

Voices of My Emotions

Overview

In this character education activity, students will explore personal emotions through creative writing and art, as well as recognize and respect one another's common emotions and concerns.

Grades

4th - 8th grade

Activity Type

Individual

Small groups or Whole Group

Materials

"A Cherokee Teaching," attached

Duration

70 minutes

Procedure:

1. Ask students to brainstorm a list of feelings and emotions, and chart their responses on the board. Then, ask students:
 - How do emotions affect our personality? How do they affect our lives from day to day?
 - How do we know what emotions a person may be experiencing? (facial expressions, tears, voice tone, etc.)
 - Is it possible to always know what emotions a person is experiencing? Explain.
 - Why do you think people sometimes choose not to share some emotions or feelings with others?
 - How might this affect their personality?
 - How might your emotions affect your role as a student? As a community member and a citizen?
2. Hand out "A Cherokee Teaching," and allow students to read it and jot down their thoughts. This can be done individually or in partners. Once the class is finished, discuss:
 - What message is the author trying to convey?
 - What is your opinion of this message?
 - What do the wolves symbolize?
 - What emotions are in conflict with one another?
 - In what ways does this story address personal responsibility in terms of our emotions and subsequent actions?
 - How does this story relate to your own life/experiences?
3. Explain to students that they will be examining emotions such as those they listed and those they read about through personifying an emotion and completing a creative writing activity. Suggest a

common emotion such as happiness from the list of student responses. Ask students to think creatively about this emotion and chart their responses to questions such as:

- What does happiness look like? (Example responses: she is yellow, plump, she has a huge smile, bright blue eyes, etc.)
- What does happiness eat? (marshmallows, fresh breeze, sunshine)
- What does happiness wear? (a flowing dress, overalls, a jumper made of bouncy balls)
- Who does happiness hang around with? (Joy, Love, and Ecstasy)
- Where does happiness live? (in the clouds, on a sunny mountain, in a cookie jar)
- What does happiness do? (laugh all day, eats chocolate, chase butterflies, capture giggles)

4. Compile their thoughts to create a creative writing on emotions. For example:

Happiness has a giggle that is contagious. She will make you laugh so hard your stomach hurts and you cry tears of joy. She is always up for doing something fun, but particularly loves eating chocolate, chasing butterflies, and flying kites. Happiness lives in the very top of a bright blue sky, on the highest, fluffiest cloud there is. She often invites her friends Joy and Love up to play, and she always wears her favorite pair of yellow overalls for those special times.

5. Instruct students to choose an emotion, perhaps one they often experience or an emotion they have difficulty handling. Tell them to imagine this emotion as a living being and to write about its life, attributes, hobbies, likes/dislikes, or living situation. Tell students to consider every aspect of this emotion, and what it would be like if it came to life. Tell students they will have the opportunity to share their "Voices of My Emotions." Before they begin, share one more example, such as:

Loneliness lives in a large, empty house in the middle of a deep, dark forest. She rarely speaks, and when she does, no one is there to listen or care. All of her windows are shut, and her doors are locked. The stairs in her house don't lead any where. No animal lives in her forest...not even one. Her days are spent listening to the echo of her footsteps or running from memories. Loneliness is afraid to leave, for if she does, she may find every other forest is just like hers.

6. Allow students to work for around 30 minutes, circulating to assist if anyone gets writers block. Once students finish, instruct them to write their final draft in a creative way and decorate it with appropriate art work. Either once students are finished, or when class meets again, allow students to share their work in small groups or with the whole class. It is important that students volunteer to share and not be forced.

7. After sharing, discuss as a class:

- Did you hear your classmates describe emotions you have felt before?
- When we are experiencing an emotion such as anger, hate, or rage, how might this affect our behavior? How do students sometimes experience these emotions lash out? How might the rest of us be affected by this? How might emotions affect the safety of our class and school?
- When we are experiencing difficult emotions, what are some ways we can seek assistance in dealing with them?

- As we are part of a community here in class, in what ways can we assist each other when we are experiencing difficult emotions? (Discuss response options such as verbal acknowledgements (“I see you are having a bad day, let me know if you need to talk; “I’m here for you”) or non-verbal (a smile, a wave, a cheerful note).
- Consider your general response when someone snaps at you, says something mean, picks a fight, appears grumpy, etc. Based on what was shared today, why might people sometimes exhibit such responses? How can we work to be more understanding of where our community members are coming from? What responses can we practice that might help diffuse a situation rather than escalate it?
- How can understanding emotions help to make our classroom and school safer?

Differentiation

Students with special needs

- Modify the writing as needed. If students struggle with writing, allow them to personify an emotion using art (painting, sketching, collage, etc.)

AIG Students

- Students can create dialogues based on two emotions meeting, and how they might affect one another (i.e. if pessimism meets positivism, what happens?)

Multiple Intelligences Addressed

Linguistic

Visual-spatial

Body-kinesthetic

Interpersonal

Intrapersonal

``A Cherokee Teaching

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life.

“A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy.
“It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves.

One is evil-

He is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, and ego.

The other is good-

He is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, empathy, kindness, humility, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.

This same fight is going on within you-
And inside every other person too.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather,
“Which wolf will win?”

The old Cherokee replied simply,
“The one you feed.”

~Author unknown

Response:

1. What message is the author trying to convey?
2. What is your opinion of this message?
3. What does this story convey regarding individual responsibility?
4. How does this story relate to your own life/experiences?