



ease through art

ART BASED
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL
LEARNING CURRICULUM

FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Module 1: Self Awareness

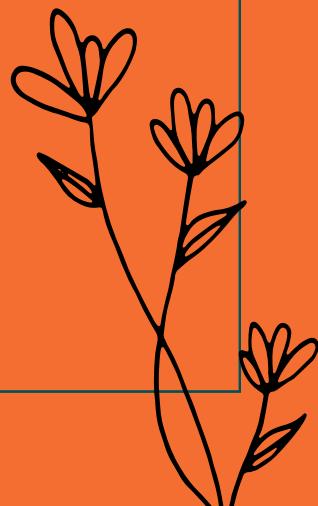




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WHAT IS SELF AWARENESS?

The first component of Social & Emotional Learning

Practising self-awareness and self-recognition is a crucial aspect of healthy childhood development, as it lays down the foundation for cultivating emotional intelligence and healthy interpersonal skills in adulthood. Self-awareness can be defined as the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations. This awareness allows individuals to manage their own emotions, navigate social situations, and develop effective communication skills.

In the context of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), self-awareness acts as a vital starting point for self-regulation, responsible decision-making and positive relationship building. It encompasses a wide range of abilities which rest on introspection and reflection. These abilities include recognizing and understanding one's emotions, thoughts and behaviours, as well as understanding how one's emotions and actions may impact the people around them. Self-awareness through SEL encourages children to practise mindfulness, and teaches them to step back from immediate reactions, assess their emotional states and make informed decisions. Self-awareness continues to evolve over time, as individuals gain new perspectives and insights into themselves and their relationships.

Self-awareness becomes an increasingly important ability when it comes to children with disabilities. As children with disabilities often tend to struggle with sensory issues and have difficulties expressing themselves, self-awareness can play a pivotal role in enhancing their ability to regulate and express their emotions. This can ensure the development of effective coping mechanisms and self-management strategies, promoting self-autonomy.

For children who are on the autism spectrum, who may experience social communication challenges, self-awareness helps in understanding social cues, fostering more meaningful connections with peers, and reducing social anxiety. It empowers them to navigate a world that may present unique sensory and social challenges, fostering greater independence and resilience.

In particular, art can act as an effective medium which provides a non-verbal and creative outlet for self-expression. The process of creating art promotes sensory exploration, cooperation and self-confidence in one's own identity and creativity. In addition, the tangible and visual nature of art allows children to discover, understand and externalise their inner worlds. One of the biggest benefits of utilising art as a medium lies in its unique and inclusive nature. As it is highly tailorable in nature, it can be easily modified to suit the diverse needs of children with varying needs, within the framework of social and emotional learning.



#1 NAME SIGNS

Identifying your emotional state

Objective

The objective of this exercise is to enable the children to recognize and understand their emotional states through the use of colours. It encourages children to explore different emotions, and the behaviours in which these emotions manifest themselves.

Materials Required

- Paper Sheets
- Coloured Markers
- Crayons



Instructions

Begin the activity by asking each child to write their name on a piece of paper. Ensure that they write their name in large bubble letters.

2. Have a brief discussion with the children: How are colours and feelings related? Do certain colours make you feel a certain way? Are certain colours associated with certain emotions?

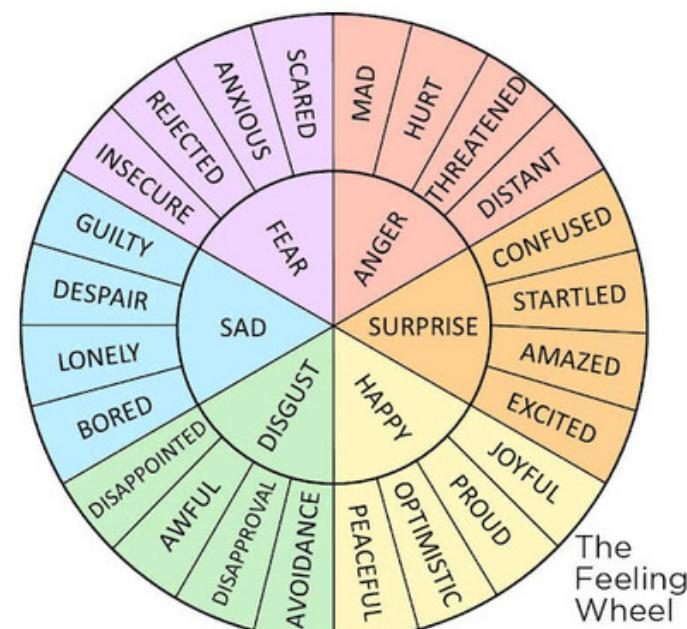
This discussion can be facilitated by the teacher going through each of the following emotions: anger, sadness, happiness, fear and disgust. For each emotion, the teacher should ask the children to describe the colours that they associate with the emotion.

For example, a child may associate red with anger, blue with sadness, and yellow with the feeling of happiness. Make sure to give the children the freedom to pick and choose their own corresponding colours to their emotional states.

3. Following the discussion, ask the children to colour in the letters in their name based on how they are feeling currently. Encourage the children to use different colours to represent different feelings.

4. After finishing the activity, create a space for the children to share their work. Encourage discussion by asking them why they chose the colours that they did to represent their current emotional state. Teachers should lead by example, by doing the activity along with the children and discussing their own feelings, in order to create a more comfortable environment.

Note: For older children, this activity can be modified with the use of a Feelings Wheel to address more complex emotions. Ask children to identify what they are feeling on the feelings wheel, and paint their names respectively.



#2 SELF PORTRAITS

Who are you?

Objective

The objective of this activity is to allow self-introspection among children. By identifying external and internal qualities that hold importance to them, they are able to recognize and communicate their identities, as well as build self-confidence in who they are. This activity also helps to improve positive self-talk.

Materials Required

- Mirrors (ideally Hand Held)
- Paper Sheets
- Acrylic Paints
- Brushes
- Pencils



Instructions

1. Have the children sit in a circle, and pass around hand-held mirrors. Encourage the children to look into the mirror and observe themselves.
2. After a few minutes of observation, have a discussion with the students: What do they see in the mirror? What do they like the most about themselves? Ask them to describe their outer self in one word. Encourage the children to identify one thing that they like about themselves (example answers can include: my smile, my hair, my eyes, etc).
3. Follow this with a second discussion: Who are they on the inside? Ask them to describe their inner selves in one word. Encourage the children to use any adjectives they like (example adjectives include: powerful, brave, kind, creative, etc).
4. On their individual sheets of paper, ask the children to draw simple self portraits combining both their external and internal selves. Encourage them to be creative, and use a wide range of colours & materials to create their own representations of themselves.
5. Offer the children the space to discuss their self portraits, either to the entire class, or in smaller groups. Teachers should focus on leading the children to view themselves holistically and positively.

#3 EMOTION STONES

How do you recognize your emotions?

Objective

The objective of this activity is to enable children to understand emotional and social cues on a personal level. By understanding facial expressions and their associated emotions, children gain a firmer understanding and are able to recognize immediate emotions as they come up.

Materials Required

- Smooth stones
- Acrylic paints
- Brushes



Instructions

1. Hand out a couple of smooth stones to each child.
2. Have a brief discussion: What are the main emotions that you feel the most in your day to day life? Ask the children to identify a minimum of three main emotions that they believe affect them the most.
3. Follow this with a second discussion: What facial expressions correspond to each emotion? This can be modified according to the needs of the children. For children who struggle with emotional regulation and identification, it is important to stress on the different types of facial expressions.
Example questions include: What face do you make when you're angry? What face do you make when you're sad? What face do you make when you feel happy?
4. Ask the students to paint these different facial expressions representing each emotion, onto the stones. Emphasise focus on facial cues: What do your eyebrows look like when you're angry? What do your eyes look like when you cry?
5. Allow the stones to dry.
6. Use the stones as a tool for children to express and share their feelings by asking them to point to the appropriate stone.

Note: This can be modified into an outdoor activity where the children select and find their own emotion stones.

#4 HEART COLLAGE

What makes you you?

Objective

The objective of this exercise is to allow children to explore different aspects of their identities. By encouraging them to think about their personal values, interests and goals, the activity provides a platform for fostering creativity and self-confidence.

Materials Required

- Magazine cut-outs for collage-making
- Large paper hearts
- Glue sticks



Instructions

1. Each student is given a cut out paper heart.
2. On a table, place a wide range of cut-out images from magazines and newspapers. This should include a wide range of things such as movies, music, food, cinema, culture, clothing, animals etc. These cut-outs can be personalised to suit the cultural and lifestyle backgrounds of the students.
3. Facilitate a discussion: what makes you you? What are your interests? What are your passions? What do you enjoy doing in your free time? What activities are an important part of who you are? Encourage the children to explore the cut-out images
4. Ask the children to identify images that resonate the most with who they identify as.
5. Show the students how to stick these images onto their “hearts” using glue sticks. Encourage them to make personalised collages which represent who they are.
6. After completion of the activity, facilitate a group discussion: Tell us about one of the images that you chose for your heart, and why you chose that image to represent yourself.

#5 EMOTION MAPPING

How are your emotions changing?

Objective

The objective of this activity is to enable children to understand the dynamic nature of emotions. By recognizing changes in their emotional states, children can map their emotional journeys and gain a holistic perspective, which plays a crucial role in emotional regulation.

Materials Required

- Coloured Chalk
- Pavement or ground to use chalk on/chalkboard
- Alternatively, chalk and chalkboard can be replaced with crayons & paper



Instructions

1. Start with a brief discussion: *How are you feeling today? How did you feel last week? Last month? How do you think you will feel next week? How have your emotions been changing with time?*
2. Ask the children how they are feeling today. After this, ask them to identify a moment in their past that elicited an emotional response in them, as well as a moment in the future that they're looking forward to.
3. Using chalk, ask the children to draw three images - one for each of the previously identified moments. Example pictures can include flowers/sunshine for happiness, rain/night for sadness, etc. Allow the children to be creative and introspect their own feelings.
4. After drawing these three images, encourage the children to think about how these three images connect to each other. *What has changed? What do they expect to change in the future?* This discussion is done best in smaller groups, or among partners in the classroom.

#6 RIVER OF LIFE

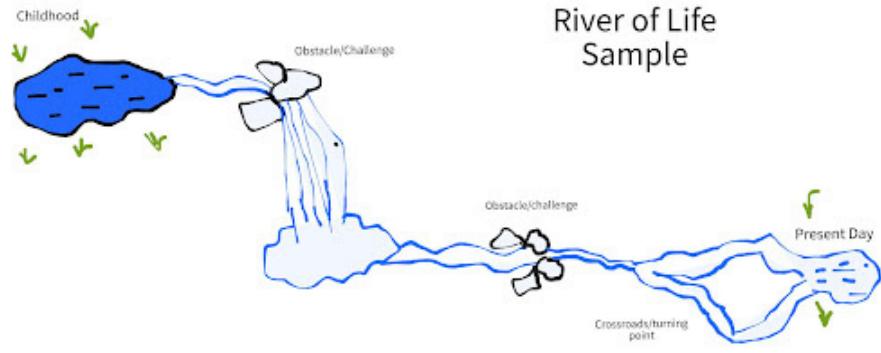
Where do you come from?

Objective

The objective of this activity is to enable children to understand their own emotional triggers, as well as the origins of their emotional states, facilitating emotional awareness. It is ideal for older age groups, including adolescents and young adults.

Materials Required

- Coloured Pens
- Paper
- Crayons/Paints



Instructions

1. The participants start the activity by asking themselves these questions:
 - *If your life were a river, what shape would it take?*
 - *Where are the bends and turns, when your situation or perspective changed?*
 - *Was the transition smooth or sudden?*
 - *Are there rocks or boulders — obstacles or life-altering moments — falling into your river?*
2. The participants should now paint their life journey in the form of a river on the piece of paper. Make sure they include dates for different years.
3. Split into smaller groups, and give participants the time to share their rivers within a more intimate setting.

Note: When working with younger age groups, this activity can be modified by asking them to reflect on shorter periods of time: the past week, the day, etc. The goal is to facilitate emotional awareness and trigger identification.

Be as creative as you like!

#7 STARE DOWN FEAR

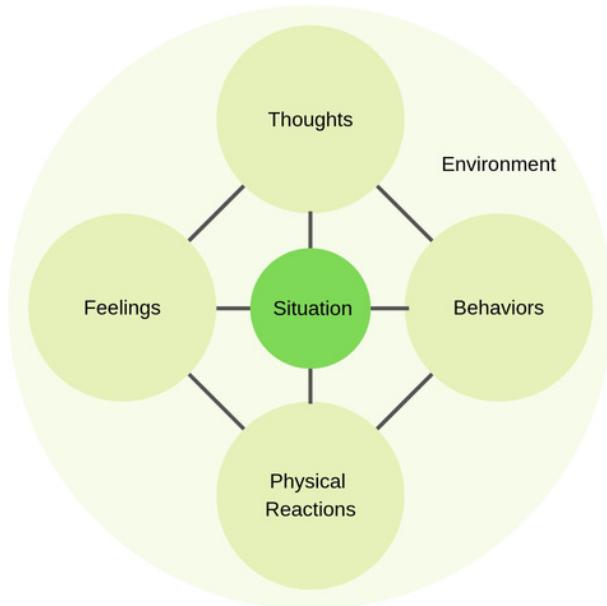
Understanding and coping with your fears

Objective

The objective of this activity is to enable students to understand and come face to face with their fears, discovering that even if the feared event does happen, they are able to cope with it. This activity can help students practice coping with rejection and overwhelming tasks.

Materials Required

- Cut out pictures from magazines



Instructions

1. Ask each student to identify something that they want to do or needs to do, but that they tend to avoid because it triggers anxiety, nervousness, or worry.
2. Students should be encouraged to identify in words (either spoken or written,) what they are worried might happen, such as rejection, failure, making mistakes, or more.
3. Use cut out pictures from magazines, or other media, and ask the students to select a few pictures that represent their fear. Alternatively, the students can draw or paint their fears on a piece of paper.
4. Facilitate a discussion with the students. Questions to ask include:
 - *What is the event that might happen?*
 - *How does that event make you feel? Identify specific feelings. (Feeling wheels are a great tool for this)*
 - *What are some ways in which you can reduce this feeling? Identify at least 2 solutions.*
 - *What will you do differently the next time you face your fear?*

#8 PERSONAL FEELINGS WHEEL

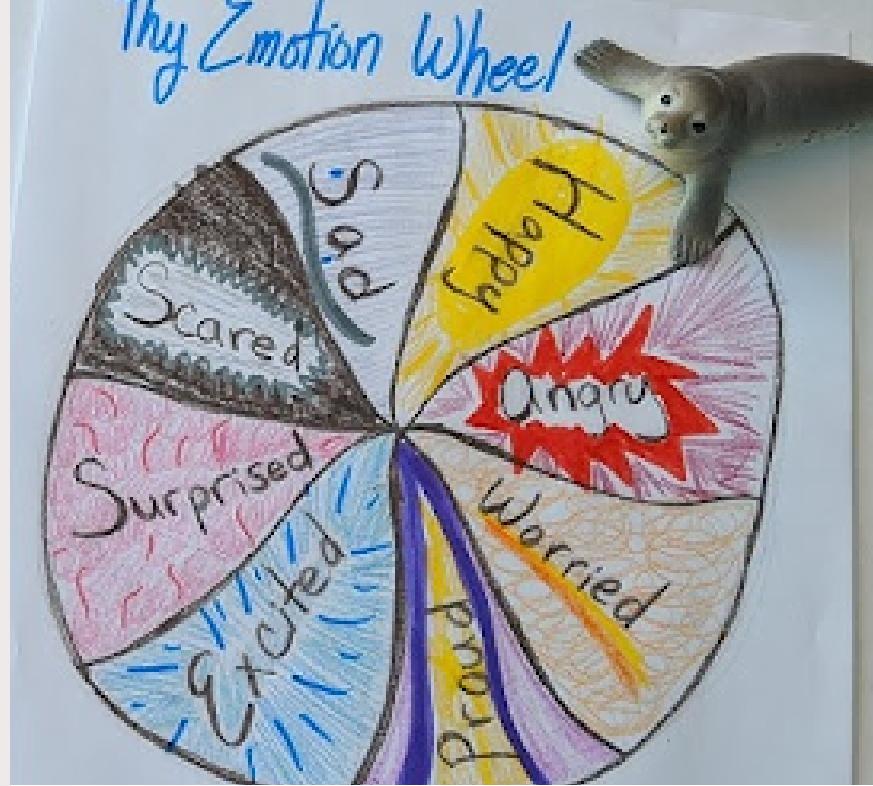
Building your own emotion wheel

Objective

The objective of this activity is to allow students to identify and explore emotions that they experience commonly. The personalised feelings wheel allows them to compartmentalise, and understand the nuances of each emotion.

Materials Required

- Pens
- Crayons/Paints
- Paper



Instructions

1. Facilitate a discussion: Are there basic emotions that all humans share no matter what culture? Brainstorm a list.
2. Ask each student to identify at least 4-5 different emotions that they experience in their lives. *What do they associate with each emotion? Are some positive or negative?*
3. Ask each student to create their own emotion wheel. Encourage them to use colours and images that correspond with each emotion.
4. Facilitate a discussion: *Why did they choose the colours that they did?* Ask them to point to the wheel and identify their current emotion.

Note: These wheels can be used on a daily basis. Teachers can ask the students to identify their emotional states at the start and end of each day, building emotional awareness among the students.

#9 BREATHE WITH MUSIC

Dealing with stress and anxiety

Objective

The objective of this activity is to help students develop relaxation techniques that can help ease the feelings of stress and anxiety that can keep one stuck in unhealthy behaviours.

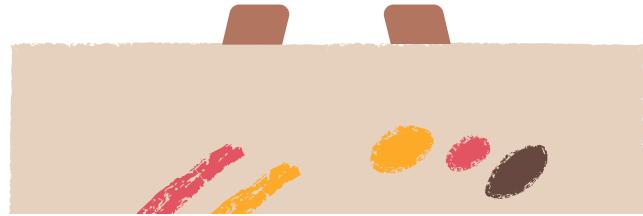
Materials Required

- Music Player



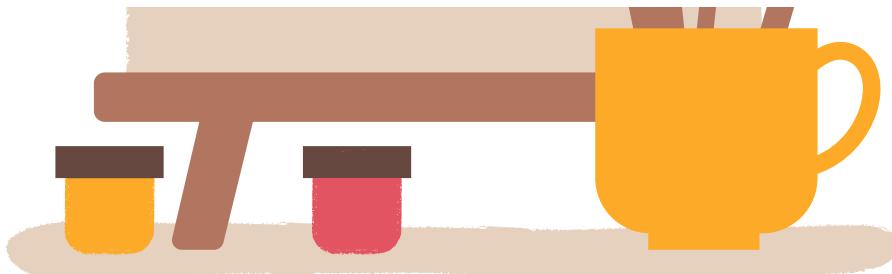
Instructions

1. Play calming instrumental music in the classroom.
2. Ask each student to place one hand on their abdomen right beneath their rib cage.
3. Instruct them to inhale slowly through their nose, drawing a deep breath into their lungs. The chest should move only slightly, while the stomach rises, pushing the hand upwards.
4. As they exhale, instruct them to relax their entire body, allowing it to become loose and limp. It should take twice as long to exhale as it does to inhale.
5. Practise this activity for 5-10 minutes, ideally either at the beginning or end of a day.
5. After the activity, encourage the students to discuss how they feel. *Are they calmer? More relaxed? Are there any lingering worries on their minds?*



END OF MODULE 1

Sources, Links & Information



Sources for Images & Additional Information

- Name Signs Images & Activities:
<https://kindergartenchaos.com/free-name-activities-for-kindergarten/>
- Feelings Wheel Image & Information:
<https://www.expandedschools.org/blog/mental-health-check/>
- Self Portrait Images & Activities:
<https://www.artsintegration.net/k-8-self-portrait-project.html>
- Emotion Stones Resources: :
<https://www.earlyyearsresources.co.uk/special-needs-c409/emotional-and-behavioural-c410/emotion-stones-p19332>
- Sample Heart Collages: <https://proudtobeprimary.com/social-emotional-learning-curriculum/>
- Emotions & Colours Lesson:
<https://primaryschoolart.com/2019/08/23/feelings-emotions-and-colour-art-lesson/>
- Making Your Personal Feeling Wheel: https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fm.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DtGKwEzpZeWQ&psig=AOvVaw2Cd5hDI5nzkfOB8x34ijmK&ust=1702439479819000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=oCBQQjhxqFwoTCMirx7X_iIMDFQAAAAAdAAAABAK

