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Introduction

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) has become the new focus point in the world of education. But what exactly is it, and how do we teach it? SEL entails providing students with the necessary tools needed to help them manage their emotions and make good decisions. When students are self-aware, they know how to talk about their feelings. When they feel comfortable talking about emotions, they can build stronger and healthier relationships with others. Students are able to manage their emotions and in turn, regulate those big feelings in positive ways. Students who are emotionally perceptive can feel empathy for others. This empathy eventually expands their social awareness as they grow up. They will learn to appreciate and relate to others, regardless of cultural and background differences.

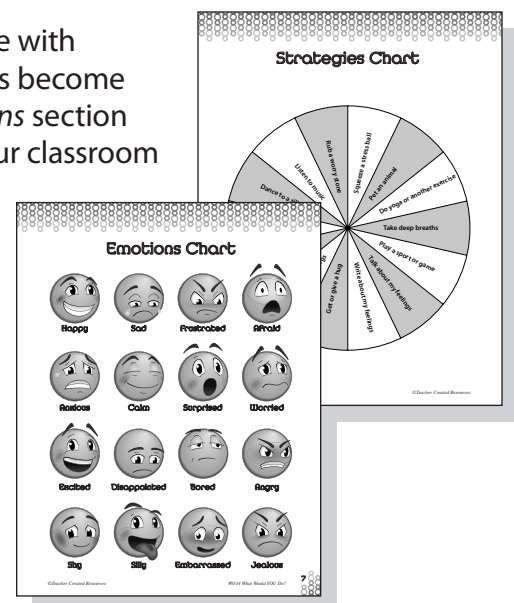
The ultimate and most significant goal of SEL is to teach students to make wise and responsible choices. Students will learn to consider ethics, risk, safety, and emotional health before making decisions. In the past, social-emotional learning tended to be either glossed over or never truly addressed. However, studies are showing the importance of learning social-emotional wellness and how it relates to students' future happiness and success.

One of the greatest benefits of social-emotional learning is knowing that you are teaching young children real-life skills that will help them become successful, emotionally healthy adults. They will learn to handle stress in constructive and healthy ways. Students will have a higher rate of lifelong happiness and success in their academics, careers, and relationships. Students who learn coping skills and strategies tend to have fewer behavioral problems in school and even less criminal behavior later in life. Social-emotional health equates to better lifelong mental health. Sounds beneficial, right? So now, let's learn how to successfully teach SEL!

How to Use This Book

This book provides tips and tools for strengthening your students' social-emotional learning (SEL) skills. Teaching SEL skills to students enables them to be successful adults. By providing them with coping strategies, they will be better equipped to manage and understand their own emotions and the emotions of others. Most importantly, students will learn how to make wise and healthy choices in a variety of difficult situations.

To begin, make a copy of the *Emotions Chart* (page 7) to share with students. Display the chart in your classroom so that students become familiar with the different emotions. The *Dealing with Emotions* section (pages 5–6) provides helpful guidelines for how to set up your classroom as a safe and comfortable place to openly discuss emotions. The *Strategies* section (pages 8–9) includes a variety of coping skills and ideas for teaching students how to deal with these big emotions. The *Strategies Chart* (page 10) is a practical sheet to display or distribute to students so they can have these strategies on hand.



Understanding the Emotion: Jealousy

Summary

In this unit, students will read a story about Wyatt, whose mother is remarried and has just had a new baby. Wyatt struggles with feeling jealous over all the attention the new baby is getting as he tries to figure out where he fits in the new family unit.

Class Discussion

Spend a few minutes discussing the social-emotional vocabulary for this unit. Write the word *jealous* on the board. Ask students to define the word for you, then write their responses on the board. If time permits, have students share their prior knowledge and experience with the class regarding this emotion.

Tell students that everyone feels jealous at times. We might feel jealous of a baby brother or sister because they seem to get more attention. We can be jealous if someone has something we want, like a new bike or a new pet, or is better at something than we are, such as a sport or a school subject. We can also feel jealous if our best friend spends a lot of time with a new friend. Jealousy may make us feel angry or sad. Reassure students that feeling jealous is normal but there are things we can do to help calm this emotion.

Tell students that they will be reading a story about a boy who is jealous of his new baby sister and has to make a choice when dealing with this emotion. Read the story (pages 48–49) aloud or distribute copies of the story to students to read on their own. Have students choose an ending (page 50) either as a group or individually. (See page 4 for additional ideas for working with the stories and endings.)

Coping Skill Activity

Jealousy can always be reversed with gratitude. If we remember the things we have that we are grateful for, our jealous feelings will subside. Give each student three index cards or small squares of paper. Have them write down three things that they are thankful for in their lives. It can be positive things about themselves, people they are happy to know, or even items that they own that make them happy. Tape these to their tables or desks and tell students that when they are feeling jealous, they can read the reminders of the things that they do have in their lives. Encourage students to do the same thing at home so they can feel grateful for the positive things instead of dwelling on the negative emotion of jealousy.

Personal Application

Have students come together as a whole group or in small groups to answer the discussion questions verbally. To conclude the unit, assign the written-response questions and the journal prompt as a way for students to relate the story to their own understanding of feeling jealous and how they have dealt with this emotion in their lives.

A New Family

"Aren't you excited about our new baby sister? Your mom is bringing her home today! My dad just called and texted me photos. Look how adorable she is!" Kayla squealed with delight.

But her stepbrother Wyatt just shrugged and said, "She's just a baby. She can't do anything but eat and sleep. We'll have to clean up after her and change her diapers. Why would I be excited? It's just more chaos in this already chaotic new life."

Kayla's smile left her face and she said softly, "I like our new life. Your mom is really nice to me, and I don't care if you don't help with the baby. I'll take care of her." Kayla stood up and went into the kitchen to get a snack.

Wyatt sighed and felt a little bad for hurting Kayla's feelings, but he was so tired of hearing about the baby and how excited he was supposed to feel when he just felt angry and jealous. His mom married Kayla's dad a year ago, and Wyatt was still getting used to their new home and having Kayla as a sister. And for the last nine months, his mom had been completely focused on the arrival of the new baby. She spent all her time buying new things for the baby and decorating the nursery. New gifts arrived in the mail every day for the baby, but nothing came for Wyatt. This baby was already stealing the last remaining bits of attention he could get from his mom, and he resented the baby before she even arrived.

Kayla came back in the room and took a big bite out of her apple as she stared at Wyatt. "I think you're just jealous," she stated. "You want to be the center of attention and you always were, and this is finally the one time you aren't, and you don't like it. I know how you feel. I was jealous of you for a long time because my dad always talked about how excited he was to finally have a son. But when I told him that I felt jealous, he reminded me that everyone feels jealous at times and that I should focus on all the things that make me so special, like how I always beat you at video games," Kayla teased. She handed a video game controller to Wyatt.

He took the controller and murmured, "Game on," but he had a hard time focusing on the game. He thought about Kayla's allegation that he was jealous, but it only made him feel mad. Why couldn't anyone understand that this whole situation was so unfair to him? He had no control over anything, and nobody ever asked what he wanted. They just expected him to be happy and excited about everything.

"Wyatt and Kayla, come meet your new baby sister," Kayla's dad whispered as he carried a tiny round basket into the house. Wyatt's mom followed, her face glowing with happiness.

Kayla whispered in a high-pitched tone, "I have the cutest baby sister in the whole wide world!"

Wyatt rolled his eyes and muttered, "Are we all using baby voices now?"

Wyatt's mom shot him a stern look and said, "Please, no attitude today, Wyatt." She walked over to him and gave him a big hug. "I missed you while I was in the hospital. I know that you are not thrilled about having a baby sister, but I really hope you will at least try to spend time with her. That's all I ask of you."

What Do You Think?

Choice 1

- 1 How did Wyatt relate to the baby?
- 2 How do you think Wyatt felt when he helped his baby sister stop crying?
- 3 How do you think Wyatt's mom felt when she saw him holding the baby?
- 4 What did Wyatt learn about feeling jealous?

Choice 2

- 1 Why did Wyatt feel jealous of the baby?
- 2 How did talking to his mom help Wyatt feel better?
- 3 Do you think Wyatt will help out more with the baby?
- 4 What did Wyatt learn about feeling jealous?

