

Middle School Youth Activity: How Do Emotions Impact Us? Infusing Emotional Intelligence Into Out-of-School Time

Video 1

Note: This youth activity connects directly to the learning from the "[How Do Emotions Impact Us](#)" staff activity from Video 2 and is an iteration of that activity. For this reason, we suggest that your staff have viewed the video and completed the accompanying staff activities prior to facilitating this activity with youth.

Learning Goals: In this activity, youth will:

- Get curious about their emotions using the “Emotions Matter” mindset
- Recognize that we all feel many emotions throughout the day
- Consider how emotions affect attention, memory and learning, relationships, decision making, creativity, and physical and mental health.

Materials

- Optional: Emotion word cards*, pre-cut and located on page 4

Time: 15-20 minutes

Facilitator Directions

1. Ask youth to sit in a circle.

2. Introduce the “emotions matter” mindset:

"Our emotions are important because they give us information. In one day, we feel many different emotions. While some of these emotions are pleasant and some are unpleasant, they all give us information. We're going to practice being Emotion Scientists, which means we are curious about our emotions like scientists. For example, I felt ____ when _____. (e.g. I felt embarrassed when I got caught passing a note in class today.)"

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Emotion Word Bank

Discouraged

Excluded

Peaceful

Cheerful

Embarrassed

Envious

Focused

Elated

Patient

Down

3. Display sentence frame for youth: I felt _____ when _____. Say, "Can you think about an emotion or emotions you felt today?" Give youth time to think. Ask if there are any volunteers who would like to share.

4. Say:

"I'm imagining that as you reflected, you noticed different emotions you've felt today. As a group, we've likely felt an array of emotions, both pleasant emotions and unpleasant emotions. We all have a rollercoaster of emotions that we feel through the day. Now we're going to think about how those emotions, this rollercoaster, might affect us. Our emotions affect us in five areas: our ability to pay attention, remember and learn, have healthy relationships, make good decisions, be creative, and feel healthy physically and mentally."

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5. As a whole group, review the impact of emotions on “decision making.” Refer to the Emotions Matter Tip Sheet to help guide the discussion. Explain that when we think of emotions that are helpful, we can think about how they help us to reach our goals. When we think about emotions that are unhelpful, we think about emotions that hinder us from meeting our goals. Remember pleasant and unpleasant emotions can be helpful or unhelpful. For example, when we are angry (unpleasant emotion), we can be inspired to help someone who has been treated unfairly. When we are excited (pleasant emotion), we may not notice a friend who is down and could our support. Ask the following questions:

- How might emotions help you to make better decisions?
- How might emotions hinder your decisions?

6. Next, divide into small groups and assign one of the remaining areas (physical and mental health, attention, memory and learning, relationships, or creativity). For five minutes, each group will discuss and answer the following questions.

- Thinking about the impact area you discussed, how might emotions might help you in this area? How may they hinder you?
- Groups can write ideas on paper, a whiteboard, or large chart paper. Allow groups to debrief their ideas with the whole group

7. Assign each group or individual an emotion word from the Emotion Word Bank. The words can be provided orally or they can be printed and distributed, one per group. Ask the following questions and allow time for discussion.

- Think about a time that this emotion helped you reach a goal.
- Now think about a time when this emotion hindered your efforts to reach a goal.

8. Individual reflection: Think about a friend, family member, or loved one. How might emotions affect their attention, learning, creativity, relationships, decision making, or well-being?

Middle School Emotion Word Cards

discouraged
(blue)

Having lost confidence or enthusiasm

peaceful
(green)

Tranquil and free from disturbance

embarrassed
(red)

Self-conscious and uncomfortable about how you think others are perceiving you

focused
(green)

Full of interest or purpose; engaged in only one idea, activity, or path

patient
(green)

Waiting calmly for something to happen even though it may be hard to wait

excluded
(blue)

Feeling left or kept out of a place, group, or privilege

cheerful
(yellow)

In a good mood and showing it

envious
(red)

Resentful or annoyed because you want something someone else has

elated
(yellow)

Very joyful, proud, and excited

down
(blue)

Sad and like you have little energy