Internalizing Emotions

Pembroke's Friday Freebie

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Moment to Moment
A positive approach to managing classroom behavior
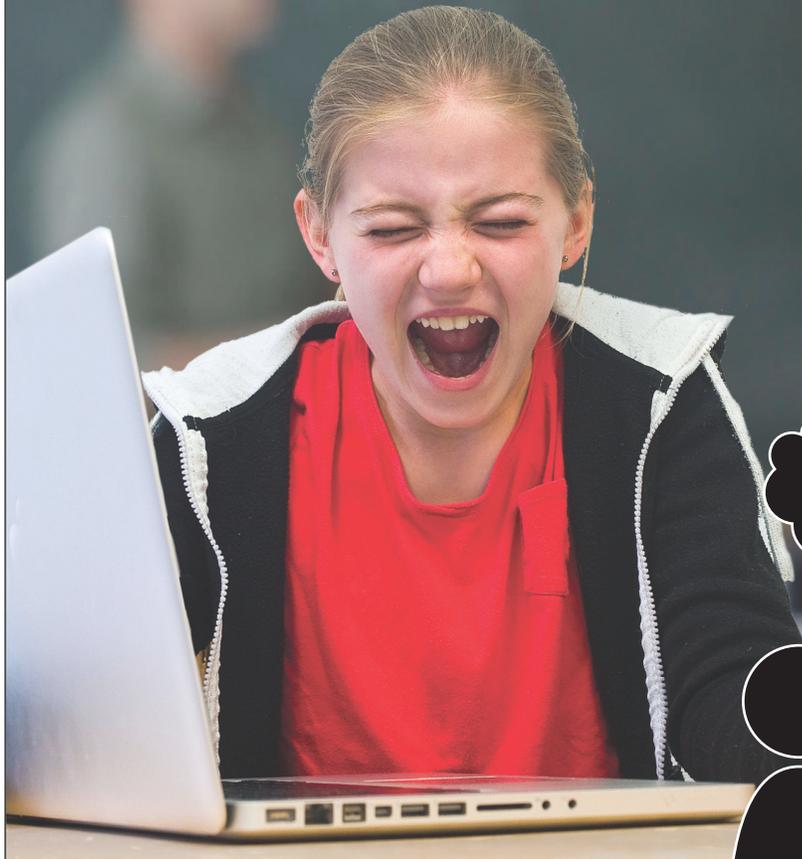
Thought
&
Emotion

Internalizing Emotions

Looking Beyond the Behavior

In a student with weak skills of internalizing emotions, you will observe
- student does not understand the different physical sensations emotions create in the body
- student confuses one emotion for another.

Understanding the Skills of Internalizing Emotions

Children with emotional-regulation challenges struggle to appropriately link the body's sensations with an emotion. They misinterpret neurophysiological responses, such as muscle tension, light-headedness, stomach pains, flushed face, racing heart. All young children cry when they are tired or get very grumpy when they are hungry; as they age, most learn to recognize the connection between their physical and emotional states. But some children are very slow to gain this physical awareness of their own bodies; e.g., they do not recognize that their stomach-ache, headache, or racing heart is because there is a spelling test. We can help children make more connections between how their body is reacting and the causes of those feelings, external and internal.

Active Skill Development

- to practice linking the body's internal sensations with an emotional vocabulary

Emotions Feel Like…

Instructions

Grades K–3
Approximate Time: 30–45 minutes

1. Have each student lie down and trace his/her full body on large piece of paper to create a body map.
2. Explain, "We feel our feelings throughout our bodies. Let's draw where we feel different emotions."
3. Do one feeling together as a class. Pick a feeling you have already talked about, perhaps one that underlies some of your particular classroom challenges (for example, jealousy). Have students close their eyes and think about the place in their bodies they feel that feeling.
4. Pick a corresponding feeling color (see chart below) and have students color in that place on the body map. Use different shades of the same color for related emotions to show the connection; for example, anger and annoyance are two shades of red.

Basic Emotions	Expanded Emotional Vocabulary
Happy: yellow	Satisfied: light yellow
Disgusted: grey	Repulsed: dark grey
Surprised: black	Shocked: black with black outline
Worried: orange	Nervous: light orange
Angry: red	Annoyed: light red
Sad: blue	Depressed: deep blue

Encourage and praise. Do not correct. Learn from your students' responses and drawings.

5. Pick one emotion at a time and examine it.

SAMPLE EXAMINATION OF ANGER
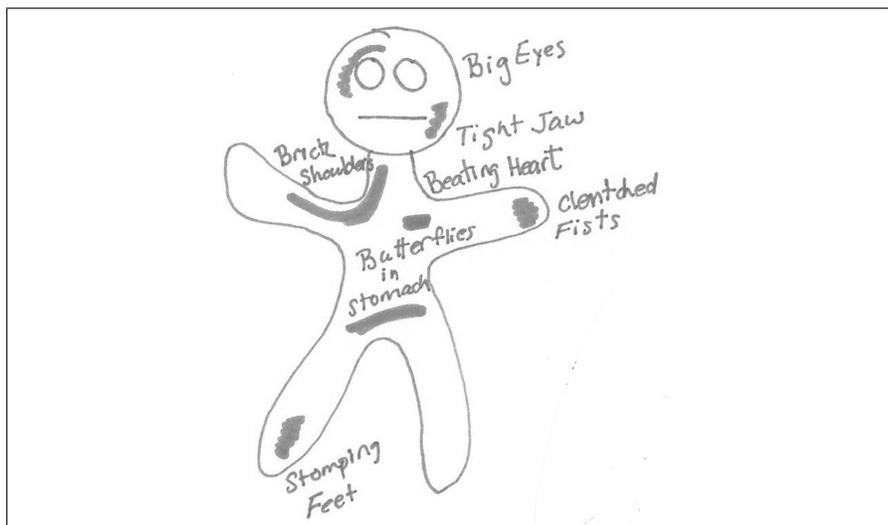
6. Make a small stick figure for each emotion and add it to the Mood Continuum (see page 108).

Discussion Before and After

- Discuss what impact feelings have on the body.
- Reflect on a time a student's body hurt or felt tired because of feelings; help him/her think about a time he/she felt energized and great after having positive emotions.

Moment-to-Moment Support

Model

When you are teaching, show students your frustration when you can't solve a math problem. Then show them the tightness in your shoulders that you feel from the frustration. Show them how you stretch your arms to relieve the tension and help yourself stay calm.

Scaffolding

Support a child by helping him/her deconstruct his/her internal feelings and his/her emotions. For example, explain that a trigger makes the child nervous or upset, so the brain sends a danger message throughout the child's body, making his/her stomach hurt, heart beat faster, and shoulders tense.

Homework

Send home a description of the activity. Include these suggestions:

Place a large cutout of your child's body in a main area of the house. Consistently label body parts and isolate where in the body your child feels his/her stress. You might consider starting to model relaxation techniques to show your child how you calm physical stress, tensing and relaxing different muscles in the body.