

The Positive Living Skills Program: Parent and Carers Newsletter

Unit Name: Feelings

Parents, carers and families are an integral part of the Positive Living Skills Initiative.

The Positive Living Skills program is a universal and practical program designed specifically for children from Preschool onwards, and the principles and positive effects of the learning experiences can reach teachers, school staff, parents, families and wider communities.

The goal is to prevent problems before they develop, by implementing a positive life skills program from an early age. The Positive Living Skills program assists to create habitual positive, healthy supportive behaviours by guiding children to learn to understand and self-direct their own thinking processes, emotions, actions, responses and outcomes, and build effective self-management and social skills.

When students learn to identify, acknowledge and understand their own **feelings**, they can begin to link these emotions to thought patterns and internal dialogue and begin to build skills to self-direct their thoughts feelings and behaviours in positive ways.

As students build their understanding of how to acknowledge the feelings of others, and support others, they are building empathy (rather than sympathy) as they are building their own ability to choose empowering emotions.

Definition of Feelings:

Feelings are how I feel on the inside, e.g., I am happy or sad or worried or calm. Other people's feelings are important too.

Empathy is the ability to sense or imagine what other people might be feeling or thinking.

This Unit is based on the principles of emotional Intelligence and cognitive behavioural therapy, and how we can build skills to understand the connection between our thoughts, emotions and behaviours, and learn effective ways to build self-awareness, so we can monitor and manage our emotional states, and direct our thoughts actions and behaviours toward positive outcomes, for ourselves and others. More and more research is now supporting the case for training in emotional intelligence starting from the age of 4, or even younger.

Research supports that students who participate in Social and Emotional Learning Programs focused on Emotional Intelligence display less aggression, less anxiety, and build more effective social and problem solving skills, and pro-social behaviour in early childhood is strongly linked with future academic performance and positive mental health. Higher emotional intelligence also has strong links with the prevention and intervention of bullying, from both perspectives.

Accepting responsibility for our own feelings is one of the most important communication skills we can acquire. We often tend to express feelings and opinions, assigning responsibility to another party. When we claim that someone or a situation 'made' us feel a certain way, we are giving away our power over the situation and over our own emotional state or responses.

Changing Channels

There are a range of strategies we can use which combine our thoughts and actions that can assist us to change our emotional state when we want to, and building an understanding that we have a choice when it comes to our emotional state at any time is key.

Students can be encouraged to think of their mind like a TV or Computer with a range of feelings channels available at any time, from happy and grateful and excited and joyful, to angry or sad or disappointed or worried. Inside

their mind they can imagine that they have their own personal remote and if they want to be on a different channel or no longer want to be on the channel they are on, they can be encouraged to choose another channel.

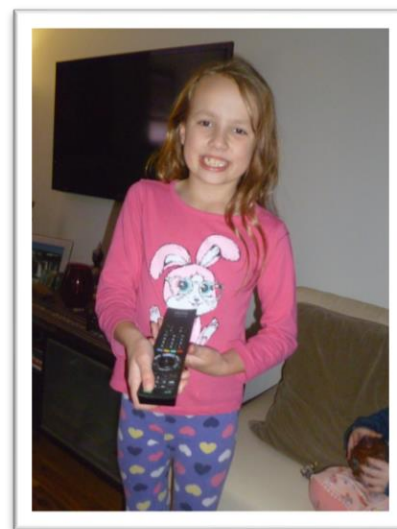
To assist with this, they can press their thumb and finger together like a remote or say click and then focus on a different emotion, or they can use the Positive Living Skills highlight clicker to click from one channel to another. Understanding the link between mind and body, using our physiology to implement effective strategies for changing channels can allow us to create the space we need to regulate our feelings, or can generate the physiological changes that will positively influence our emotional state.

The main concept to understand is that we are all designed to feel a range of emotions, both positive and negative, and we can all learn to recognise the emotions we are feeling, acknowledge them then process or release them, or seek more support. When we learn how to build on the positive emotions we want to feel more often, we can connect more and more positive experiences, or learn to look for the good in negative situations.

There is much evidence to support that we can use our physiology to positively influence our emotional state, whether we choose to go for a walk to calm down, or exercise to increase our emotional energy, to looking skyward to promote positive feelings, and (personal) power posing, as supported by modern body language expert Amy Cuddy.

We can use visualisation techniques, breathing techniques, and it is well documented how counting will engage the logical brain when our body is in fight/ flight mode.

We can also 'anchor' and build on positive feelings by using the concept of stimulus and response either within our own physiology or with external stimulus such as songs or phrases or visual stimuli.



These tools for positive visualisation also involving our physiology can be extremely powerful to build confidence to prepare for important events.

All these techniques can assist us to create that space to be able to make empowered emotional choices, and to build on our toolkit of practical techniques to promote resilience and our own coping abilities.

Here are some ideas for how to apply Feelings concepts into your home life:

As well as applying the Feelings lessons within the delivery of the Positive Living Skills program at school, here are some suggestions for how the concepts within this Unit could be applied at home:

- When children can identify and express how they are feeling, they are more likely to be able to manage their emotions and responses assisting parents/carers to understand and support children more effectively
- Assist yourself and your child to build empowerment by using words that encourage ownership of emotions. E.g., Instead of asking 'How did that MAKE you feel? You can ask, 'How did you feel when.....?'
- Teaching children about their own feelings and an awareness of the feelings of others develops emotional intelligence, which will enhance learning and development and have a positive influence on behaviour. Emotional Intelligence is conducive to more effective communication
- When children learn how to associate with others' emotions and perspectives, they can better consider how their words and actions might affect others, and they can make more positive choices
- Having knowledge of children's feelings, hopes and desires assists in directing positive discussions
- When children become aware they have the ability to direct their thoughts and their feelings towards the positive, they will be looking for more positive feelings within themselves
- Encourage children to use changing channels to assist them to move to more positive feelings channels at any time at home to enjoy more and connect more with themselves and others, and feel more empowerment over their own emotional health.

*****For more information about the Positive Living Skills program, and to access free resources from the Positive Living Skills family link, visit www.positivelivingskills.com**