

Emotion

Metaphors

This strategy involves using a metaphor to help young people identify, name, or describe their emotions. For some metaphors, it can help to have pre-set definitions or categories connected to emotions, or have youth brainstorm emotion metaphors during an activity that can be used for ongoing check-ins throughout the program.

Implementation Tips:

- ◆ Use emotion metaphors as part of opening circles or check-ins as well as anytime throughout the day to encourage youth to recognize and name emotions as they experience them. This also helps build understanding of the causes and impact of different emotions.
- ◆ When youth provide responses, be sure youth name specific emotions (i.e. happy, sad, frustrated, distracted, mad, etc.)
- ◆ Depending on time, youth can just identify their emotion metaphor quickly or you can ask youth to share more about why they identified a particular emotion to engage in deeper conversations as a group. Emotion Metaphors can be used in pairs, small groups, or large groups.



Examples of metaphors include:

- ◆ Temperature Check or Weather Patterns (e.g. Cloudy, Sunny, Stormy, etc.)
- ◆ Animals (What animal best represents how you're feeling right now?)
- ◆ Song Titles
- ◆ Seasons
- ◆ Desserts (Ex. Cake = Happy; Jello = Wiggly/Unable to Focus; Melted Ice Cream = Sad; Red Hots = Angry)
- ◆ Colors (Check out The Zones of Regulation® for formal curriculum)
- ◆ Anything else you can think of—be creative!



IT'S A METAPHOR

Emotion Motions

This strategy allows youth to identify or express emotions using their bodies, which can be useful for youth who are not as comfortable expressing emotions verbally. Using physical activities to identify emotions can also be connected to mindfulness activities, or to strategies for constructively managing epic or highly intense emotions. The intent of this strategy is to allow young people to move around and express themselves in creative ways while still encouraging exploration and discussion of emotions.

Implementation Tips:

- ◆ Use Emotion Motions as part of opening circles or check-ins as well as anytime throughout the day to encourage youth to recognize and name emotions as they experience them.
- ◆ It can be helpful to have pictures and examples of different emotions posted around your program space to help young people identify and recognize emotions.



- ◆ Be sure to consider the abilities, comfort levels, and cultural norms of everyone in your program. Have alternate movements or ways to engage and always allow youth to pass if they do not want to share their own emotion.

- ◆ Use emotion motions as a way to teach youth about the causes and impacts of different emotions. Ask youth what makes them happy or sad and then ask them to show what that looks like in action. Incorporate skits or other role playing games to help youth explore how to manage emotions when they aren't in the midst of experiencing a highly intense emotion. This can help youth learn key strategies for managing emotions and help build empathy for others.

Examples of Emotion Motions:

- ◆ **Emotion Motion/Gesture** (e.g. jazz hands or a jumping jack for excitement; crouching down and resting head in hands for sleepy)
- ◆ **Ratings & Continuums** (e.g. line up happy to sad; comfort level rating; Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree to a named emotion, etc.)
- ◆ **Emotion Yoga**—Create poses to represent different emotions and practice breathing techniques at the same time.
- ◆ **Emotion Dice**—Create oversized dice with different emotions represented. Youth can roll the dice and act out what the emotion looks or sounds like and/or how to manage the emotion.



Emotion

HIGHLIGHTS

This strategy focuses on adults naming, acknowledging, and validating emotions as much as possible throughout the day, while also modeling for youth the practice of identifying and managing emotions. Often, emotions are acknowledged just at the beginning or end of a session (i.e. how is everyone feeling right now?) or during conflicts when youth are noticeably upset. Intentionally highlighting all types of emotions throughout the day helps build self-awareness and positively models that we experience (and can manage) our emotions all the time.

Implementation Tips:

- ◆ When highlighting emotions, be cautious of assuming you know the specific emotion that is being expressed. Use tentative words, such as “it seems like” or “it sounds like” and then ask youth to confirm or elaborate on what they’re feeling.
- ◆ Highlight all types of emotions you see young people experiencing throughout the day—not just the intense emotions that naturally draw our attention (i.e. anger, frustration, sadness)
- ◆ Highlight your own emotions throughout the day to model naming and managing emotions (e.g. during an afternoon lull, say “I’m feeling a little sleepy after that big lunch, I’m going to stretch and take a few steps to help me focus). You can also name when you’re frustrated or upset, but be sure to model how *you* can manage those emotions (e.g. take a couple deep breaths, focus attention on something else for a few minutes and return to the task, etc.).
- ◆ Avoid labeling certain emotions as “bad,” “challenging,” or “negative.” We experience all types of emotions. The goal is help youth learn how to express and manage all emotions in ways that don’t cause harm to themselves or others.

Opportunities for Emotion Highlights:

- ◆ When youth arrive
- ◆ Before youth leave a session
- ◆ During a challenging activity
- ◆ After a fun game
- ◆ During a time of intense focus
- ◆ When you’re noticing a strong feeling in yourself (happiness, frustration, anxiety, excitement, etc.)

