

Working With Emotions

Feelings Vocabulary

Grades 1–8

Divide the class into six groups. Each group will get one feeling category and then brainstorm as many words as students can think of that fall into the same category. The categories are Excited, Sad, Scared, Happy, Angry, and Tender. Our feelings can be quite complex. So some of the words under one emotion will also have flavors of another. Some words, like *frustrated*, could show up under more than one category—like *sad* and *angry*.

Option One

After groups have had time to come up with their list, write each category on the board or a large piece of paper and call on each group to give its list of words while you write them down for everyone to see. After you finish writing, ask the rest of the group members if they have any words they would like to add to that feeling.

Option Two

Give each group a large sheet of newsprint (easel size sticky notes are ideal). Using one color marker, students write all of the words they can think of for their feeling word—with that word at the top. After about 10 minutes, ask them to post their sheets on the wall, or lay them on the floor. The whole group does a “gallery walk” in silence in which students look at each list and can add, in another color marker, words they feel are missing from the list.

After about 5 minutes, ask someone from each group to read the whole list and notice what each feeling category evokes.

Feelings Wheel

Grades K–5

Pass out blank paper and pencils. Ask students to fold the paper in half the wide way—folding the top of the sheet down to the bottom. Participants will draw a circle on the top half of the paper and divide the circle into four quadrants. Participants then write one feeling word in each quadrant. Each word will express something that they are feeling right now. Then, on the bottom part of the page, they will choose two of the words to develop more fully, writing: “I feel . . . because . . .” for each of those two feelings. Let students know this is just for them—they will not be asked to share it unless they wish.

The other ways the feelings can be shared include:

- A quick circle activity in which each student may choose to share one of the words from his or her feelings wheel
- A deep listening dyad in which students have 1 to 2 minutes each to talk about anything they want to related to what they wrote or how they felt about doing the activity
- A drawing, sculpture, or other symbolic form of expressing the feelings students just identified

Weather Report

This activity is another tool for helping students become present. It introduces the concepts of symbol and metaphor, and is a tool for getting a quick read of the group at the beginning of the day.

Ask students to sit or stand in a circle. Let them know the group is going to be giving a “weather report”: each student will have the chance to speak about how he or she is feeling or doing today using weather images. Weather is used as a

metaphor for students' state of being at the moment. Give participants examples of some weather report options, like "sunny now, with a storm approaching" or "heavy cloud cover," or "raining, but clearing later today," or "blue skies." Then ask students to close their eyes, if they are comfortable doing so, and quietly reflect on how they are feeling today. (If you just did the feelings wheel activity, you can refer back to it by saying, "You might reflect on the feelings you just identified during the feelings wheel activity or notice if you're feeling something new now.")

Give participants 15–30 seconds, and then ask them to open their eyes. As the facilitator, you should go first in this exercise, modeling your weather report for students. Then proceed around the circle until all students have completed their weather report. Let participants know that the purpose of this activity is to allow them to have more awareness of their internal state and to give them a different kind of language to discuss emotions.

Note: As the facilitator, you may want to comment: "As you may have noticed, I am introducing you to a variety of tools for helping you become present. We started with an active stream with the feelings vocabulary exercise, but today we're primarily working with the reflective, expressive stream of focusing activities."