

Emotions & Self-Regulation

Author: Tvrtko Noa Pater

THEME

Introduction to exploring the relationship between our thoughts and emotions, and to the concepts of self-regulation and mindfulness

CONTEXT

This activity explores the relationship between our emotions and our thoughts, raising awareness about what happens in our brains as we experience emotions. The class discussion revolves around explaining the way emotions can sometimes 'hijack' our rational thinking and raising awareness about our ability to manage emotions with conscious thought. Drawing on cognitive behavioural therapy principles (see sources below for more information), we can become more conscious of the interdependent role that our thoughts, feelings and actions play.

GOALS

- Introducing students/participants to the concepts of social-emotional learning – self- management, self-awareness, social-awareness
- Raising awareness about the way thoughts and emotions influence each other
- Building students'/participants' awareness of mindfulness and emotional self-regulation

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students/participants are able to identify and articulate different negative thoughts and the kind of emotions they generate
- Students/participants are able to identify and discuss different emotional self-regulation methods

METHODOLOGY

- Group discussion
- Small group work and presentations

MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Projector and computer, internet; "History of Propaganda & Disinformation" cards set (printed/hard copy)

Overview of activities (process)

Duration: 45 minutes

Group brainstorm: 10 minutes

The teacher/educator starts the lesson with a few brief questions:

1. What comes first, thoughts or emotions? (chicken-egg question)
2. What are emotions?
3. Can we control our emotions? (If yes – how? If not – why not? Note: all answers are 'correct'.)
4. When do emotions become a problem? (Note: when they are negative, over a longer period of time, causing us to feel bad and get stuck in a cycle of negativity and pessimism.)

Watching short films and discussions: 15 minutes

It is advised that the teacher/educator reviews the following short videos and selects which one of two among them is the best fit for the students/participants:

- AboutKidsHealth YouTube channel, "You Are Not Your Thoughts", at: <https://youtu.be/0QXmmP4psbA> (2019, length: 4 minutes)
- Kids Want to Know YouTube channel, "Why Do We Lose Control of Our Emotions?", at: <https://youtu.be/3bKuoH8CkFc> (2017, length: 6:47 minutes)
- Sentis YouTube channel, "Emotions and the Brain", at: <https://youtu.be/xNY0AAUtH3g> (2012, length: 2 minutes)
- Fig. 1 by University of California YouTube channel, "Your brain is wired for negative thoughts. Here is how to change it.", at: <https://youtu.be/3ThUrVXz9jQ> (2019, length: 4 minutes)

After watching one or two short films, the following discussion questions could be used to guide the group reflection:

- Did anything surprise you after watching these two short films?
- What would you answer now, to the question, "What comes first, thoughts or emotions?"

Group work on emotional self-regulation strategies and brief presentations: 20 minutes

Divide the class into smaller groups (ideally, 4 – 6 students/participants in each group). Give the groups 10 minutes to discuss their assigned topic, and come up with a brief presentation.

Group 1: **Mindfulness** – What is it? What are some of the best ways of practicing it, or learning it? What are the benefits of mindfulness?

Group 2: **Emotional Check-In** – What is it? What are some of the best ways of practicing emotional check-ins, and how can we do it? What are the benefits of doing emotional check-ins?

Group 3: **What story are you telling yourself?** – What is the 'inner narrator' or 'inner critic', or 'self-story'? What are some of the best ways of challenging these stories?

Group 4: **Positive self-talk & affirmations?** – What is it? What are some of the best ways of practicing positive self-talk and affirmations, how can we do it? What are the benefits of positive self-talk?

Group 5: There are a lot of **apps** nowadays that promote emotional self-regulation, mindfulness, and meditation. Quickly research what applications exist in your country (or internationally), and present your findings to the class.

Facilitate the presentation of each group's results in their numerical order (2 minutes per group).

ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION OPTIONS

Given the topic of this activity plan, it is advised that no evaluation or assessment be implemented.

ADAPTATION FOR ONLINE IMPLEMENTATION

The class is fully adaptable for online implementation, as the short animation films as well as the group discussion can be done in plenary with all students/participants participating.

SOURCES

- Mental Health Center Kids is an excellent resource for educational materials about children and teenagers mental health, at: <https://mentalhealthcenterkids.com> / <https://mentalhealthcenterkids.com/blogs/articles/cbt-triangle>
- Lauren Brukner, "Emotional Regulation Activities for Teens and Tweens," Edutopia (2021), at: www.edutopia.org/article/emotional-regulation-activities-tweens-and-teens/
- Mindful Schools, see: www.mindfulschools.org



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