



OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will engage in physical movement and play, as they develop the vocabulary and experience of resilience and endurance. They will develop their connection to nature by a play-based activity that mirrors the behaviors of fish.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is emotional resilience, and how can you use it in your life?
- How can you help yourself keep going when things feel difficult?
- How might fish move through water and adapt to changes?

MA STATE FRAMEWORKS

Physical Fitness and Activity [PK.4.PF]

1. Demonstrate developmentally appropriate locomotor movements (i.e., hop, gallop, jog, slide, skip and run) and movement concepts (e.g., traveling in various pathways, showing differentiation of speed) in a variety of situations (e.g., incorporated in a dance or rhythm activity, applied during a game or activity).

Mental and Emotional Health [PK.5.MH]

1. Recognize and accurately label simple emotions (e.g., happy, sad, mad, worried, lonely) and demonstrate awareness that personal emotions may be the same or different from the emotions of others.
2. Accept failure and demonstrate the ability to persevere despite perceived failures.

MATERIALS

- Projector, video and music
- Sufficient space for movement
- Fish cards printed out, enough for one fish per student

JUST KEEP SWIMMING

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PROCEDURE

Overview

This movement-based activity explores the idea that, no matter how calm or turbulent the water, fish must always keep swimming in order to breathe and uses this concept as a metaphor for emotional resilience. Throughout this activity, youth explore how different emotional “waters” call for different types of movement and resilience—while also having fun creating expressive shapes and motions with their bodies.

Warm Up:

Show students videos of different types of water (e.g., choppy seas, rushing rivers, still lakes, trickling streams) and as a class assign emotions to each video. Ask students, “What do you think the water is feeling?” or “If water had human emotions, what emotion would you assign it?” to help students build emotional vocabulary and empathy through observation.

Main Activity

Choose a Fish

Begin by having each student choose a fish from the fish cards. This can be turned into a creative arts activity: students can color, paint, or decorate their fish on paper, then tape or pin it to their shirt as a name tag or badge. Introduce the idea that “Fish always keep swimming—and in this activity, swimming equals dancing.” Students will then use their bodies to express how their fish might move through the different waters.

Move Like a Fish

Show short videos of various moving waters. Play music to match the mood. After each video, prompt students to move like their fish would in those conditions:

- “The waters are slow—how would you like to move?”
- “Now the water is rough and choppy—how can your fish swim through this?”
- Encourage creativity, self-expression, and fun.

Reflect

After about 15 minutes of movement, gather students in a circle for reflection. Guide a short conversation using questions like:

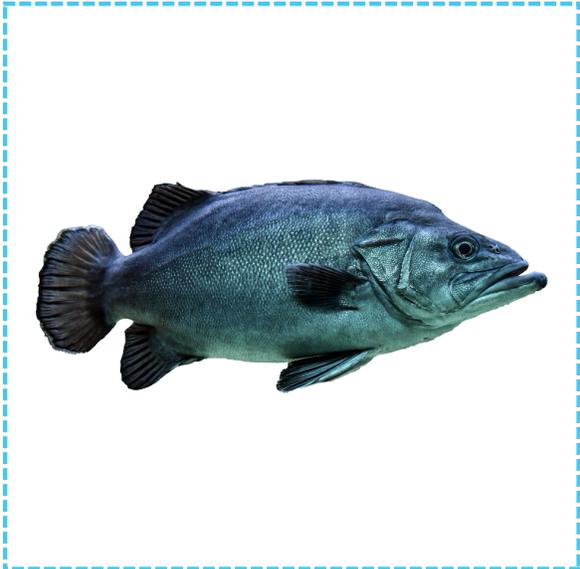
- “What helped you keep going when you got tired?”
- “When was it hardest to just keep swimming?”
- “How did it feel to pause and rest?”

Reflecting will help students make connections between their physical movement and their emotional experiences, reinforcing the idea that resilience means adapting to different “waters” and continuing on—even in challenging conditions.

JUST KEEP SWIMMING

HANDOUT

Fish Cards



JUST KEEP SWIMMING

HANDOUT

Fish Cards

