

Becoming Courageous

Contemplate: Lesson 1

What's Really Going On?

Objective:

1. To help students learn to identify things that are affecting their mood and their ability to learn
2. To help develop a culture of talking about challenges in a non-threatening, non-judgemental way
3. To create a reference for the children so that they can easily identify the challenges that are affecting them.

Rationale:

1. When a child is upset or scared, they are experiencing a secondary emotion. If we can identify what is causing this secondary emotion, then we can work towards finding a solution or coping strategy.
2. Openly talking about emotions in a non-judgemental way helps students to become more self-aware, and to independently tackle challenges.

Alignment to the British Columbia Core Competencies:

Critical Thinking; Analyze and Critique;

1. I can analyze evidence from different perspectives
2. I can reflect on and evaluate my own thinking
3. I can analyze my own assumptions

Personal Awareness and Responsibility; Self Regulation;

1. I can use strategies that help me manage my feelings and emotions

Personal Awareness and Responsibility; Well Being;

1. I can use strategies to find peace in stressful times

Supporting Literature:

1. Short explanation of Gloria Wilcox's: The Feeling Wheel <https://allthefeez.app/feeling-wheel/>
2. Short explanation of Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions <https://www.6seconds.org/2017/04/27/plutchiks-model-of-emotions/>
3. Survey of 3 different emotion classification systems (there is a one time limit to access this for free, so only click when you want to read it!) <https://www.theemotionmachine.com/classification-of-emotions/>

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Materials and Resources:

1. Courage Journals. I use exercise books, but you can use any type of book or journal. Courage Journals are used to reflect on the content of the day's lesson. Each child should have their own.
2. The book, *Alexander and the No Good, Terrible, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst. [Link to a video of the book being read aloud](#)
3. Smartboard, or projector and speakers (to show videos)
4. To make posters: paper (11x17), watercolour paints, paintbrushes, black paint pens or felt pens.

Lesson (this will most likely take 2 lessons, each one an hour long)

Introduction:

1. Organize students so they can see both you and the smartboard/chart paper.
2. Introduce the concept of describing "what is the real problem". I always give the example of a student who says "this is stupid" about their schoolwork. I always wonder what the reason is for the student to say this.
3. Introduce and read the book, *Alexander and the No Good, Terrible, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst.

Main Activity:

1. Have a discussion with your students about having bad days, or bad moments. Ask the students for examples from their own lives (I'm sure there will be lots)
2. With the smartboard, or a piece of chart paper, ask the students to think of reasons why things might not be going well at school. Write these down, so that the students can refer to them when making their reference posters. (I have a list of the ones that we came up with as a class, but this is not exhaustive)
3. Explain to the students that we are going to use these "real reasons" to describe what has happened that is making us angry/sad. We are going to make posters to put on the wall so that we can refer to them for suggestions about why we are feeling sad/mad.
4. With 11x17 paper, have the students do a watercolour wash on the paper. This will provide a calm, but attractive background for the posters. It is important that the words are easy to read.

Next lesson

1. After reviewing what you are learning about, and reading the list, assign each student to make a poster of one of the "real things that go on". I suggest that the students write in pencil first, and then go over it with black paint pens or felt pens.

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Reflective Activity:

In the Courage Journal,

1. Think about a time when you felt sad, what was the real thing that was going on in your life that made you feel that way? Write about it
2. Think about a time when you felt angry/mad. What was the real thing that was going on in your life? Write about what happened and how it made you feel.

Extensions: Hang the posters up in a place where the children can see them. When a child is sad/mad (or even joyful or any secondary emotion on the emotion wheel) ask them to tell you what is really going on and how they are really feeling. After some time, when the students get practiced describing their emotions and situations in a non-judgemental environment, the students will decrease the frequency of progressing to their secondary emotions.

When problem solving with children, it is also helpful to have them use the posters to describe what is “really going on”. This helps children to both recognize emotion and also develop empathy for one another.

Here is a partial list of “What is the Real Problem” that my class came up with:

1. I'm tired
2. I'm hungry
3. I'm having a challenge with a friend.
4. I'm sad about _____.
5. This work is too hard.
6. This work is too easy.
7. I don't understand
8. I'm worried about _____.
9. I'm frustrated about _____.
10. I hurt myself.
11. I'm embarrassed about _____.
12. I had a bad morning because _____.
13. There's something going on at home.
14. I was away when you learned this.
15. I didn't learn this last year.
16. It is hard for me to read this.

There are, of course, many more. Tailor the posters to fit the situations of your students.

Extensions: Let's pick your brain. Student make a self-portrait with the top of the head open. Inside this space, they make small pictures of the things that are going on in their lives. These are then glued onto the background paper. Click on the “creative activity” button to find a link to this project.

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Story Books:

What are You so Grumpy About? by Tom Lichtenfeld. Big Idea: sometimes we are in a grumpy mood, and we don't know why. (until we think about it and try to figure it out)

Jack's Worry by Sam Zuppardi. Big Idea: talking about our worries makes them easier to handle. (and maybe even go away)