

Introduction

This programme is designed to help children aged 4–11 years develop a simple and healthy understanding of their emotions through movement, play and discussion. It supports children to notice how their bodies feel, learn the names of common emotions, and begin to understand that all feelings are normal and okay. The sessions are educational in nature and are not therapeutic. They focus on building emotional awareness as part of early personal, social, and emotional development.

Throughout the programme, children will explore emotions in a calm, safe, and age-appropriate way. Activities are practical, engaging, and inclusive, using movement, breathing, listening and simple language to help children connect feelings with their bodies. Each session builds gently to a comprehensive understanding of the self, allowing children to revisit ideas through repetition and routine.

The programme has been designed to be accessible for all learners, including children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Clear instructions, visual supports, flexible movement options, and alternative communication methods are embedded throughout to ensure every child can take part in a way that feels comfortable and safe.

By taking part in this programme, children will begin to:

- Recognise and name basic emotions
- Notice how emotions can feel in their bodies
- Learn simple ways to calm their bodies
- Build confidence in talking about how they feel
- Develop early self-awareness and emotional understanding

This programme supports wider emotional literacy, self-regulation and wellbeing as part of a child's learning journey.

Rationale

The role of schools and educational professionals has changed significantly over recent years. While the core purpose of education remains teaching and learning, the reality is that school staff are now expected to respond to a far wider range of emotional, social, and behavioural needs than those they were originally trained for. Many professionals entered the sector to teach, support learning, and nurture development within the classroom, not to act as mental health practitioners. However, increasing emotional needs in children mean that emotional awareness and regulation can no longer sit outside of everyday school life.

Although teaching children how to process emotions is not something that education professionals should *have* to do, it has become something that we *need* to do in order to create safe, calm and effective learning environments—for both children and staff. When emotions are unsupported, they often present as dysregulation, behavioural challenges, low engagement, and reduced access to learning. When children understand their emotions and feel supported to manage them, they are far better able to engage with education.

There are many wellbeing and emotional literacy programmes available; however, very few specifically and practically focus on the process of recognising emotions within the body and learning safe, age-appropriate ways to release and regulate them. In addition, many existing programmes are not financially realistic for primary school budgets,

limiting access to support that is greatly needed. This programme has been developed with both **practical need and financial accessibility** in mind.

This programme has been created by a practitioner working directly within the education system as a **Teaching Assistant, Pastoral Worker, and Mental Health First Aider**, with additional ongoing **training in counselling**. While this programme is **not a therapeutic or counselling intervention**, it is informed by professional experience of the real challenges children and schools face daily. It is designed to sit safely within an educational framework, supporting children's emotional understanding in a structured, accessible, and developmentally appropriate way.

The programme aims to:

- Support emotional awareness without replacing therapeutic support
- Reduce emotional barriers to learning
- Promote calm, regulation, and readiness for learning
- Offer schools a realistic, free and practical approach to emotional processing
- Support staff by providing clear structure, guidance, and ready-to-use resources

By embedding simple emotional processing strategies into everyday school practise, this programme aims to support not only children's wellbeing but also teacher confidence, classroom calm and overall school functioning.

4-7	7-9	9-11
To consider the idea of emotions as colours and think about what their emotions feel like for themselves.	To recognise emotions and how they would like to change them.	To use emojis to articulate emotions and understand the variety of feelings.
To notice where emotions sit in their bodies and explore gentle ways to move and release tension.	To use their body effectively to reduce tension.	To explore how emotions can change over time and recognise triggers.
To use breathing techniques as a self-regulating tool.	To recognise the environmental factors they can change to support mood regulation.	To identify physical sensations with different emotions to strengthen mind-body awareness.
To develop understanding about having an active role in calming emotions.	To support mood regulation through purposeful action.	To use comics to depict emotional experiences and problem-solving.
To build confidence in using their body as a tool to calm and shift emotions.	To identify one immediate appropriate action.	To categorise emotions, develop self-awareness and vocabulary.
To use kind actions as a reset after big emotions.	To identify their roles and regulate through responsibility.	To focus on positive experiences to boost emotional resilience.
To use walking as a way to help big feelings feel calmer.	To use creativity to express emotions.	To practise mindfulness to increase awareness and reduce stress.
To recognise that emotions can guide safe and helpful actions.	To develop self-awareness and consider how we affect those around us.	To identify strategies to cope with emotional challenges effectively.
To develop empathy for themselves.	To creatively think about constructive ways to respond to emotional difficulties.	To identify stress triggers and develop simple coping strategies.
To explore building relationships with kind actions and empathy.	To reflect and explore ways to make amends.	To visualise solutions and outcomes to build confidence and resilience

Calm With Kindness – 4-7 Years

Objective:

To use kind actions as a reset after big emotions.

Resources:

- Note taking page (page 10)
- Paper
- Kindness action Cards (page 44)
- Colouring pencils/Crayons

Session Plan:

Welcome (3 mins)

Welcome the children to the session and invite them to sit on the carpet in a comfortable position Explain that there are many different ways that they are going to be able to interact with this session and they can choose. Remind them that if they would just like to observe for the session, this is enough.

Warm Up (4 mins)

Take some balloon breaths with the children (see the script if you are unfamiliar with this). Do some gentle movements with the children to introduce the idea that moving is something your body needs and by giving your body what it needs you are being kind to yourself.



The Next Right Thing – 7-9 Years

Objective:

To identify one immediate appropriate action.

Resources:

- Note taking page (page 10)
- Tokens – 1 page per child (page 93)
- Mood map – 1 map per child (page 92)

Session Plan:

Welcome (3 mins)

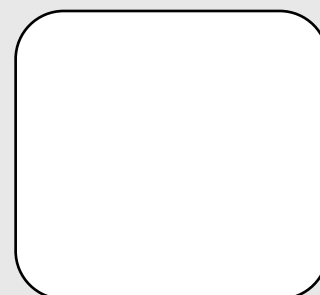
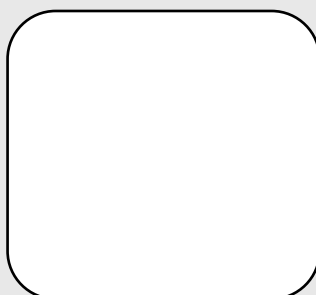
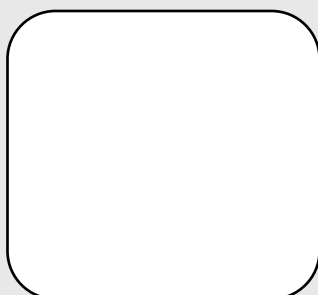
Welcome all the children to the session and explain that we will be working on things that we can do after we have had difficult emotions that were displayed in front of others. Explain that this session is not to talk about situations that anybody has been in, it is to help them to have some insight if an event comes up they decide they need to act on afterwards. Do a guided deep breath with the group.

Normalising Repair (5 mins)

Have a discussion explaining that everybody has emotions that get too big and result in behaviour that we might not want to take part in; shouting, crying or running away. Explain that our actions, whether we can control them or not, may impact our relationships but once we are calm, we have choices.



Mood Map



Gratitude Map – 9-11 Years

Objective:

To focus on positive experiences to boost emotional resilience.

Resources:

- Note Taking Page (page 10)
- Paper
- Pencils
- Gratitude map examples (page 148)

Session Plan:

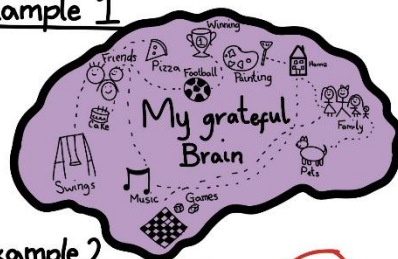
Welcome (3 minutes)

Introduce the objective and the session. Let the children know that they do not have to talk about their own lives and we will be working on noticing the small things that make people feel happy. Discuss the word gratitude and that it means things that we are grateful for, in this session we will be using the term for things that have made us have positive feelings.

Introduce The Idea (4 minutes)

Explain that when our brains are having big feelings, it doesn't remind us of the things that can make us happy. This is not about forcing our way back to happiness, but about remembering the good things do exist and there is support available, from ourselves, from things or from other people. Doing a map of the positive things when we are not in a big feeling, helps us to recall them when we are, so doing a map today could help future feelings and it is something you can do as many times as you want to in the future.

Example 1



Example 2

