the third jar, blue, and paint the sky and a small puddle near your feet. Smell the fresh air. Feel the water from the puddle on your toes. Dip your brush into the next jar, yellow, and reach your arms into the sky to paint a large warm sun. Feel the warmth from the sun shining onto your face and skin. Take deep breaths and say to yourself “I can do this”. Open your eyes and take time to feel the good feelings and how your body feels before starting your project. (3)
Focusing & Calming Strategies:

• Pinwheel – (See Activity Template A and B) Use template A for students to create their own.

Movement Poses & Breathing (See Appendix C)

• Squeeze The Sponge (spinal twist, seated in chair)
• Paint Brush Dipping  (forward bend in standing or sitting)
• Color Breathing – Imagine breathing the colors blue or green in through your nostrils, filling your body with calming light. Breathe out the colors red or black through the crown of your head.

Sensory Strategies:

Activities

• Worry Stones – How to make: Use clay to form worry stones. Have students feel the ridges and bumps with eyes open. Then trade stones with another student. With eyes closed, notice the similarities and differences. Adaptations: Worry rocks can be collected on the playground. During indoor recess, have students decorate with positive affirmations using markers.

• Create with Music – Playing music to different beats allows for stress reduction. Sharp, staccato music may prompt you to draw jagged edges or bold lines. Softer rhythms may encourage you to draw waves. Instrumental music is generally a more effective stress-buster than music with lyrics, because the mind is allowed to relax without distraction. (18)

Tools

• Suck on hard candy, use stones as fidgets, color Mandalas for centering and focus

Teaching Moment

Positive affirmations are a way to replace the way one thinks. Positive new beliefs can be strengthened through repetition. Repeat affirmations a few times a day. Address one change in thought for a month and you will most likely see a difference in a child’s response to an anxiety-producing event. (23)

Developed by: Alisa Deininger, OTR/L, Sarah Kolic, OTR/L & Denise Young, COTA/L (2016) for Every Moment Counts: Promoting Mental Health Throughout the Day. All of the Calm Moments Cards and supporting materials are free and downloadable in the Embedded Programs tab at www.everymomentcounts.org