

Manage Big Feelings (Secondary)

Have you ever felt really anxious or frustrated? Maybe you had a test coming up, and just thinking about it made you nervous. Or maybe you've experienced times when it was hard to concentrate because you were tired and overwhelmed. When you have strong emotions, like frustration, anxiety, worry, or discouragement, you can use the strategy **manage big feelings**.

Managing big feelings is like driving a car. Imagine that you're driving too slowly. It will take forever to get to where you're going. If you're driving too fast, you might lose control or even wreck. You want to drive at just the right speed. **Managing big feelings** is like that; you want to be aware of how your body and mind react to emotions so that you can go just the right speed to focus on learning.

When you **manage big feelings**, you notice the signals your body is sending you. If your body and mind are going too fast, you might notice a racing heart, sweaty palms, shortness of breath, or butterflies in your stomach. Taking a few deep breaths or saying positive things to yourself, like "You can do this. Stay focused," can help you when you notice that your mind and body seem fast. When your body and mind are moving too slowly, you might have low energy and feel tired. Taking a brisk walk or putting away things that distract you can help when your body and mind seem slow. Sometimes when we have feelings like sadness or hurt, it's best to talk to an adult or friend. Learning to recognize the signals your body is sending you and choosing techniques to help you focus means that you are **managing big feelings**.

I used the strategy **manage big feelings** when I was working on my lifeguard certification. I wanted to get a summer job as a lifeguard, but to become certified, I had to go through training and pass a written exam and a water-safety exam. I passed the written exam easily, but during the water-safety portion, it was difficult for me to keep the training manikin's head above water. I got nervous each time I practiced, and that made it difficult to position the rescue tube correctly under the manikin's shoulders. On the day of the exam, I felt my stomach flutter and my knees shake. I knew that if I didn't **manage my big feelings**, it would be harder to pass the exam. As I was stretching, I visualized myself calmly positioning the manikin, and I reminded myself that I had practiced many times. Then, before I jumped in the pool, I closed my eyes and took three deep breaths. I was able to **manage my big feelings**, pass the exam, and get a job as a lifeguard.

The next time your reaction to emotions gets in the way of your learning or progress, use the strategy **manage big feelings** to get your body and mind to go just the right speed. When you use the strategy **manage big feelings**, you'll stay focused and make progress even when learning or doing something challenging.