

Using a feelings diary to support emotional literacy

This resource is intended to support students who are unable to say what is happening to cause their behaviour, are reactive to their emotional states and lack the ability to consistently express themselves emotionally.

The goal of this resource is to

- Help students identify what they are feeling
- Give them the language to describe it by expanding their emotional vocabulary

It is intended as a resource that enables students to reflect on and become more aware of their emotions on a moment by moment basis. For the adult, potentially there is less to work out and potential stressors and patterns can be identified. It would then be a case of finding calming, soothing and regulating activities that could potential be used before more demanding sessions in the form of short physiological breaks that allow the student to recover; ultimately working toward a personalised emotional regulation system.

Basic emotions and the problem of not expanding upon them

Typically, the six most common emotions I see in the students I support are happy, sad, angry, tired, scared and leave me alone. Generally, students find these emotions easy to identify apart from 'leave me alone' which I introduce as a way of a child communicating if they are so escalated that they couldn't access an appropriate verbal response.



The problem with these basic emotions are that they are often the external representation or result of a range of more subtle and potentially imperceptible emotions. For example, a child may say they are happy that they have passed a test yet their 'happiness' comprises of relief, pride and confidence. Similarly, a child who may indicate 'leave me alone' might not have the emotional literacy to explain that what comprises this emotion is shame, rejection, worry and worthlessness.

Therefore, the follow emotions might be useful for an adult to support the child expanding on their emotional vocabulary. You may need to explain these emotions or use videos or stories that are of interest to the child to find examples of these and label them in order that eventually the child can begin to recognise these new, subtler emotions in themselves.



HAPPY EMOTIONS

Curious	Proud
Confident	Respected
Courageous	Peaceful
Loving	Optimistic
Inspired	Playful
Brave	Thankful
Joy	



UPSET EMOTIONS

Pressured	Depressed
Scared	Lonely
Defensive	Abandoned
Worried	Unimportant
Worthless	Hopeless
Stupid	Guilty
Disrespected	Ashamed
Excluded	Disappointed
Threatened	Embarrassed
Nervous	Ugly
Misunderstood	Small
Angry	Bored
Let down	Stressed
Humiliated	Tired
Betrayed	Overwhelmed
Jealous	Surprised
Frustrated	Confused
Annoyed	Bullied
Disgust	Down
Contempt	Unloved





The daily feelings diary

The purpose of this resource is that it allows for the whole day to be captured which is useful over time for establishing patterns and putting in recover breaks. Students often worry if things are written down (fear of contact book and the permanency of writing) therefore it is important that the diary is respected as being the students and as a starting point they are simply invited to identify how they feel during each transition of the day.

Potentially this can become a timetable for the day but also a way of capturing explicit positive comments from school. Sometimes the students I support believe the narrative around them is completely negative and over time this may have the potential to combat this.




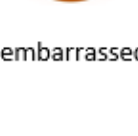







This resource can also help improve the link to home and school.

I have included a picture of the editable example I created

Learning	How long on timer?	Feelings	Comments
<p>Morning Check in and register, early work</p> <p><i>Topics and learning for the day here</i></p>	<p>20 minutes</p> <p><i>Times/Timer to be used if appropriate</i></p>	<p> happy, excited</p> <p><i>student to identify – do this throughout day after sessions and when student ready. If left until end of the day</i></p>	<p>Looking forward to science volcano experiment</p> <p><i>Comments from student – adult can help.</i></p> <p><i>Specific positive comments from adults</i></p>
<p>Handwriting and reading</p>	<p>45 minutes</p>	<p> </p> <p>Frustrated, embarrassed, forgetful</p>	<p>Hate the way my writing looks. Takes looks of energy and I get cross. Worried about the writing and forget what I'm writing.</p> <p>I could see you really concentrated on your writing well done.</p>
<p>Maths</p>	<p>45 minutes</p>	<p> Excited</p>	<p>Love using Numicon set and taking photos – made times table easy to understand</p> <p>Got to do <u>Matheletics</u> on the iPad</p>

The weekly home/school feelings diary

This can be useful for to begin to get students to identifying their emotions between home and school as well as being a tool parents can potentially use. Obviously it offers less capacity for detail but can be useful to help students identify patters of thoughts and behaviours.

Day	School	Home	Comments
Monday			<p>Couldn't find my bag – really cross</p> <p>Wanted gaming time to take my mind off it but dad said homework first.</p>
Tuesday	<p> worry, scared,</p> <p> embarrassed</p>	<p> proud</p>	<p>Worried about my line in class assembly. Proud I did it</p> <p>Really clear delivery in assembly – well done</p>
Wednesday	<p> Excited Proud</p>	<p></p>	<p>None school uniform – got to wear my Arsenal shirt</p> <p>Great attitude all day – well done</p>
	Morning	Evening	
Saturday			<p>Little brother knocked the laptop and I lost my game – got told off for hitting him</p> <p><i>Well done for saying sorry</i></p>
Sunday			<p>Scored a goal for my team this morning</p> <p>Worried about the maths test tomorrow</p>

Final thoughts

It is important that the student is calm and available for learning. One way of accessing this might be to consider:

Are they calm physically? Are they at rest, muscles loose, breathing evenly and slowly?

Are they calm emotionally? Are they experiencing calm emotions not emotional churn from social or family issues?

Are they calm cognitively? Are they thinking positive thoughts rather than occupied by worries or anxieties?

Are they calm on a sensory level? Not over or under responding to noise, movement, balance or touch?

Validate all emotions. You will notice there are more emotions that are negative than positive and children may list emotions that upset you. Sometimes adults might say things like 'you don't mean that' or 'or nobody thinks that about you' which appear supportive but do (with the best intentions) dismiss the child's feelings. Gentle exploration as to why the child is feeling this way may be one way to proceed.

This is an intervention for students who struggle to effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience and are often unable to diffuse their negative emotions resulting in dysregulation. Therefore, it is possible they will be uncomfortable with this type of intervention and will require significant adult co-regulation and support to engage with this type of learning.

The goal is to move from co-regulation (needing someone to help you regulate your emotions) to self-regulation (ability to regulate emotions independently). This may take a long time and it may at times feel like it isn't working but keep in mind we are looking for progress (however small that might be) as opposed to perfection.

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