



**Lesson Concept**

Calming down helps you handle put-downs and avoid making conflicts escalate.

**Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Identify strategies for handling put-downs
- Demonstrate what they've learned about strategies for calming down
- Demonstrate assertive responses to put-downs

**Materials**

- DVD player and monitor or computer with speakers, projector, and screen
- Grade 4 DVD
- Handout 15
- Lesson 15 Teaching the Lesson card
- Following Through Card 15
- How to Calm Down poster

**Lesson Preparation**

Display the How to Calm Down poster where students can see it clearly and you can refer to it during the lesson.

Copy Handout 15, one per student.

**Why This Lesson Matters**

Insults and mean comments are common causes of conflict among students. Put-downs can lead to serious problems and even fights if handled poorly. Students can keep their emotions under control by applying the Calming-Down Steps, which give them a chance to think through the situation and improve their ability to handle put-downs and escalating conflicts. Being able to keep strong emotional reactions in check can be important for students who are bullied, since sometimes a strong emotional reaction rewards the person bullying and makes further mistreatment more likely.

**Teaching Notes**

Unfortunately, popular media often portray insults and put-downs as humorous. Students are given the

message that insulting and putting down their peers will be rewarded with laughter and admiration for a quick wit. This is particularly salient for upper elementary students, who are developing their senses of humor. Help guide students by having them think critically about what makes something funny or not and analyze whether comedy should really be at the expense of others. Have students practice perspective taking by imagining themselves in the shoes of someone being put down for others' amusement.

It is important to emphasize that put-downs are not okay and not allowed at school. Make sure you have communicated a clear policy for dealing with student put-downs.

Do not allow students to act out the actual put-downs in the skill practice.

Go online to [www.secondstep.org](http://www.secondstep.org) to find:

- In-depth guidance for teaching and implementing the program
- Video examples of program activities in real classrooms
- Digital versions of the Following Through cards
- Writable PDFs of the Home Links to email to students and families
- Online training
- Spanish-language materials



## Review

Play the “Calm Down” music video.

Have students listen with attention for what the words say happens when you name your feeling. (“It slows you down and makes you think.”)

Review using the Calming-Down Steps to avoid jumping to conclusions. Refer to the How to Calm Down poster.

## Introduction (5 minutes)

Display the first screen.

As you watch this video, imagine what it would be like if these voices were talking to you.

Play the video.

**What was happening to the flower with each put-down?** (It shrank. It shriveled. It got smaller.)

**If these words were directed at you, how would it make you feel?** (Bad, upset, unimportant, mad, angry.)

**Sometimes when people say mean and hurtful things to you, they can make you feel unimportant, small, bad, or even angry.**

The voices on the video were saying things to humiliate someone or hurt someone’s feelings on purpose. These are put-downs. Put-downs are not okay. And they can be the cause of a lot of strong emotions. Do you agree? Thumbs up for yes, thumbs down for no. Comment on the number of thumbs up.

**Over the last couple of weeks, you’ve been practicing ways to calm down strong emotions. What are some of those ways?** Refer to the How to Calm Down poster and the “Calm Down” song. (Stop—use your signal. Name your feeling. Calm down: breathe, count, use positive self-talk.)

Today you’re going to learn how to use some of those same Calming-Down Steps for handling put-downs.

## Story and Discussion (10–15 minutes)

In this next video, one student is put down by another student in his class. As you watch, think about what Derek is feeling and what he needs to do so he doesn’t react in a way that might make things worse.

Play the video.



**1. What has happened to Derek?** (He was being put down.)

**2. Derek said he felt like hitting Jason, the other boy. What could Derek do to keep himself from reacting this way?** (Follow the Calming-Down Steps. Stop—use his signal. Name his feeling. Calm down: breathe, count, use positive self-talk.)

**3. Think of one stop signal Derek could send to himself. Give students think-time. Now turn and tell your partner your signal.** After about 30 seconds, call on a few students at random to report. (Hold on, chill, wait.)

**4. Now, again with your partner, come up with one or more feelings Derek might be having that he could name. He could say to himself: “I’m feeling very . . .” what?** Give students about 30 seconds to discuss. Call on a few students at random to report. (Angry, embarrassed, upset, mad, furious.)

**5. After Derek has stopped and named his feeling, what are some ways that he could calm down?** Refer to the How to Calm Down poster if necessary. (Deep, centered breathing. Counting. Use positive self-talk.)

**6. After Derek has calmed down, what do you think he should do that will be safe and not get him in trouble?** Write some of students' answers in a place where everyone can see them. Add the following solutions if students do not come up with them on their own: Ignore him. Assertively tell him to stop. Tell him it's none of his business. Say something positive about himself, such as "I did better than last time!" Talk to an adult about what happened.

**As you can see, Derek has many choices of things he can do that will make the situation better for him and not worse for everyone else.**

**7. Watch carefully to see how Derek handled the situation.**

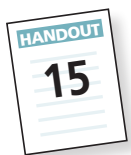
Play the video.

**8. Was Derek's response to Jason aggressive, assertive, or passive?** (Assertive.) **Derek did the right things to calm himself down, and he was respectful and assertive when he responded to Jason. But what should Derek do if Jason still keeps putting him down?** (He should get help from an adult.)

**It's very important to remember that any time you can't get someone to stop putting you down, you need to go to an adult for help.**

### Activity (10–15 minutes)

**Now you're going to do a skill practice. Who remembers why we practice?** (To get better. To build connections in our brains. To make skills permanent.) **Now, together with your partner, you will practice ways to respond to put-downs.**



Distribute Handout 15, one per student.

Read the directions out loud.

Remind students to follow the Calming-Down Steps from the poster and to be assertive. Ask students to give examples of or define assertiveness. (Face the person you're talking to. Keep your head

up and shoulders back. Use a calm, firm voice. Use respectful words.)

Give students ten minutes to do the skill practice. Monitor and coach pairs as they practice. Do not allow students to act out the put-downs.

Remind students to switch roles after five minutes.

As time allows, have students volunteer to demonstrate their skill practices for the class.

### Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

**What kind of responses did you find easiest to do in the skill practice?** (Various answers.)

**Put-downs are not allowed in our class. Why are put-downs not okay?** (They make people feel bad. They make people mad. The person saying them appears rude and unkind. Put-downs can start a fight. Put-downs are disrespectful.)

**Think about why it is important to stay calm when you are reacting to a put-down.** Give students think-time. **Turn and tell your partner your ideas.** After a minute, call on a few students at random to report. (So that you can respond assertively, rather than aggressively. So that you can think clearly about what to do. So you don't make the situation worse.)

**If someone continues to put you down, even after you've assertively told that person to stop, what should you do?** (Get help from an adult.)

**Some of the ways to deal with put-downs that you practiced today include follow the How to Calm Down poster, ignore the person, assertively tell the person to stop, say something positive about yourself, and get help if put-downs continue. Which of these ways do you think will work best for you when dealing with put-downs in the future?** (Various answers.)