



FLY FiVE[®]

The Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum

SHOWING EMOTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY





Overarching Goals

Emotional responsibility refers to the recognition that our beliefs, feelings, emotions and behaviors are in our control. While outside factors such as an event, experience, or another person may activate our beliefs, feelings, emotions, and behaviors, we have control over how that activating event impacts us (Prendergast, 2014). Taking responsibility for our own emotions does not absolve others of their behavior, nor does it involve forced positivity or repressing how we feel. Rather, emotional responsibility means that we choose to take ownership of our emotions, even the ones that feel uncomfortable, and take care of ourselves through that process. When we show emotional responsibility, we intentionally choose a response that is constructive and loving for ourselves and others (Paul, 2012).

For students, learning how to take responsibility for their emotions can help them to build their emotional competence and confidence. It provides them agency over how they respond in challenging situations, and also shows them the limits of what they can control—they cannot control or change other people’s behaviors, but they can control how they respond to them (Prendergast, 2014). To help students practice emotional responsibility, consider using the following approaches:

- Affirm that everyone has a right to their own emotional reality, which can help students express emotions without denying another person’s right to their interpretation of and feelings about an experience (Creighton, 2019). This also reminds students that their emotional reactions are not universal, and while their emotional experience is valid, they have a responsibility to proceed in a constructive way.
- When emotions arise—whether joy, disgust, or anger—have students examine the emotion to understand it, and themselves, more fully. They can use the following questions to guide their examination (University of Illinois, 2015):
 - What am I feeling?
 - What does this emotion tell me about the situation?
 - Why am I feeling this way?



- Create a space in the classroom where students can step away if they feel angry, sad, or stressed. This space can include mindfulness cards to help students use body scans and breathing to work through their emotions or blank paper so they can journal for a few minutes (Reeve, 2019). This space allows students to work through their emotions, learn about themselves and what activates certain emotions, and choose an intentional response.
- Encourage students to examine their beliefs about a situation and explore how they are interpreting an event. What judgments are they attaching to another's actions and their own emotions? Does the intensity of their feelings match the situation (Prendergast, 2014; University of Illinois, 2015)? Students can explore the subjective nature of their emotions and practice working through their feelings critically.

When students have the tools to intentionally explore their emotions, examine which emotions correspond to different circumstances, and articulate how they experience their emotions, they will be better able to take responsibility for how they feel and manage themselves in a constructive way.



References

Creighton, J. L. (2019, February 13). Taking responsibility for how you share your feelings. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/loving-through-your-differences/201902/taking-responsibility-how-you-share-your-feelings-0>

Paul, M. (2012, January 31). Who is responsible for your feelings? Huffpost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/taking-responsibility-feelings_b_1109779

Prendergast, D. (2014, January 24). Emotional responsibility and dealing with other people. The Albert Ellis Institute. <https://albertellis.org/emotional-responsibility-and-dealing-with-other-people/>