**TOOL: Teaching Students to Use the Peace Area**

**Presenter note:**Please modify the scenario as needed for your class. Using metacognition, explicitly telling the students what you are thinking and feeling, helps them know that everyone has a range of positive and challenging feelings. You might need to explain this at the beginning.

**At the Elementary Level**

**1. Explain the purpose of the procedure.**

*All of us have times that we are upset about something or have trouble concentrating.  Sometimes we just need a minute to calm down and breathe and relax. This is even true for me!*

*I have set an area in our room called the “Peace Area” that we can use for this.  It has two purposes:*

1. *For calming down and being able to get back to work*
2. *For solving a problem with a friend or classmate*

**2. Describe the procedure, including your expectations for how students will perform each step.**

*So, what are some of the ways we can use this space to cool off and reflect?* (Take student suggestions.) *I’m going to model how I might use it. Ready?*

(Cross arms, look angry, pout) *I didn’t have any coffee today and it’s making me really cranky. Then, when I was waiting to use the copy machine, Ms. Smith just jumped right in front of me! I am so mad!*

*(Stomp over to peace area)  Here I am in the peace area.  Let me just take a few deep breaths.* (Model breathing in deeply.) *I’m feeling a little better, but I’m not quite calm. Maybe a few more breaths.* (Breathe in.) *I can also write or squeeze a ball. Now I’m feeling better. I really like Ms. Smith! I wonder why she cut in front of me? Maybe she didn’t see me. Or she had a copy emergency. I’ve had those.*

*Okay, now I can think of what to do next.  What are my options? I can just let it go. It’s not like this happens all the time. Or I can tell Ms. Smith that it hurt my feelings when she cut the line. I think I will check in with her later and see if something was going on this morning.*

**3. Practice the Procedure**

*Okay, now let’s have a couple of you try.* (Choose two to three volunteers, and guide them through choosing to go, calming down, and thinking about what to do next.)

**4. Observe and Reflect**

Observe students closely so that you can give them feedback. Over the next few days, ask students themselves to reflect on how they are doing and what impact the Peace Area is having on the class.

**At the Highschool Level**

Gather students in a circle. Explain to students that in the process of learning new things and working with different people it is natural that we sometimes feel frustrated, angry, or overwhelmed.

Explain that for this reason you have created a “Peace Area” they can use.  It has two purposes:

1. For calming down and being able to get back to work
2. For solving a problem with a friend or classmate

Use strategies like Turn-to-Your-Partner to allow students to reflect and share around the following questions:

* What are some things that are frustrating that happen in class?
* What are some ways you could use the Peace Area?
* What are some ways that it's not appropriate to use the Peace Area?
* How might a Peace Area help?

Let students know that in order for this new strategy to work, they need to make sure they get to the Peace Area in a way that respects the work their peers are engaged in.

If it feels appropriate, you can have students practice. *Okay, now let’s have a couple of you try.* *(*Choose two two three volunteers, and have another student guide them through choosing to go, calming down, and thinking about what to do next.)

Have the class circle back in a few days. Ask students:

* Has anyone used the Peace Area?
* Was it helpful?
* Are there any strategies you used that you think could help others?

Give feedback around any challenges or positive changes you’ve observed.

**Teaching students to use the Peace Area – conflict resolution**

***Plan ahead of time to have the counselor or another adult to role play with you.***

*You have been doing a great job using the peace area for calming down.  I have seen you walk over without disturbing anyone else, breathe, think, and come back and join the group without distracting them from what they are working on.*

*Today we are going to talk about using the peace area for resolving conflict.  We all have problems with other people sometimes. This is normal in all relationships. And we know that there are ways to solve problems productively.*

Model using a “Solving Problems” Anchor Chart or another problem-solving strategy you use in your class. Coach students through the process for at least two additional problems that you suggest. Here are some examples:

* Elementary level: One student refuses to let someone play; a student engages in name-calling, cutting in line, or bumping into someone.
* Middle or high school level: team member isn’t doing their share of the work; there is a  misunderstanding among friends.

**Note:** Situations that would be considered bullying due to differentials in power dynamics will require more adult support.

The next day, reinforce students for using the area well.  Ask students what they have seen people do and how they have felt about solving some issues themselves.  Role play one or two more examples, coaching students as needed in the process.