

# UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

## Skill Sheet for Educators

Middle schoolers experience all the same complicated, wonderful, confusing, and big emotions that adults do. It's okay to feel all emotions, including feelings that are both pleasant and feelings that are uncomfortable.

Emotions are important because they provide us with information about ourselves and our environment, and they help us to connect with one another. Learning how to notice, label, and express their feelings helps middle schoolers to feel more in control of their emotional experience.

### Summary of **KEY SKILLS** from the video.

- Label and name feelings to increase emotional vocabulary AND reinforce that you can feel more than one emotion at a time.
- Notice body sensations that are attached to different emotions and provide clues for what we are feeling. Sometimes it's easier to notice physical symptoms first.
- Rate the feeling of emotions on a scale of 1 to 10 to capture that we feel emotions in different amounts or intensities.

### Practice skills

- Make time to check in with your students and explicitly ask how they are feeling. Start by listening and validating your students' emotions before jumping to problem-solving or fixing what is wrong. For example:



"I see that you're feeling sad, and that's okay."



"I hear you feel angry and sad at the same time. That happens."



"It makes sense to feel excited and nervous!"

- Provide specific positive feedback frequently, immediately and consistently when your students can identify how they are feeling or recognize how someone else is feeling.
- Bring emotions into academic work. When reading books or learning about historical events, help students gain perspective into other people's experiences and emotions. For example:



"How do you think the character in the book we're reading felt in that situation?"



"What do you imagine it was like to be alive at that time or have that experience?"



"When you were reading it, how did it make you feel?"

- Discuss and label how you feel, how your body reacts to that feeling, and how much you feel it. It is a great way to normalize all feelings and send the message that feelings are important.

### **Start with this →**

- Emotional validation is a foundational skill that educators can try in the classroom that will help students to increase emotional awareness.
- Listening, reflecting, and connecting helps to increase your student's awareness of their emotional experience and helps them to know that it's okay to feel all emotions.
- Be mindful of the do's and don'ts below when it comes to validation as you encourage your students to tell you how they're feeling.

#### **DO**

##### **Listen**

Give your full attention.

##### **Reflect**

Say back what the emotion was that they shared. For example: "I hear that it was super frustrating."

##### **Connect**

Tell them you understand. For example: "I can understand why you would feel that way."

#### **DON'T**

##### **Minimize Feelings**

Avoid telling your child they shouldn't feel a certain way. For example: "Don't worry about it! It will be fine!"

##### **Shame**

Avoid using language that can lead to embarrassment for feeling a certain way. For example: "Why do you feel sad about that? You know better."

##### **Fix Right Away**

Avoid jumping in with solutions. For example: "I'll handle the issue with that other child. Don't worry."

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your students or post in your classroom to reinforce and practice the different skills for understanding feelings.

## Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

## Directions

Use this activity to help practice labeling feelings, rating their intensity, and identifying which body sensations you may feel with these emotions. First circle the ratings below to indicate how much you've experienced each feeling within the past week, with 0 being not at all and 10 being the most intense.

joyful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
anxious	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
frustrated	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
fearful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
depressed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
calm	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
disgusted	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
content	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
hopeful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Joy

Sadness

Fear

Anger

Disgust

faster heart rate	sweaty palms	clenched teeth	nausea
tension in neck and shoulders	slower heart rate	steady breath	more energy
stomachache	furrowed brows	clenched fists	shaky
tightness in chest	headache	pursed lips	urge to run
weakened or shaky legs	reddened or hot cheeks	shallow or quickened breathing	heaviness

## Follow-Up

When you rate your feelings, you're gathering data about your experiences over the past week. If there are emotions that you're hoping to feel more or less, the skills reviewed in the additional videos and worksheets of this curriculum will help. You can use worksheets like this one each week to track your progress and figure out how the skills might be affecting your feelings.