



# Meet Mr. Mouse Lesson Plan



## Target Concepts

- Experiences can be divided into those that brains *seek* and those that brains *avoid*.
- Brains *seek* experiences that give us comfortable thoughts and emotions, and *avoid* experiences that give us uncomfortable thoughts and emotions.

## Lesson Preparation

- Read and/or review the video, script, lesson plan, and handouts
- Print “Comfy or Uncomfy Animals” primer worksheet (one per student)
- Print “Animal: Seek and Avoid” worksheet (one per student)
- Optional: Print “You: Seek and Avoid” worksheet (one per student)
- Print “Home Letter” and “Meet Mr. Mouse Book” (one per student)

## Review

This review activity is designed to activate students’ learning from the previous lesson. Students are invited to discuss what three things the brain controls, and share personal experiences of situations that can lead to different forms of thoughts, emotions and actions.

The following script is intended to provide a general guide for how you may choose to lead this activity:

- “Before we begin our new Brain Talk lesson, let’s review what we remember about the brain.”
- [Individually, in pairs, or in small groups] “What three things does the brain control? (thoughts, emotions, behaviors)”
- “When is a time you have needed to use problem-solving thoughts to figure out an answer or fix a problem?”
- “When have you felt an emotion in a gentle way? What about a time you felt an emotion in a strong way?”
- Describe a time when you reacted faster than the speed of thought. What happened? Now think of a time when you responded in a calm way. How did that turn out?”

## Primer

This primer activity is designed to prepare students for the lesson by activating known information to scaffold new learning. Students are asked to consider whether various animals are in states of comfort or discomfort.

The following script is intended to provide a general guide for how you may choose to lead this activity:

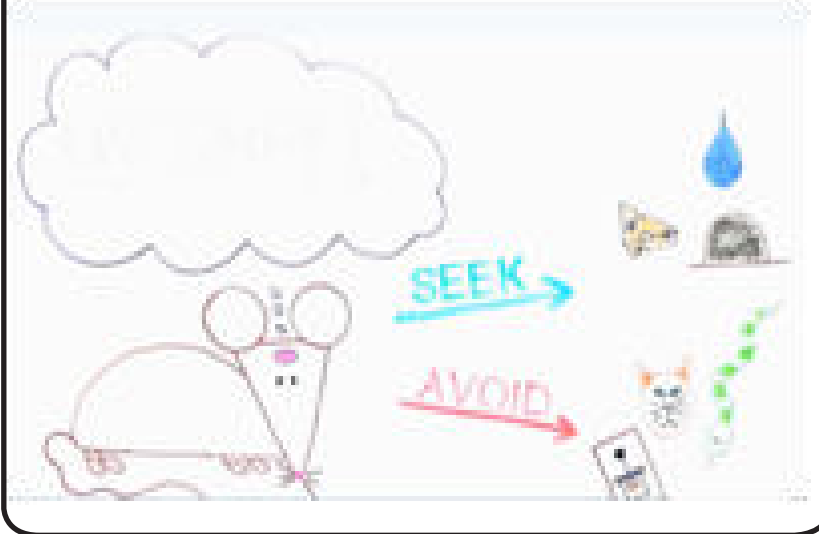
- “Today we’ll be talking about what the brain seeks and avoids. The brain likes to feel comfy and doesn’t like to feel uncomfy. Let’s start by looking at some animals and deciding if they seem comfy or uncomfy.”
- (Provide the Comfy or Uncomfy Animal primer worksheet to each student) “Start by cutting out each animal. You are then going to make two piles of animals: one pile for animals that seem comfortable and another pile for animals that seem uncomfortable.”
- “Which animals seem comfy? How did you know? What might change to cause them to feel uncomfy?”
- “Which animals seem uncomfy? How did you know? What might change to cause them to feel comfy?”



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Meet  
Mr. Mouse  
Early Elementary

## Watch Video: Meet Mr. Mouse



## Guided Instruction

### Discussion Points:

- Brain Talk begins with Mr. Mouse because there are ways that our human brains are similar to Mr. Mouse's simple brain. Just like Mr. Mouse, humans also have a part of the brain that seeks comfy things and avoids uncomfortable things.
- What does Mr. Mouse seek? How do these things help Mr. Mouse feel comfortable and stay safe?
- What does Mr. Mouse avoid? Why do these things cause Mr. Mouse to feel uncomfortable?
- The brain's impulse to seek comfortable things and avoid uncomfortable things helps to keep animals, and sometimes humans, alive. What would happen to Mr. Mouse if he didn't avoid uncomfortable, unsafe things?
- What kinds of things or activities do you seek? What kinds of things or activities do you avoid?

### Activity:

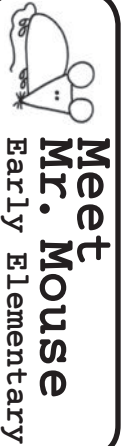
- "Animal: Seek and Avoid" worksheet

## Background Information

- Although humans have a *thinking brain* (i.e., cortex) and a *feeling brain* (i.e., limbic system), our brains evolved from a much simpler brain, which was more like a mouse's: mostly feeling and mostly concerned with seeking and avoiding.
- *Seeking* is the master emotional system that influences the rest of our emotional systems; it is the mammalian motivational engine that gets us out of the bed (or den) to venture forth into the world each day.
- *Avoiding* is a primal emotional reaction activated for self-preservation, and driven by the desire to seek safety.
- These bottom-up primal emotional networks are foundational processes that regulate the secondary-processes of emotion, memory and learning.



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## Teacher Notes

- Sensory input (too little or too much) can trigger seek-mode or avoid-mode for a student. Help students identify how stimuli in the classroom environment may be triggering seek-mode or avoid-mode on a sensory processing level, and how they might use this knowledge to meet their sensory needs.
  - Example: a student who is triggered into seek-mode by distracting visual stimuli may benefit from a personal study carol during independent work time.
- Sensory survey's can be used to help students build metacognitive awareness of their sensory needs.
  - A useful online sensory checklist can be found at: <http://www.sensorysmarts.com/sensory-checklist.pdf>

## Taking it Further

- Help students look for cross-curricular opportunities to identify times times when a character from a story or lesson was seeking or avoiding an outcome or experience.
  - Literature Example: in the picture book Big Al, by Andrew Clements, Big Al is seeking friends and trying to avoid scaring the smaller fish.
  - History Example: Dr Martin Luther King was seeking equal rights for people of color, and as a peaceful protestor he was also trying to avoid violence.