

PROCESSING HARD FEELINGS

MATERIALS |

paper, writing utensils,
“The Feelings Wheel”
handout (see appendix)

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to reflect on how they handle difficult emotions like anger or anxiety and how they could process their feelings in more helpful ways.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Pass out The Feelings Wheel and re-introduce the concept of challenging feelings.

- Recall the Feelings Wheel. A number of human emotions are challenging for us such as, angry, anxious, or sad. When we feel some of these challenging emotions we may express them in ways that are harmful to ourselves or others. While all feelings are valid and okay to have, today we are going to practice some techniques to help us feel our feelings in ways that are not harmful to ourselves or others.

Invite participants to reflect on times they have been angry, mad, sad, or scared.

- Divide participants into pairs and ask them to share: “When you feel these feelings how do you usually handle it? What are the strengths of your approach? What are some of the challenges?”

As a large group brainstorm mindful ways to process challenging emotions. Some possibilities include: taking five deep breaths, slowly counting to 30, taping each of your fingers in order with your thumb 10 times, taking a break or finding a quiet space, listening to a song you find calming, watching a calming video (like cake decorating, sculpting, or painting), screaming, punching a pillow, shaking your body vigorously, relaxing each muscle of your body one at a time, journaling, doing jumping jacks, squeezing a stress ball or playdough, stretching, sharing how you feel with someone, scribbling vigorously on a piece of paper, giving yourself a hug, tearing up or crumbling paper, taking a walk, positive self talk, blowing on your hands, etc.

As a large group practice doing some of these techniques together.

Direct students to find a new partner and brainstorm three things they can do or say when they are angry that resonate with them from the list you brainstormed and the techniques you practiced.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did doing this activity feel?
- How could we support each other when one of us is feeling angry, scared, or sad?
- What could we provide in this space to help us with our feelings (examples: playdough, stress balls, a space to walk around, etc.)?

NOTES |

Repeat this activity throughout the term or year so that participants get multiple opportunities to practice.

EXTENSION: Ask participants to write down the techniques they would like to try or that they think will best work for them. Invite them to add this to their portfolios to refer to when they need support.



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/building-foundational-skills/>