

Group Application: Understanding and Managing Our Emotions

Learning Objectives:

- Learn and internalize five basic feelings
- Learn and practice emotional regulation strategies. Awareness leads to regulation.

Materials Needed:

- Whiteboard/flipchart
- Markers
- Emotion cards (one set per participant)
- Stress balls or fidget toys

Part 1: Opening Ice Breaker – Emotion Charades (10 minutes)

Facilitator Script: "Welcome everyone! Today we're going to explore our feelings and learn how to understand and manage them better. Let's start with a fun activity. I have some cards here with different feelings written on them. Each of you will take turns acting out an emotion without using words, and the rest of us will try to guess what it is. The twist is that you can only use your face and body language – no sounds allowed!"

Instructions:

1. Distribute feelings cards randomly to participants
2. Each person takes turns acting out their feelings
3. Group members guess the emotion being portrayed
4. After each correct guess, ask:
 - "What specific facial expressions or body language helped you identify this emotion?"
 - "Where else have you seen someone express this emotion?"

Part 2: Understanding Our Five Basic Feelings (15 minutes)

Facilitator Script: "Great job with the charades! Now let's dive deeper into understanding our feelings."

Gentle prompt:

- "If you had to name a feeling today, what would it be?" [Listen and validate their response]
- "That feeling lives in your body somewhere – maybe your chest, stomach, or shoulders. Where do you feel it most?" [Let them identify the physical sensation]
- "What are the messages you've gotten about feelings?"
- "How does your family deal with feelings?"

We are now going to talk about the five basic feelings: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, and shame. Each of these feelings serves a purpose and tells us something important. Feelings exist in our bodies. Our body usually knows what we're feeling even before our minds do. Feelings can be confusing too, right? Sometimes I'm feeling so many things at once, it's hard for me to figure out what I'm feeling and when. Sometimes I have a hard time telling someone else exactly how I'm feeling.

But what's the difference between a feeling and an emotion? Feelings are messages of information, they tell you something. Labeling a feeling can often decrease how intense the feeling is. Emotions are how you express those feelings, the outward communication of the feeling.

"Who here has felt angry before? (wait for participants to raise hands) What about happy? What about sad? What about afraid? What about ashamed? These five feelings I just asked you about are called 'The Five Basic Feelings.' Everyone

feels them, and most of the time, everything we're feeling can be described by one of these five basic feelings. It is a normal human response to feel these. All humans feel these feelings, and they aren't 'good' or 'bad'. When you have a feeling, it doesn't mean you are the feeling forever (I feel sad vs. I am a sad person). We're going to talk more about these feelings today."

Activity: Emotion Mapping

1. Draw five large circles on the whiteboard, one for each emotion
2. For each emotion, guide discussion with these prompts:

Happiness:

- "What does happiness feel like in your body?"
- "What situations typically make you happy?"
- "How do you express happiness?"

Sadness:

- "Where do you feel sadness in your body?"
- "What are some healthy ways to express sadness?"
- "How can sadness actually help us sometimes?"

Fear:

- "How does your body react when you're afraid?"
- "What's the difference between helpful and unhelpful fear?"
- "How can fear protect us?"

Anger:

- "Where do you feel anger in your body?"
- "What are some warning signs that you're getting angry?"
- "What's the difference between healthy and unhealthy anger?"

Shame:

- "How does shame feel different from other emotions?"
- "What thoughts typically come with shame?"
- "How can we handle shame in a healthy way?"

Note: After the participants give their defining words for shame, describe to them the difference between "Shame" and "Guilt" then proceed with the remainder of the exercise.

- Guilt – "Feeling bad for something you did. Example – I did something bad."
- Shame – "Feeling bad about who you are. Example – I am bad." (remind the participants that none of them are bad)

Part 3: Discussion Questions (5 minutes)

Discussion Questions:

1. What was the easiest feeling to talk about?
2. What was the hardest or most confusing one?
3. Many feelings are about how we feel about other people/situations we can't control. What do we do with these feelings?
4. What feelings do you have today? (Choosing among the five from this activity). Facilitator should go first, and name a feeling that they are experiencing today.

Part 4: Emotion Regulation Strategies (10 minutes)

Facilitator Script: "Now that we understand these emotions better, let's learn some practical ways to manage them when they become overwhelming. When emotions feel too big, remember this quick tool. It's called "PAC"

P – Pause & Breathe

A – Acknowledge Feelings and Accept Them

C – Choose a Healthy Coping Mechanism

Teach and Practice These Strategies:

1. The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique
 - Name 5 things you can see
 - 4 things you can touch
 - 3 things you can hear
 - 2 things you can smell
 - 1 thing you can taste
2. Square Breathing
 - Demonstrate the technique
 - Practice as a group
 - Inhale for 4 counts
 - Hold for 4 counts
 - Exhale for 4 counts
 - Hold for 4 counts
3. STOP Technique
 - S: Stop what you're doing
 - T: Take a step back
 - O: Observe your emotions
 - P: Proceed mindfully

Part 5: Closing Activity (5 minutes)

Emotion Action Plan

Facilitator Script: "For our final activity, we're going to create individual action plans. Think about one challenging emotion you often experience and choose one strategy we learned today that you want to try."

Have each participant complete these sentences:

- "The emotion I want to work on is..."
- "I notice this emotion when..."
- "The strategy I will try is..."
- "I will practice this strategy by..."

Close with group sharing: Have each participant briefly share their action plan with the group.

Facilitator Script: "Thank you all for participating today. Remember, all emotions are valid and serve a purpose. What matters is how we understand and respond to them. This week, try to notice when you experience these different emotions and practice the strategies we learned. Next session, we'll check in on how your action plans worked."

Notes for Facilitator:

- Monitor group dynamics and ensure all participants feel safe sharing
- Be prepared to manage potential emotional triggers
- Validate all emotions shared by participants
- Watch for participants who may need additional support
- Keep examples age-appropriate and relevant to teen experiences

Optional Activity: Express Yourself - Emotion Through Music (15 minutes)

Learning Objectives:

Music is a powerful tool for emotional expression. This activity helps participants identify, process, and express their emotions through song lyrics, either by writing their own or connecting with existing music.

Materials: Paper, pens, device to play music (optional)

Part 1: Song Identification (5 minutes)

1. Emotional Check-in:
 - Take a quiet moment to identify one present feeling or a feeling that you have felt strongly recently.
 - On your paper, write this feeling and rate its intensity from 1-10.
2. Music Connection:
 - Think of a song that expresses this emotion or how you feel.
 - Write down the song title and artist.
 - If possible, play a short clip of the song (30 seconds).
3. Share (Optional):
 - Share your chosen song and why it connects to your feeling.
 - Example prompt: "This song expresses my feeling of _____ because _____."

Part 2: Create Your Lyrics (10-15 minutes)

1. PAC Method Check-in:
 - Pause and take three deep breaths
 - Acknowledge your chosen emotion
 - Choose to express it through writing
2. Quick-Write Options:
 - Option A: Write 4-8 lines that express your emotion
 - Option B: Choose an existing song and rewrite the chorus to fit your emotion
 - Option C: Write a rap verse about your emotion
3. Guiding Framework:
 - Line 1: Name the emotion
 - Line 2: Where you feel it in your body
 - Line 3: What triggered this feeling
 - Line 4: What you need or want
 - Lines 5-8: Your choice

Sample Starter Lines:

- "When I feel [feeling], it's like..."
- "This [feeling] sits in my [body part] like..."
- "No one sees the [feeling] that..."
- "If my [feeling/emotion] had a voice, it would say..."

Part 4: Closing Reflection

- How did putting your feelings into lyrics help you understand them?
- Did writing about your emotion change how intensely you feel?
- How might you use music to help with emotional regulation in the future?

Facilitator Notes

- Create a safe, non-judgmental space
- Emphasize there are no "wrong" emotions
- Make sharing optional
- Consider creating a group playlist of songs that express different emotions
- For youth who struggle with writing, offer to scribe or let them record audio instead

Resources:

<https://resourcegrp.org/blog/the-stop-technique-in-dbt/>

<https://selkernels.gse.harvard.edu/en-US/student-kernels/feelings-charades>

[https://ccp.net.au/basic-](https://ccp.net.au/basic-emotions/#:~:text=Anger%2C%20Fear%2C%20Sadness%2C%20Disgust,feelings%20in%20these%20five%20domains.)

[emotions/#:~:text=Anger%2C%20Fear%2C%20Sadness%2C%20Disgust,feelings%20in%20these%20five%20domains.](https://ccp.net.au/basic-emotions/#:~:text=Anger%2C%20Fear%2C%20Sadness%2C%20Disgust,feelings%20in%20these%20five%20domains.)

<https://youthfirstinc.org/emotions-charades/>

<https://smho-smso.ca/fw/identification-and-management-of-emotions/recognizing/emotion-charades/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/201601/what-are-basic-emotions>

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/emotions>