

Emotional Literacy Strategies

Identifying & Expressing Emotions

Visual Supports

'Feelings' posters and/or 'feelings' picture cards



How to structure it...

Set up a mirror in dramatic play or in the cool-down area so students can see themselves while practicing making different faces that are on the 'feelings' posters and picture cards.



Pro Tip

Visit the NCPMI website for printable versions of different feelings visual supports.
(<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/Program/strategies.html>)

Music & Movement

Sing songs that reference emotions, or change the lyrics to songs students already know.

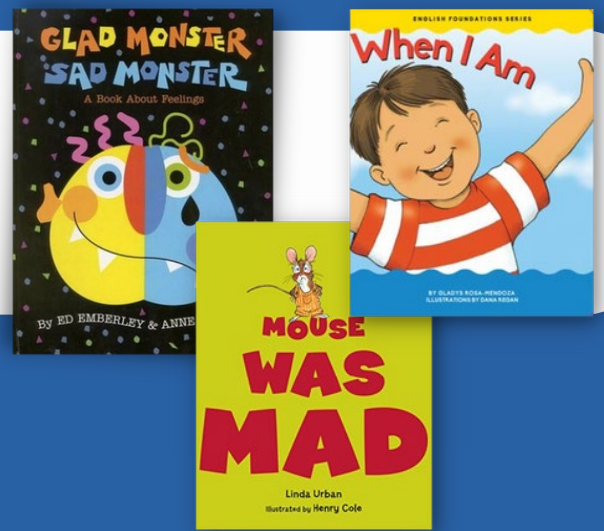
How to structure it...

Add a song that references different emotions to the song choice board during circle time or music and movement time. Sing a variation of "If you're happy and you know it" that goes through the different feelings (e.g., happy, sad, mad, excited, confused, etc.), paired with different movements and facial expressions.

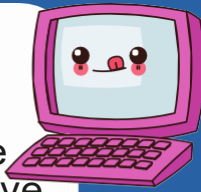


Books

Read stories about different emotions.



Pro Tip



Visit the NCPMI website Book Nook for an extensive list of books that match different emotions, along with lesson plans for embedding many of the books into your instruction.

(<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/Program/strategies.html>)

How to structure it...

Have a 'feelings' week as a unit or theme in the classroom and read books about different emotions. Embed reading stories about emotions into circle time or literacy activities. Include books about emotions in the book/literacy center. Plan center activities that relate to the books being read.

feelings bingo



Games

Play games to work on identifying different emotions (e.g., memory game with pictures of different emotions, emotions BINGO).

How to structure it...

Embed emotions into games students are already familiar with. For example, if students have already learned how to play BINGO, change the BINGO game to include emotions. Velcro laminated emotions pictures onto the existing BINGO boards and call out different emotions for students to find on their BINGO board. For students who need to match the emotions instead, the adult can have a matching picture when they call out the emotion. In other words, some students will be receptively identifying the emotion on their own board while other students may be matching the emotion using the picture the adult is holding.

Daily Check-Ins

Students can 'check-in' their feelings each day.

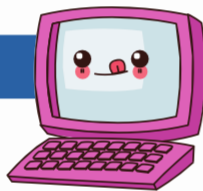
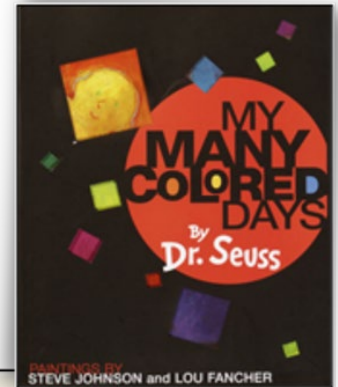
EMOTION CHECK IN



How to structure it...

Have students 'check-in' their feelings upon arrival at school.

Embed it into the morning arrival routine (e.g., students put away their belongings, sign-in, check-in their feelings, etc.). One example of a feelings check-in was a teacher who read Dr. Seuss's "My Many Colored Days" to introduce different emotions. The book paired different emotions with different colors. After repeated exposure with the book, the teacher introduced a feelings chart that matched the colors and the emotions. Each emotion was labeled with the matching color from the book. Some students were able to understand the feeling they were selecting because of the actual picture from the book, some selected it based on the color, and others selected it because they understood the feelings picture/line drawing.



Pro Tip

Adults should check-in their feelings as well. And students and adults should be encouraged to revisit the feelings check-in throughout the day as feelings change. Students need to understand that their feelings are dynamic and can change based on different situations and experiences. The NCPMI website also has free printable feelings check-ins:

<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/Program/strategies.html>

Self-Regulation & Anger Control

Tucker the Turtle

Social story to teach students how to recognize their feelings and think about their response before reacting. The Turtle Technique promotes the use of self-regulation and problem-solving.



How to structure it...

Read the Tucker the Turtle social story to the class. Model the Turtle Technique and have students practice the steps. Post the Turtle Technique steps in a central location (including in the cool-down space) and prompt students to utilize the Turtle Technique when appropriate.

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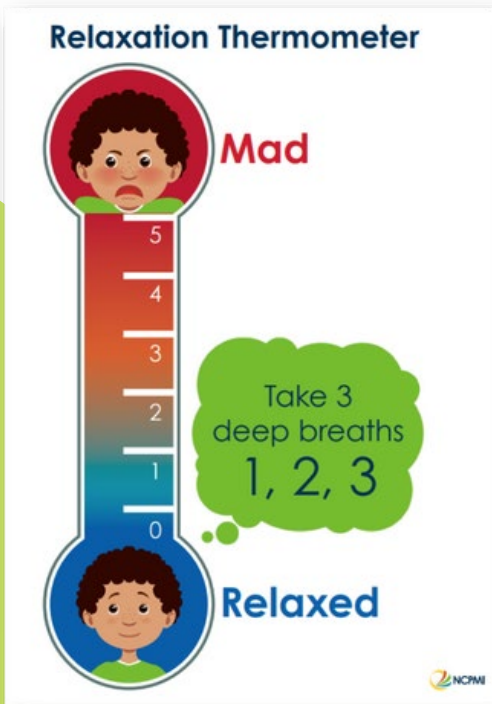
Find a printable version of Tucker Turtle Takes Time to Tuck and Think Here:

https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/TuckerTurtle_Story.pdf



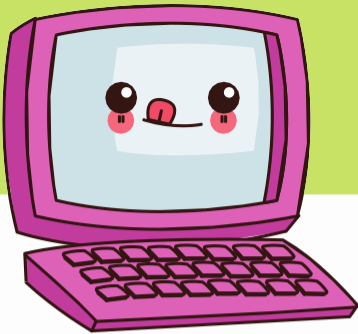
Relaxation Thermometer

A tool to help students recognize their feelings and how those feelings are affecting their body, and to select self-regulation strategies for calming and relaxation.



How to structure it...

Once students have learned about different emotions, introduce the relaxation thermometer to the group. This can be done within whole-group or small-group instruction. Show the thermometer and explain how it works. Help the students place different emotions on the thermometer and come up with examples of how their bodies feel at different points on the thermometer. They can then think about strategies they've learned (i.e., calm-down strategies) that could help them when they start to experience more intense emotions and body sensations. This lesson can be done as a series of lessons: (1) introduce the thermometer (what it is and why it's helpful), (2) where different emotions may fall on the thermometer, (3) how their bodies feel at different points on the thermometer, (4) what calm-down strategies may be beneficial at different points on the thermometer. Display the thermometer in a central location in the classroom, model the use of it, and cue students to refer to the thermometer. Consider having a duplicate thermometer in your cool-down space as well.



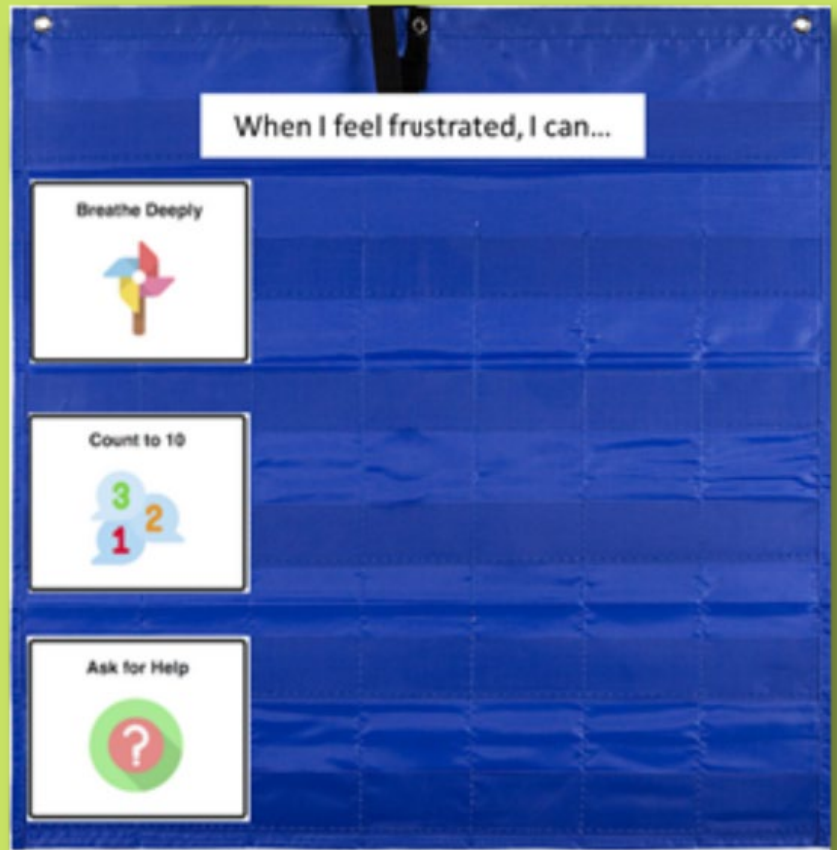
Click & print...

Find a printable relaxation thermometer here:

<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Relaxation-Thermometer.pdf>

Question of the Day

Routine built into the school day in which students answer a daily question.



How to structure it...

Can be embedded into an existing routine like the morning arrival routine (e.g., put away belongings, sign-in, check-in feelings, answer the question of the day). The question of the day can be different questions like “which of these foods do you like the most?” or can be situational questions to encourage students to think about how to use various self-regulation or calm-down strategies in different situations. For example, one day the question of the day could be “When I feel frustrated, I can...” and students could be given a choice of calm-down strategies that have been taught such as breathing deeply, counting to 10, or asking for help. They would then put their name or picture beside the strategy they plan to use should they feel frustrated that day.



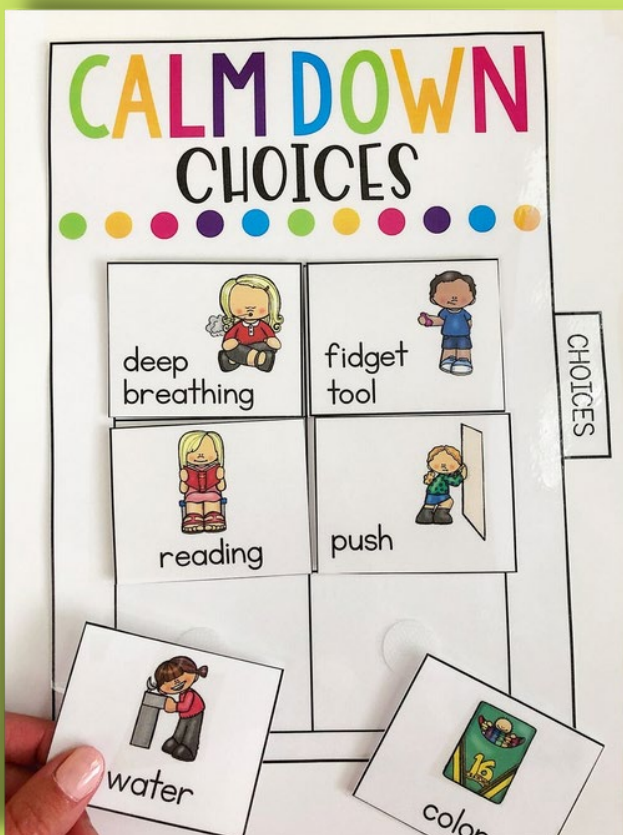
Calm Down Space

Small areas of the classroom students can go to when needing to calm down or self-regulate. The spaces can be used when students are experiencing an emotion to a heightened degree (e.g., overly excited, overly upset). These are not negative spaces or the stereotypical time-out spaces. These are safe spaces intended for students to practice their self-regulation strategies.



How to structure it...

Teach the use of the calm down space to students as a large group or during center time. All students should visit the calm down space when they are already calm and practice using the calm down strategies in the space. Make it a positive experience to use the space.



Pro Tip

The time to teach is when students are calm, not when they are escalated and in need of the space. It is also helpful to have the adults in the room model visiting the calm down space as a self-regulation strategy.

Problem-Solving

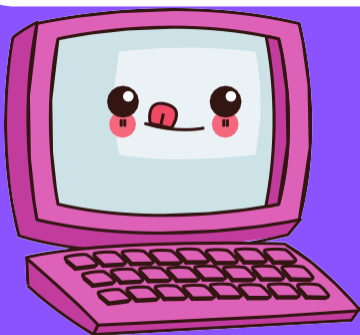
Solution Kit

The Solution Kit is a set of commonly used solutions that students can apply to problems they encounter. The Solution Kit has picture cards to remind students of the various solutions available to them.



How to structure it...

Introduce the Solution Kit one or two solutions at a time. Explain the solutions, model what they do and don't look like, have students practice the solutions, remind students of the solutions throughout the day, and provide positive attention for their use of trying the solutions from the Solution Kit. Post the pictures from the Solution Kit in various spots in the room. This can be done by having pictures posted on the walls, pictures on key rings that students can refer to, or even a "kit" with the solution cards that students can go through when needed.



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<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/2006/solutionkit.pdf>

Problem-Solving



Problem-Solving Steps

The problem-solving steps are meant to support students when they experience a problem and need to identify potential solutions to the problem. The solutions from the Solution Kit can be used within the problem-solving steps.

How to structure it...

Introduce the problem-solving steps using the Problem-Solving social story from NCPMI. The social story explains the problem-solving steps and then has problem scenario cards students can practice walking through the problem-solving steps and identifying appropriate solutions from the Solution Kit. It may be helpful to first teach the solutions from the Solution Kit and then teach the problem-solving steps. Or you may opt to teach the problem-solving steps first so students understand the big picture, and then teach the individual solutions from the Solution Kit.

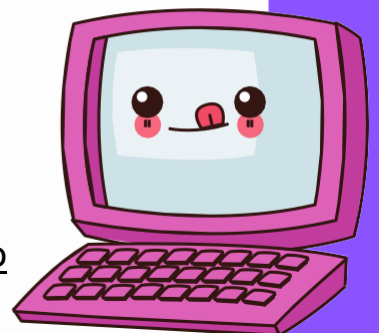
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Poster;

https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/SocialEmotionalSkills_problem-solving-steps_poster.pdf

Social Story:

https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/ProblemSolving_Story.pdf



General Tips for Use



Teach and practice the skills and strategies when students are calm. When students or adults are escalated, they are not in a physical or mental state to be receptive to learning.

Utilize the teaching sequence of:

- (1) tell,
- (2) show,
- (3) do,
- (4) practice,
- (5) monitor, and
- (6) generalize



Be intentional about teaching and practicing these skill and strategies. Set aside time in your instruction and work these into your lesson plans and activities.

