



ART BASED

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING CURRICULUM

FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Module 0: Introduction to SEL

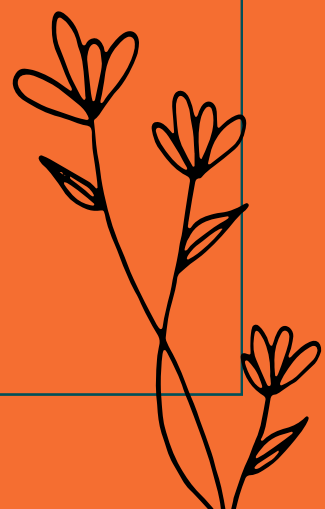




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INTRODUCTION

What is eaSEL?

eaSEL or Ease Through Art is a curriculum designed for special educators and teachers working with students with disabilities. The curriculum, which is divided into 6 modules, will be looking at different components of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) through the lens of art. Art-based SEL harnesses the power of creative expression to promote emotional, cognitive, and social development, offering a unique and effective approach to address the diverse needs of children with disabilities.

Through support from the American India Foundation, two fellows from the Banyan Impact Fellowship's 2022-23 cohort, Padma Samhita Vadapalli and Sanaa Munjal, have co-created this curriculum in order to address the issues of a lack of accessibility and awareness which persist in the disability space. It is their hope that this curriculum will act as a stepping stone in fostering an inclusive knowledge repository, which will allow special educators to incorporate SEL based activities within the classroom.

Children with disabilities often face challenges in communicating their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. They are also more susceptible to experiencing mental distress and suffering from mental health issues during their lifetimes. Traditional therapeutic approaches do not adequately address their specific communication and emotional needs, necessitating alternative interventions that enable self-expression and promote holistic development. In addition, art based SEL remains largely unintroduced among PwD communities in India, despite its significant potential and benefit.

The benefits of art based SEL include:

1. Provides a means to facilitate self-expression, communication, and emotional well-being among children with disabilities
2. Fosters cognitive and sensory development through engaging and interactive artistic activities.
3. Enhances social skills, self-esteem, and self-confidence among participants through creative collaboration and community engagement.
4. Provides exposure to art, and paves the way for the integration of art based social and emotional learning within their school curriculum.



CURRICULUM

Structure & Components



According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional, Learning ([CASEL](#)), Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is “the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.”

The eaSEL curriculum comprises of 1 introductory module, and 5 SEL modules.

1. Self- Awareness

- Emotional Awareness, Trigger Identification
- Self-Awareness & Building Identity

2. Self Management

- Self Compassion & Regulation
- Goals, Success and Management

3. Relationship Skills

- Teamwork and Social Skills
- Understanding Compassion for Others

4. Responsible Decision Making

- Interpersonal Awareness
- Recognizing Common Humanity

5. Community & Systems (Social Awareness)

- Appreciating Interdependence
- Community & Global Engagement

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

- 1. Individualised Approaches:** Recognize and respect the unique needs and abilities of each child in the classroom. Do not hesitate to tailor and modify the provided SEL activities to accommodate diverse learning styles, communication preferences, and sensory sensitivities.
- 2. Clear Communication:** Provide instructions in the children's preferred communication style in the classroom. Be clear and concise with your language, and provide communication aids and tools to support the facilitation of these activities. A few such effective aids have been provided in the curriculum for reference.
- 3. Establish a Routine:** Build structure and a predictable routine into your SEL sessions. Ensure that you outline the session's agenda, objective, and activities in advance.
- 4. Visual Supports:** Utilise visual supports to further explain and illustrate SEL activities. Schedules, charts, and diagrams can provide clarity and outline expected behaviours to the children.
- 5. Incorporate Sensory Elements:** Be mindful of sensory sensitivities of the children, and modify the SEL activities accordingly. Provide a diverse sensory environment, and offer sensory breaks and movement breaks if required.
- 6. Flexible Grouping:** Implement flexible social grouping in order to allow effective peer collaboration. Give children the flexibility to work either with a partner, in small groups, or within the larger classroom with respect to their social comfort and needs. This allows for the fostering of meaningful connections and sharing between the children.
- 7. Emphasis on Positive Reinforcement:** Positive reinforcement can act as an effective tool for encouragement and learning. Celebrate small achievements, and use a strength-based approach by phrasing limitations within a positive context.
- 8. Feedback and Reflection:** It is important for teachers to consistently seek feedback from the students and the support staff post-activities. Reflection on the effectiveness of SEL activities can help teachers tailor them and improve them to fulfil the needs of the classroom.
- 9. Compassion-Focused Classroom:** Create a compassion-focused classroom with kindness and warm-heartedness at the center of it all. Co-create norms within the classroom to support a trusting environment. Routinely point out to students when they properly used their SEL skills (knowingly or unknowingly) and create situations where they can practice them easily. Nurture a culture of Kindness.
- 10. Reflection and Learning:** Create a reflection time for absorption of Social Emotional Learning along with working towards the readiness of learning and assessing the understanding of students. The methods of assessment may vary among students, but integrating a reflection and learning circle after each activity serves as an example. Allow them space to express how they feel in their own words.



ICEBERG THEORY

The Connection between Behaviour and Emotions



The Iceberg Theory of a child's Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) development uses the metaphor of an iceberg to illustrate the complexity of a child's inner world and the importance of addressing social and emotional needs in classrooms.

Imagine an iceberg floating in the ocean. What you see above the surface is just the tip, while the vast majority of the iceberg lies hidden beneath the water. Similarly, in a child's SEL development, their observable behaviors and actions represent only the surface-level manifestations of their social and emotional well-being.

Beneath the surface, there's a whole range of thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and experiences shaping a child's behavior and interactions. These include aspects such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and relationship building – all critical components of SEL.

Now, this theory highlights the need for SEL in classrooms by emphasizing that addressing only the observable behaviors is not enough. Just like the bulk of the iceberg lies hidden underwater, many of the factors influencing a child's social and emotional development are not immediately apparent.

By integrating SEL into classroom practices, educators can dive beneath the surface to address the underlying factors impacting a child's behavior and well-being. SEL provides tools and strategies to nurture essential skills like emotional regulation, conflict resolution, communication, and empathy – skills that are vital for academic success, positive relationships, and overall well-being.

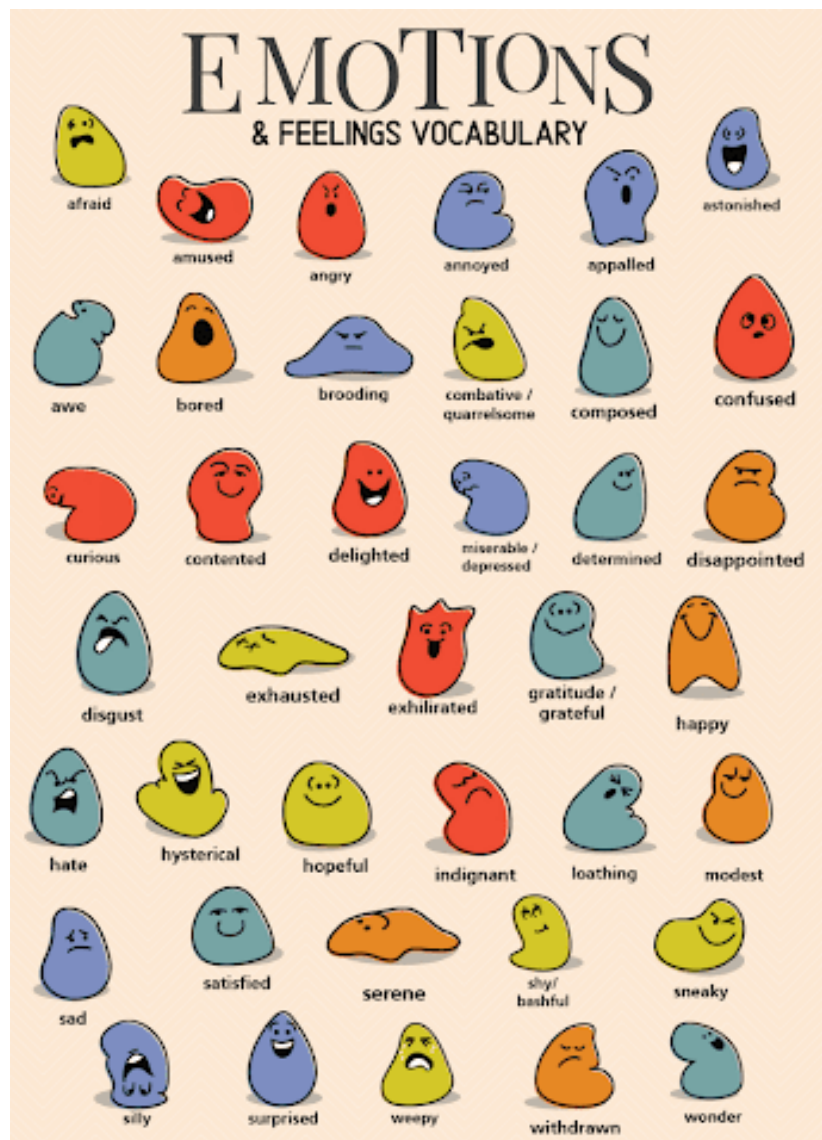
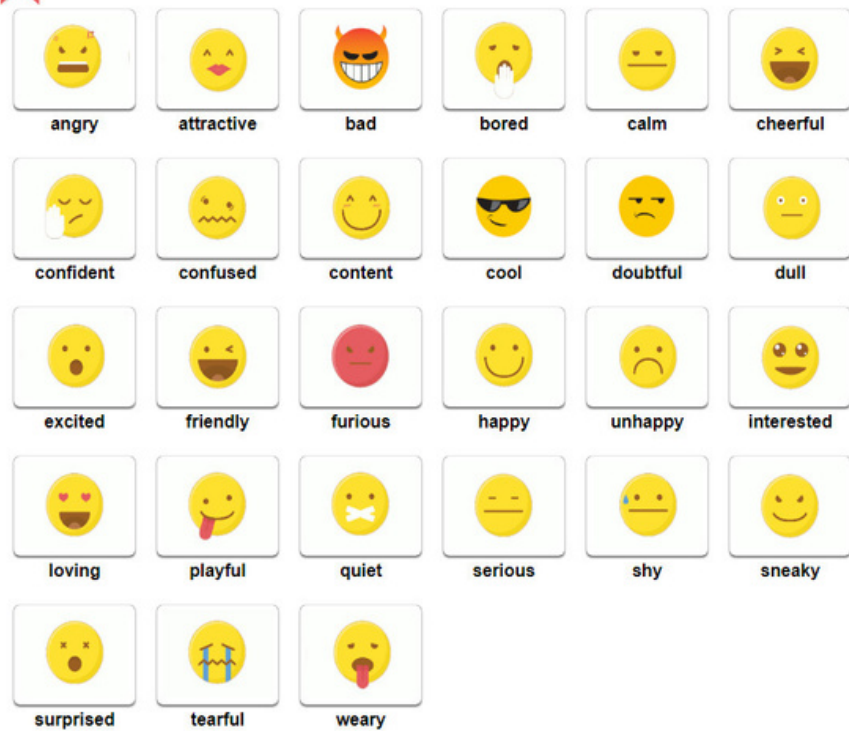
Moreover, the Iceberg Theory underscores that neglecting a child's social and emotional needs can have far-reaching consequences. Unaddressed issues below the surface can lead to challenges such as poor academic performance, behavioral problems, social isolation, and mental health issues.

Incorporating SEL into classrooms creates a supportive environment where students feel valued, understood, and equipped with the skills needed to navigate the complexities of their inner world and the world around them. By addressing the whole iceberg of a child's SEL development, educators can lay the foundation for lifelong success and well-being.

EMOTIONS VOCABULARY

Putting your Emotions into Words

For a small child, words such as "frustrated" would be difficult to understand. An example to explain this concept could be opening a tightly wrapped box and then asking, "Is it hard to do?" Afterwards, we can respond, "Oh, that must be so frustrating." This helps the child understand the word and its usage.



Body Literacy

Understanding these emotions and practicing emotional regulation is crucial in our daily lives.

Some children may become more upset or angry due to minor environmental changes, such as noise or overcrowding.



1. Provide each student with a piece of paper and encourage them to draw a body map. They have the freedom to depict it in any creative manner they choose. Optionally, offer guidance and support in drawing the body map if needed.
2. Engage the students in a raw and open conversation about how they are feeling today. Encourage them to express their emotions and state of mind freely.
3. As the teacher, demonstrate on your own body map areas where you typically feel emotions or sensations. Use the provided reference image to guide your demonstration.
4. Instruct the students to highlight on their body map where they feel different emotions in various situations. Prompt them with common scenarios to help them think and identify emotions. For example:
 - Feeling hungry when getting their favorite food item (sensations in the mouth and stomach).
 - Experiencing excitement while playing games (smiling, warmth).
5. Encourage students to verbalize and share their emotions and corresponding physical sensations. Guide them in identifying which feelings correspond to which body parts. Allow students to touch different body parts such as the heart, stomach, and palms to discern any associated emotions.

Through this activity, students gain insight into the connection between emotions and bodily sensations, laying the groundwork for enhanced self-awareness and emotional regulation. Additionally, introducing the Iceberg Theory concept reinforces the understanding that visible behaviours are often manifestations of underlying emotions and feelings.

Naming Sensations



The objective of this activity is to enhance children's ability to recognize and name their bodily sensations accurately. By developing vocabulary related to sensations, children will gain a better understanding of how emotions manifest in the body.

The Sensations Vocabulary activity is designed to deepen children's understanding of their emotional experiences by integrating bodily sensations into their emotional literacy. While traditional approaches to SEL often emphasize identifying emotions, this activity acknowledges the importance of recognizing bodily sensations and their correlation with feelings.

By engaging in the activity, children will not only learn to identify sensations but also understand how they manifest in the body and how to accurately label them. The attached image, depicting a feelings-sensation wheel, serves as a visual aid to guide children in identifying and categorizing their sensations as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

Through this comprehensive exploration, children will develop a nuanced vocabulary for describing their emotional and physical states, enhancing their self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

HELP NOW STRATEGIES

Coping Mechanisms

2. Push against a wall

Focus on the sensations of your muscles pushing.

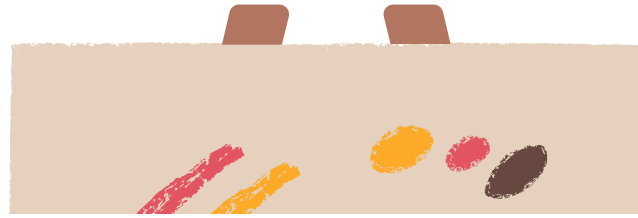


Help Now! Activities (from the Trauma Resource Institute)
The Art of Healing Trauma Blog

Instructions

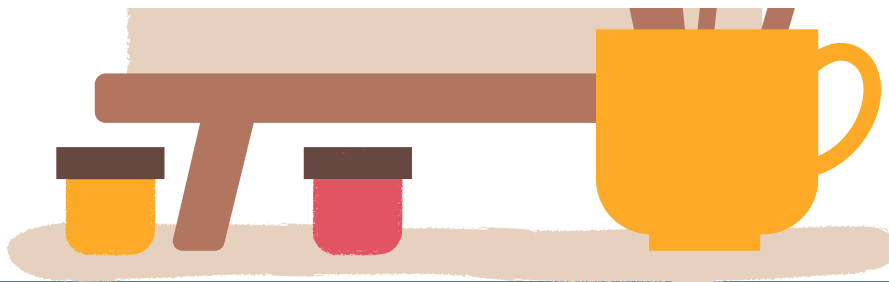
There are simple strategies we can use to help our bodies become calmer and feel safer when we are undergoing unpleasant emotions and sensations in our body. There are several help now strategies that can be used, below are some of them listed to support anyone who might need them:

1. Identify 5 Things in one particular colour around the room to bring back focus and attention. For example, 5 things in the colour Red or Yellow. Make a note of them. Focus on your surroundings, invisible things become more visible.
2. Push Yourself against a wall and stand facing the way by putting both hands on the wall and leaning towards it. Focus on different body parts like hands, feet, muscles, etc. and the way they feel while pushing yourself towards the wall.
3. Count backward from 10 to 1 out aloud or either way. Pay attention to how the mouth moves with each number being counted and bring complete focus to your body and the movement.
4. Drink Water or anything available and pay attention to how the water feels while entering the body and what sensations you feel. Bring complete attention to your body.
5. Bring complete focus to your environment and surroundings. Pay attention to 5 colours, 5 sounds, 5 things you can touch and 5 things that you can see. Make a note of them. Take time to observe everything around you.
6. Walk barefoot and feel the ground/grass. Focus on the feet and your surroundings and bring complete focus to one particular activity.



END OF MODULE 0

Sources, Links & Information



Sources for Images & Additional Information

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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1oXx4dellY> -
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