



Recognizing emotions

Adolescents explore and learn about different kinds of emotions through drawing.



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1/5



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30-45 min



Activity Overview

Purpose

Identify an emotion and describe it through a drawing exercise.

Objectives

Adolescents will be able to:

- ▶ Build trust among other adolescents.
- ▶ Identify and discuss emotions.

Competency domains

Identity and self-esteem; Coping with Stress and Managing Emotions.

Works well for

Younger adolescents (ages 10-14) who are developing their vocabulary, adolescents who are recovering from recent crises, and adolescents who enjoy quiet, individual activities.

Phase

Knowing Ourselves.

Before

Refer to the **Gallery walk** tool and the **Agreeing to group rules** activity to support adolescents in giving positive feedback as they look at each other's drawings. Use the **Emotion Card** tool as a reference for different types of emotions.

After

None needed.

Preparation

None needed.



Recognizing emotions

1

Explain:

Participants will work in pairs to think of words for emotions and write them on the marker board.

Optional: Adolescents can write down the words they think of in their notebooks and journals.

2

||| Facilitator says:

"All emotions are a natural part of life. We cannot control how we feel, but we can try to recognize our emotions and think about how we manage the difficult ones and enjoy the good ones. I am now going to ask you to choose an emotion that is important to you, and to explore it through drawing."

3

Draw a large rectangle on the marker board, and divide it into four boxes.

4

||| Facilitator says:

"Each of you is going to choose one emotion and make four drawings to describe it."

- ▶ In the first box, draw a picture of something that makes you feel this emotion.
- ▶ In the second box, draw a picture of what the emotion looks like to you.
- ▶ In the third box, draw a picture of how the emotion helps you.
- ▶ In the fourth box, draw a picture of how the emotion can be difficult for you.

1. I feel ...
when I:

2. To me,
feeling ...
looks like this:

3. Feeling ...
helps me when:

4. Feeling ...
is difficult for me
when:

5

Give the adolescents at least 20 minutes to draw and let them have more time if they ask for it. Observe their drawings as they work. Check if any of the adolescents' drawings refer to difficult experiences, as they may need additional support.

6

Ask the adolescents if they would like to share their drawings (for example as part of a gallery walk), but don't push them to show their work to others if they don't want to.

Sharing and Take Away:

7

Discuss:

- ▶ While looking at each others drawings.
- ▶ What makes you feel certain emotions?
- ▶ How do you express or show these emotions?
- ▶ How are these emotions difficult for you?

8

Continue discussion:

- ▶ What similarities do you see in each other's drawings?
- ▶ In what ways is expressing emotion helpful? Can expressing emotions ever be unhelpful?
- ▶ In what ways are these emotions helpful for us? Can difficult emotions like sadness or anger ever be helpful?
- ▶ When are emotions difficult for us? Can positive emotions like happiness or excitement ever be difficult?



Recognizing emotions

Do & Don't

- ✓ Let adolescents choose which emotion they would like to explore through drawing, even if they all choose the same emotions.
- ✓ Let adolescents explore their emotions in whatever way they choose. Instead of drawing pictures they could express themselves through colours, patterns or words.
- ✓ Observe each adolescent and look at their drawings. Notice if any adolescent shows signs that they may need additional support or services such as counselling. If necessary, speak with the adolescent individually outside of the session, and connect them to the support they need.
- ✗ Push adolescents to talk about a specific emotion, or discourage them from exploring the emotion they choose.
- ✗ Force adolescents to draw their emotions in a specific way.

Adaptation

If the adolescents speak different languages, or if they have recently arrived in a new environment where the language is new to them, teach them a few new words for emotions. (However, limit the number of vocabulary words to ten, to keep the focus of the activity on arts and expression.)

Environment

This activity can be done in an indoor or outdoor space, where adolescents can sit comfortably, write and draw.

Supplies

- ▶ One large piece of paper per adolescent.
- ▶ Pencils.
- ▶ Markers and other drawing materials.

Improvise

Adolescents can also explore their emotions through collage or photography.

Continue

In follow-up sessions adolescents can:

- ▶ Create new drafts of their drawings.
- ▶ Organize an exhibit of their drawings, focusing on different types of emotion.
- ▶ Explore emotions through role-plays. For example, they could create role-plays about situations that contribute to positive and negative emotions, and explore strategies for managing difficult feelings.