

Year 1. Getting to Know Myself - Teacher Guide

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IN PROGRESS

Key Points

- Exploring human emotions, their significance and the appropriate place to express them.
- Understanding that we have natural emotional responses to certain circumstances.
- Learning that there are typical responses, which can be strong but which we can learn to master.

Objectives

Knowing

To understand that we all have emotions and that there are appropriate ways to handle these.

Accepting

To appreciate being in charge of our emotions and to respect those of others.

Doing

To recognise and name emotions when feeling them.

Lesson Notes

Enjoying control of our sentiments.

We not only think, invent, love and have feelings, but we are also conscious of doing these things. Within the parameters of daily life, we can decide for ourselves the general direction of our lives, mostly in small things. Making decisions in a positive way helps to guide us towards what is good and fulfilling (and to avoid those things that hold us back or might harm us). Our sentiments, which are mental feelings or emotions, are part of this and part of our human condition. They both give us spontaneity and repress our readiness to act. The starting points for our sentiments are numerous but, however strong they may seem, they do not prevent us from mastering them. Our willpower is able to steer them, with varying degrees of control.

Sentiments and emotions can have many causes, and we cannot always prevent their appearing.

The aim to put before children is to recognise their sentiments, and so contain, rather than suppress, them. This encourages them to use their reason and freedom of action to conduct themselves in a positive way. For instance, where a situation provokes anger, the sentiment generally remains with us until the cause disappears. However, a person can still act with serenity without losing his temper. We integrate our sentiments with our freedom of action by what specialists call "categorising" (sorting them into clearly defined categories). That is to say: "If I can describe how I am feeling, it is easier for me to face up to that sentiment." Even if boys are often slower at this than girls, all pupils can gradually be helped to master these skills.

This chapter is about training the will to act resolutely. We don't impose our willpower arbitrarily on our sentiments: our sentiments are part of us and are not the enemies of our virtue. Rather we need to educate them, just as we do our other capacities.

To do so, we need to know how to separate them into what is positive and what is negative. Children who fail to do this become more susceptible to adverse peer pressure.

This is especially dangerous in adolescence, when it can be difficult for them to resist pressure towards alcohol, drugs, inappropriate sex and such like. Failing to prepare children in advance can cost them a lot later on.

By contrast, children who are able to name and distinguish positive and negative sentiments become stronger in character and are endowed with the resources which make for happiness.

Our sentiments colour our internal world. They can also be confusing, especially to young children. From the neurological point of view, boys develop their capacity to identify their sentiments later than girls. A sentiment has a greater or lesser hold on a person in the measure that it is identified and understood. If someone is frightened of the dark, it is because he does not know what may be hidden there. But if he knows what is there, or puts on the light, the fear disappears.

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Activities

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Page Materials

Lesson plan

Charlie and Alice Course Book

Chapter 10, "Consoling Alice", pp. 22-23.

- Get the children to look at and comment on the pictures.
- Read the story.
- Get the children to retell the story.



1. Identify the various emotions displayed in the course book

Our most basic emotions are: joy, sadness, fear and anger.

- Which of these emotions come across in the story?
- Who, when, why was anyone content/happy/joyful? Show the children that joy is a positive emotion which helps us and accompanies moments of happiness. It is very difficult to be joyous all the time, and one doesn't need to feel pressure to be so: pretending to be happy doesn't generally produce the benefits of true joy.
- Do the characters have fun? (doing something they like, which entertains them?)
- Do some laugh?
- Do some cry?
- Are any of the children fearful? (They might not pick this out, but Marcia goes out into the dark looking for the doll by herself, showing her courage in doing so. Alice stays behind, perhaps because she is afraid, or maybe she is just too upset.)
- Is anyone angry?



2. Identify events which provoke such emotions in us

When are we content/happy/joyful?

Ask the children to describe circumstances which made them really happy. Guide them to realise that we feel happiest when we are doing something right. This can take the form of learning a new skill, such as a times table. When we master something difficult, especially if we have had to struggle for it, we feel triumphant. Happiness also comes from doing good deeds and feeling loved (e.g. seeing a mother or loved person unexpectedly at the school gate). It can come from being greeted by a new puppy, or receiving an unexpected gift or prize. Ask them how they show their joy. You might ask them to playact an event.

What do we feel like when we are having fun?

Having fun contributes to making us happy but is not the only thing to look for in the day. You want here to help children resist the natural tendency to want to play all day, instead of getting on with what they need to do. Also point out that there is an unkind fun which makes us feel bad afterwards. Draw out from the children the different things which they each like doing, to show them that there is no one way to enjoy ourselves. Contrast passing pleasure with the solid happiness of conquering a difficult skill or helping someone else.

What makes us cry?

Crying is normal when we are sad or something hurts us, exteriorly or interiorly. It is good to cry, for a boy as well as a girl, when we suffer grief. On the other hand, to cry out of pique or to try to get our own way rarely solves the problem in hand and can annoy other people. Mastering our tendency to cry when we do not get what we want is part of growing up.

What makes us cross?

Anger is a negative emotion which we feel when other people (or other things) do not behave in the way we want. Before inviting the children to give examples, describe some typical situations which make people angry, asking the children what might be a reasonable way to show it. In the story, Charlie could have remained cross with Jack (who mocked Alice when she was crying) but he got over it and took Jack's hand in the dance. You can show the children that, if we allow ourselves to be dominated by anger and bear grudges, we lose our sense of proportion and freedom of action. It is important that the children understand that, while it is not wrong to get annoyed by something, we need to know how to get over it and not let our anger dominate our actions.

Is there something which frightens you?

In what circumstances? It is natural to feel fear when we are threatened by something, but we want to learn to be realistic and not fear what is not dangerous. Fear is there to help us to avoid particular dangers. If there is something which frightens us, we should move away from the cause of the danger, or tell an adult we trust about it, and then the fear will have played its part.



3. Listen to the stories below and identify the emotions and sentiments

Charlie really wants to see his father, who has been kept late at work. As soon as he hears the front door open, his heart beats faster. He runs downstairs with a big smile on his face and jumps up to embrace him. He feels happy and safe.

Nathan, who is still little, begins to cry for no obvious reason. In fact, he wants a toy which he has lost. His mother steps what she is doing and runs to him, worried, and gives him a big hug. Nathan realises that crying is a good way to get attention, and he begins to cry often. To begin with, his mum comes whenever he cries, but she begins to see that he is making a fuss about nothing. She stops paying attention. Then one day Nathan has a bad tummy ache and really cries. His mum gives him a quick kiss and leaves him crying. She does not realise that he is ill and delays taking him to the doctor which makes his illness worse.

Jodie has drawn with felt pen on the walls of her room. Her dad takes the felt pen from her and scolds her. Jodie doesn't like being told off, stamps her feet and empties her toys on the floor. Her dad brings some soapy water and a sponge and tells her to wash the wall. Jodie refuses, and tips the water up.

Jodie's bad temper comes from being both upset and cross. She expresses this by wanting to hurt something (or someone). But being angry doesn't help Jodie. What she needs to do is to calm down, say sorry for her bad temper, and try to make good the damage she has caused.



4. What am I feeling?

Ask each child in turn to act out a sentiment whispered only to you. Get the other children to guess what it is.



5. Time for a song

"If you are happy and you know it" - 2:57 min

You can sing the same song for a wide range of different emotions, such as: "Sad and you know it, make a frown" and "Scared and you know it, hide your eyes" and "Mad and you know it, take a breath."

"I get angry ... but I don't let the anger get me" - 2:33 min

Get the children to discuss the various coping mechanisms suggested in the song which appeal to them.

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Reflection

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Can the children think of some events which would make them sad, fearful or angry? What coping strategies might they adopt? How would they help their friends in similar situations? Continue to praise the children when you see them making an effort to manage their emotions in the succeeding weeks.

Family links

Suggest that the children watch the "I get angry ... but I don't let the anger get me" song with their parents. Do the parents sometimes get angry and use some of those tactics? Do they have other ones?

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