

Exploring Our Children's Stress: Tips & Tools for Adapting Teaching to Students' Needs

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The Social Thinking® Methodology is designed for use with individuals who have solid to strong language and academic skills.

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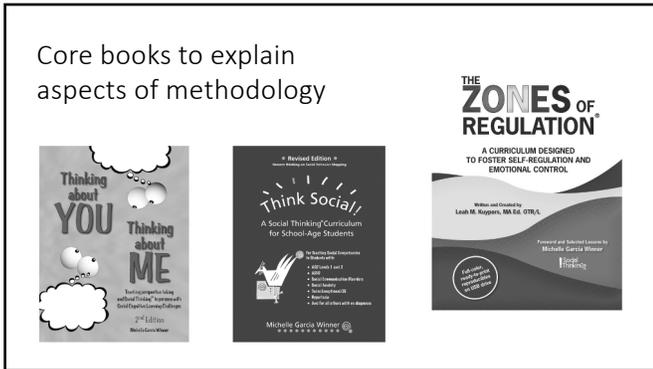


It's focused on helping individuals develop metacognitive awareness about themselves and others in the social world to foster development of one's social competencies.

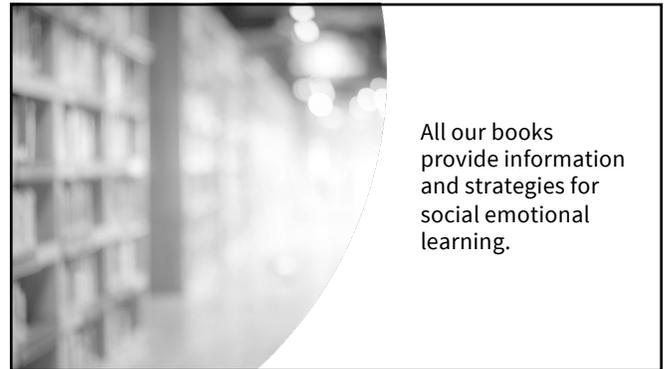
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The methodology is intended for use with children as young as 4 years old and throughout school and adult years

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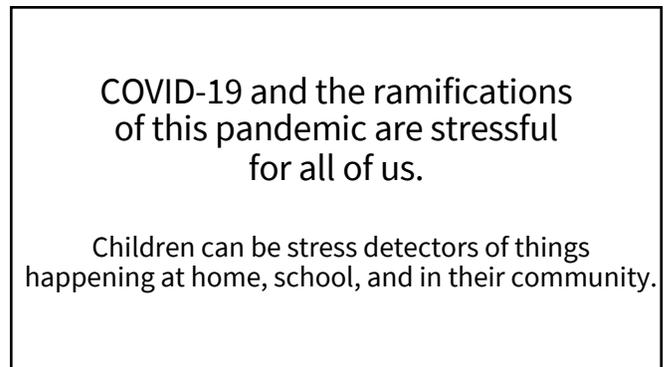
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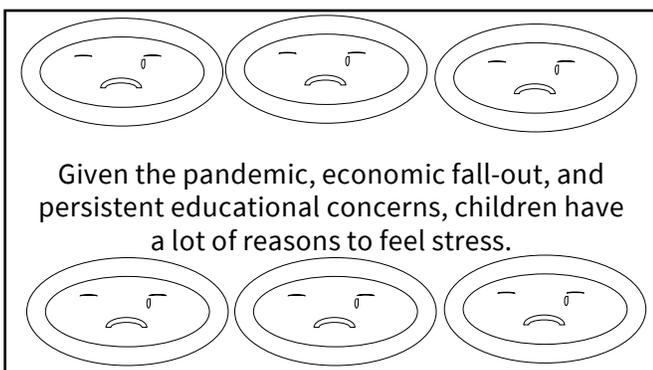
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The New York Times | <https://nyti.ms/39uuu3k>

THE CHECKUP

The Pandemic's Toll on Children With Special Needs and Their Parents

Missing social contacts and altered routines, disturbed sleep and eating habits can be particularly intense for the kids with developmental challenges.

By Perri Klass, M.D.
July 27, 2020

13

For many children, events related to the pandemic feel traumatic.

Experiencing trauma negatively impacts one's ability to learn.

14

Currently, all adults are struggling with the exact same issues as our children!

Dealing with uncertainty is the new normal – and it's difficult for us all.

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Here's the problem.
We can't create certainty during uncertain times.

But we can support each other.

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Developing awareness of one's range of feelings and experiences can help individuals recognize that not everything is stressful and what is stressful can be discussed and explored.

Dr. Dan Siegel describes this process as "name it – tame it"

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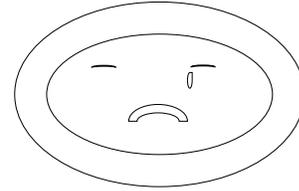
Dr. Dan Siegel describes this metacognitive process as:
"name it – tame it"

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Some individuals with social learning challenges have *stuck thinking*, especially around stressors.

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The more they talk about that one thing, the more that one thing grows and grows. Then it feels like that one thing is all they can think about.



20

How can we help kids talk about their range of feelings and experiences with a growth mindset rather than a fixed -stuck mindset?

Dweck, C. (2006) *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*.
Random House, New York, NY

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Let's seek to get children's perspective of their feelings and experiences by providing visually based tools to help them consider their experiences in shades of gray.

22

While it may seem obvious to us what our children feel and what they are experiencing, it may not be obvious to them, and we may be wrong in our assumptions.

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Keep in mind:
Members of a family or classroom may experience the same event together, but each person feels a bit differently about the experience.

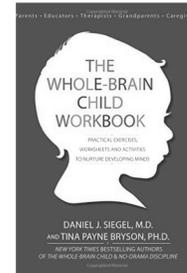
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We *feel* and may *show* our feelings as an automatic brain function.

Dr. Dan Siegel describes this as one of the functions of the “downstairs” brain.

To *talk* about our feelings and experiences metacognitively requires the “upstairs brain.”

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The
Mindsight
approach

Adapted from
Daniel Siegel, MD &
Tina Payne Bryson,
PhD:

26

The goal is for individuals to use their “upstairs thinking” to try to understand their feelings and learn to self-regulate the sensations they are experiencing within their “downstairs brain.”

27

By having students talk out loud about their own thinking helps to build their metacognitive thinking.

Have you ever noticed that by explaining your problem to others helps you to learn more about what you are experiencing?

28

A problem for many social learners is they struggle with more concrete or “black and white” feelings and thoughts.

This means they feel as if they are either happy or sad, and they think about things as being bad or good. They struggle to evaluate all the shades of gray in between.

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For students who are old enough to use a visual rating scale, it can help individuals unpack their thoughts and feelings about different situations or topics.

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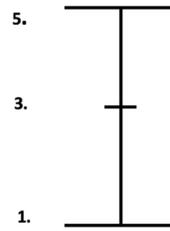
Let them know you want to learn about what makes them the most and least stressed, worried, uncomfortable and/or satisfied—when talking about a specific topic.

The more refined the topic, the more specific information a student may provide.

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Name _____ Date _____
 Topic of Scale: _____

List events, experiences or people from:
 least stressful or most satisfying "1"
 to most stressful or least satisfying "5"



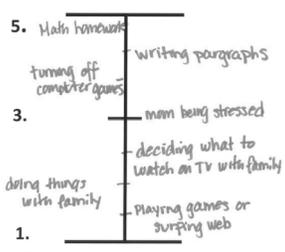
Find this scale free in your handouts

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Topic of Scale: Home - NOT in zoom school

List events, experiences or people from:
 least stressful or most satisfying "1"
 to most stressful or least satisfying "5"

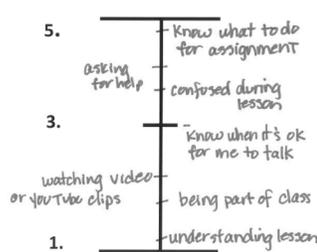



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Topic of Scale: Online School Zoom

List events, experiences or people from:
 least stressful or most satisfying "1"
 to most stressful or least satisfying "5"

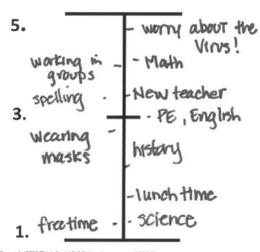



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Topic of Scale: At school

List events, experiences or people from:
 least stressful or most satisfying "1"
 to most stressful or least satisfying "5"



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Ask your students why they rated things the way they did on the scale.

If they can't tell you, suggest a few different ideas and see if one of these makes sense to them.

If they agree with one of your ideas, ask them to "fix my words" to encourage them to talk about it in their own language.

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A child or student's answer is never wrong!

One's own feelings are never wrong, so avoid correcting how you think a student is feeling. The purpose of the scale is to help us find out how an individual feels about different aspects of a topic.

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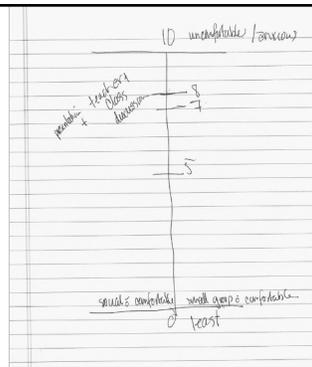
Learn how to talk to kids to help unpack their feelings and problems:

Collaborative Pro-Active Solutions by Dr. Ross Greene

<https://www.livesinthebalance.org>

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Example:
Scale of a 13-year-old girl explaining her social anxiety when in class with her peers and teacher.



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You can create scales about any topic.

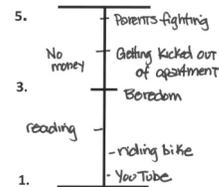
Recess at school, free time at home, YouTube clips, types of things student learns at school, things student does with family, etc.

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Some of our children deal with stress they have no control over, but it is on their mind all the time.

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Topic of Scale: Home
List events, experiences or people from:
least stressful or most satisfying "1"
to most stressful or least satisfying "5"

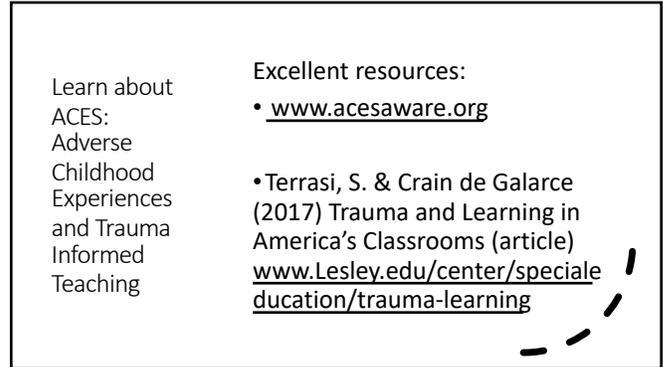


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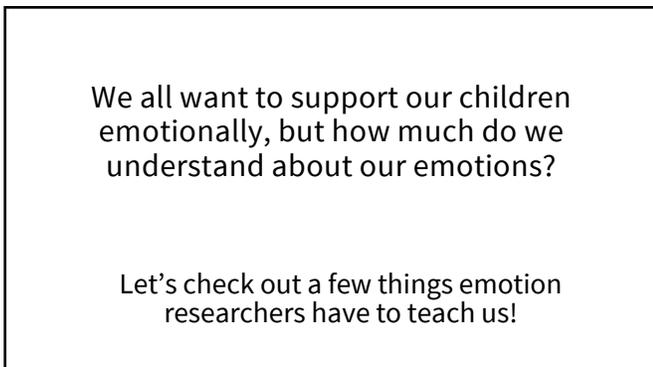
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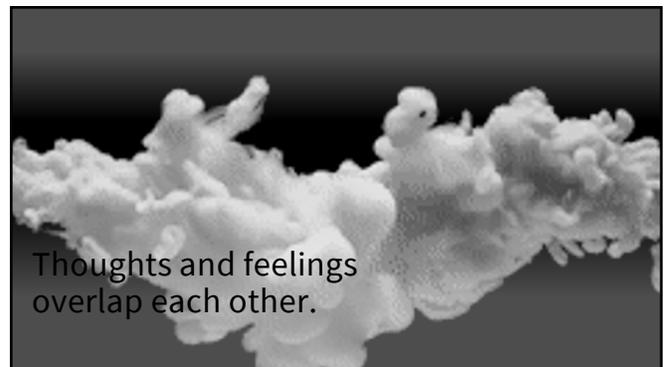
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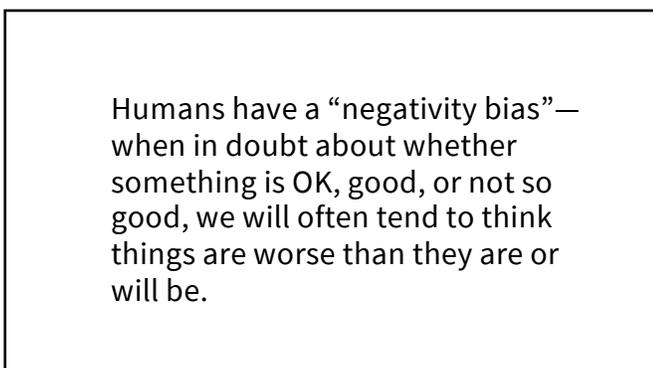
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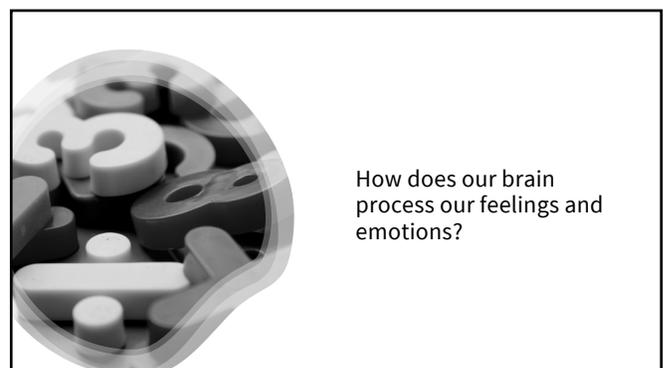
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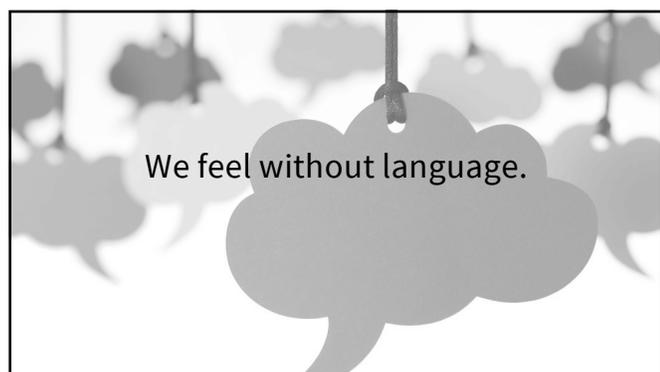
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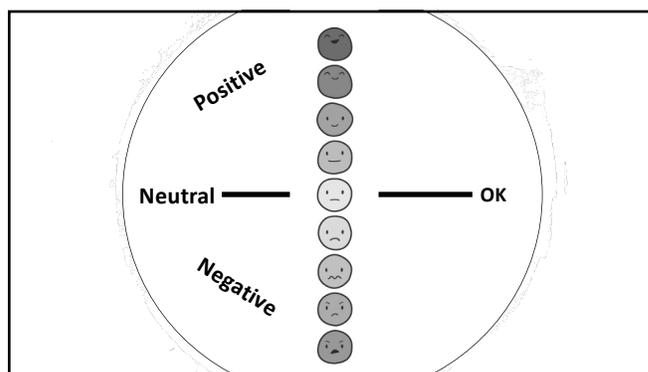
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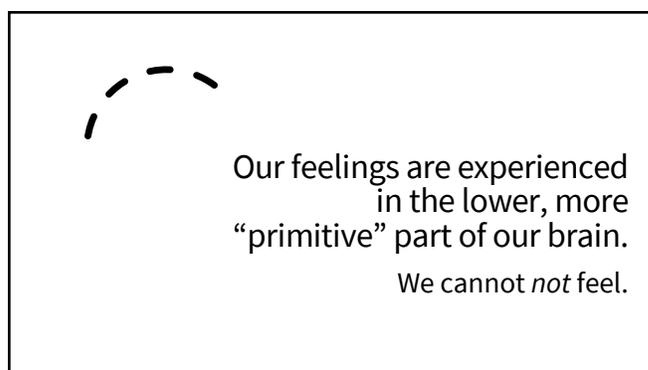
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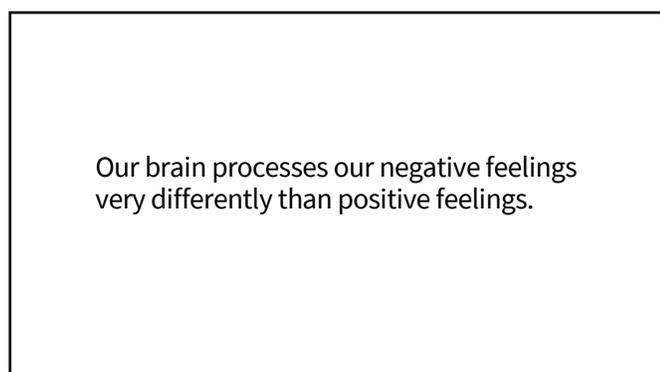
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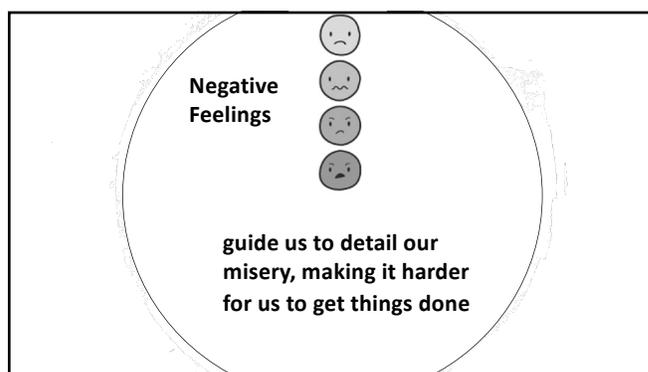
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Positive Feelings



We think more broadly when we feel good; we are more easily motivated and tolerant

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Our feelings change throughout the day.



While our moods may span across time, our feelings shift regularly.

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Sometimes we get stuck on negative thinking.

We almost never get stuck on positive thinking.

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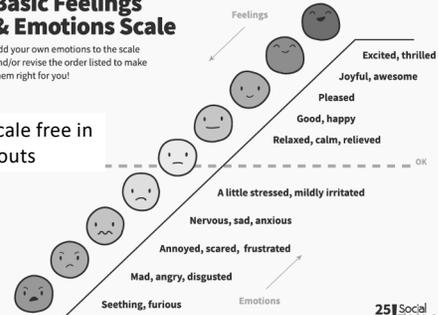
We feel our feelings.
We describe our feelings by talking about our emotions.

58

Basic Feelings & Emotions Scale

Add your own emotions to the scale and/or revise the order listed to make them right for you!

Find this scale free in your handouts



Feelings

Excited, thrilled
Joyful, awesome
Pleased
Good, happy
Relaxed, calm, relieved

OK

A little stressed, mildly irritated

Nervous, sad, anxious

Annoyed, scared, frustrated

Mad, angry, disgusted

Seething, furious

Emotions

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We have more feelings than we can easily describe.

Help students give examples of their feelings even if they can't yet use emotion words to name that feeling.



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Use these basic scales to encourage students to talk about their feelings in different situations.

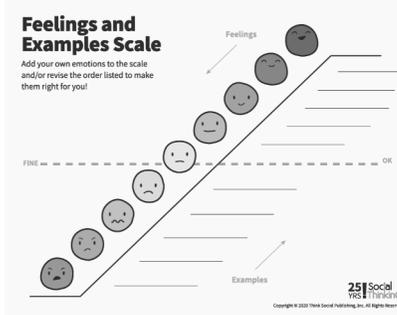
Encourage them to talk about things, experiences, or people that often lead them to feel positive (purple), as well as things, experiences, or people that often lead them to feel negative (orange).



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Students can provide examples of when they felt certain ways

Find this scale free in your handouts



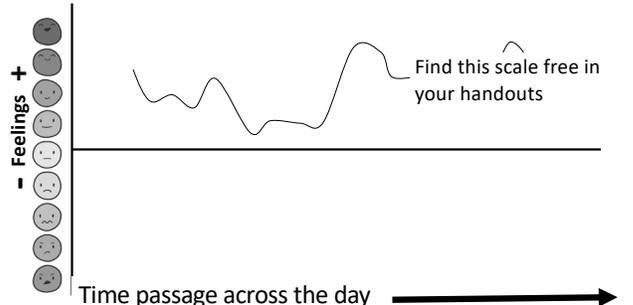
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For children who are old enough to understand how to use graphs, graphing one's feelings journey across a day can help social learners notice that their feelings change and that not all feelings are negative.

63

Tracking feelings across a day

Find this scale free in your handouts

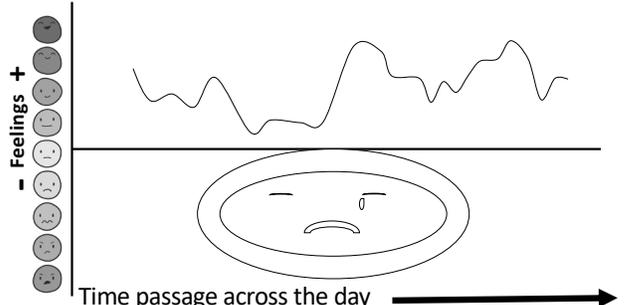


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Asking students how their day went without asking them to graph it across time may lead to stuck thoughts and feelings...

65

Tracking feelings across a day



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It's human nature to only pay attention to negative feelings and talk about negative experiences.

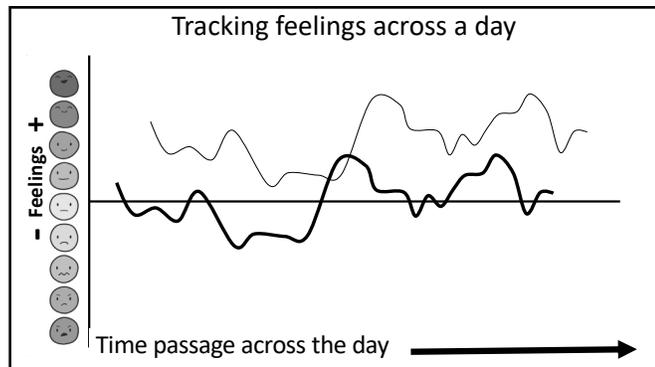
This encourages negativity because children find the most predictable way to relate to people is to complain to people. Let's break this cycle!

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When we ask students to think about their day or part of the day where we saw them experiencing both positive and negative feelings, have them learn to graph it out—

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Tracking feelings across a day

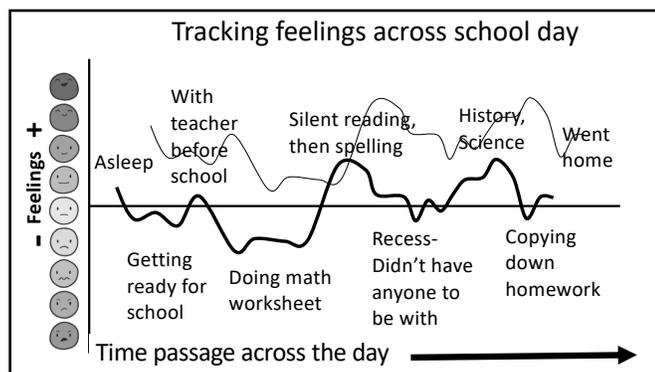


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—then tell us what was happening during different feeling states.

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Tracking feelings across school day

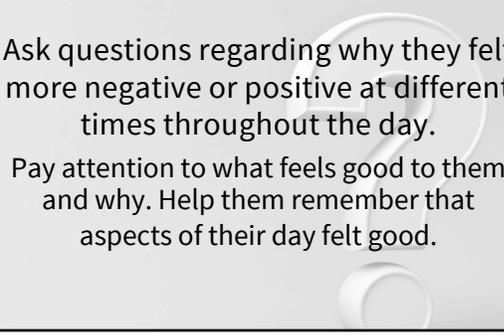


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The visual graphs help both social learners and parents and/or teachers learn more about how students are experiencing their day to help us get perspective of their experience.

72



Ask questions regarding why they felt more negative or positive at different times throughout the day.
Pay attention to what feels good to them and why. Help them remember that aspects of their day felt good.

73

Given that negative feelings are reported with more detail, students will often report problems they are experiencing when they talk about different negative feeling episodes.
This helps to engage a problem-solving process.

74

As children age into middle and high school, encourage them to consider their choices to engage in problem solving.
Adults can help teens recognize their range of choices.

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Free video lesson describing how to access and use the:
Problem Solving Thinksheet
Check out the **Free Stuff Portal** on our website:
www.socialthinking.com
<https://www.socialthinking.com/free-stuff/video-lessons>

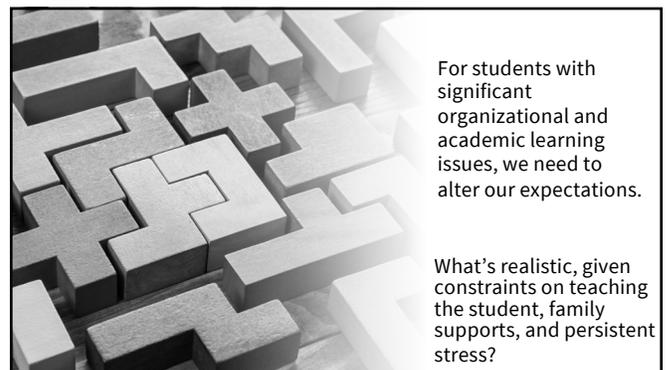
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As we learn about our students' stress, we also bear the responsibility of figuring out how we can help them at this time.

For many of our students, this may provide many opportunities to encourage flexible thinking and learning strategies for self-regulation.

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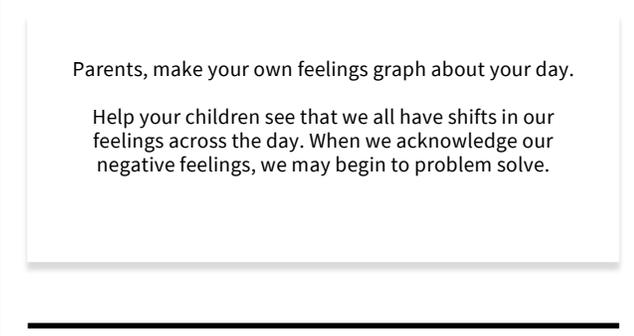
For students with significant organizational and academic learning issues, we need to alter our expectations.

What's realistic, given constraints on teaching the student, family supports, and persistent stress?

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Parents, make your own feelings graph about your day.

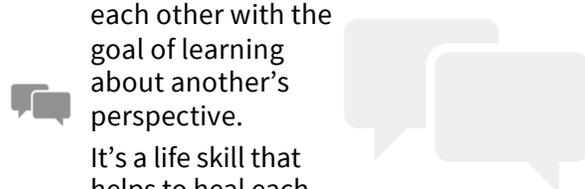
Help your children see that we all have shifts in our feelings across the day. When we acknowledge our negative feelings, we may begin to problem solve.



79

Let's keep talking to each other with the goal of learning about another's perspective.

It's a life skill that helps to heal each other's wounds.



80

Remember, helping students manage their mental health is critical to their being able to learn.



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Oct 1,2, 7 & 8: 4-part series: Power of Emotions

Nov. 5,6, 12 & 13: 4-part series: Early Learners 4-7yrs.

Dec. 1 & 2: 2-part series: Treatment Decision Making and Treatment Tools

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Winter-Spring 2021

Jan. 21-22: 2-part series: Tweens and Teens

Feb. 1-2: 2-part series: Social-Academic Connection

Feb. 6: 1 course: Focus on Living as an Adult

March 4-5: 2-part series: Social Detective & Superflex

April 16-17: 2-part series: Social Thinking Vocabulary & Treatment Ideas

May 4-5: 2-part series: Informal Dynamic Assessment

May 15: 1 course: Supporting Evidence & Tips for Measurement

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Webinar10

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4-7 years old



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8-11 years old



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Tweens and Teens

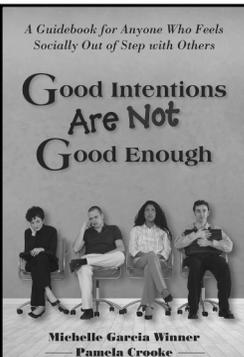


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A Guidebook for Anyone Who Feels Socially Out of Step with Others

Good Intentions Are Not Good Enough

Adult Social Learners



Michelle Garcia Winner
Pamela Crooke

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Teaching Social Competencies—More Than Social Skills

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