

**Teaching Trait Emotional Intelligence to Adolescents
with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders**

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Introduction

Trait emotional intelligence, or trait EI, is a subset of the broader “emotional intelligence” or EQ. It first gained attention in 1990 from the work of Professors Peter Salovey and John Mayer, who defined it as “...the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).”

Significant research has been conducted on emotional intelligence and a positive correlation has been found in higher academic performance among students. (Garner, 2010; Berenson, Boyles, & Weaver, 2008; Roy, Sinha, & Suman, 2013), and prosocial behavior among peers (Mavroveli, Petrides, Shove, & Whitehead, 2008). Higher trait emotional intelligence is also associated with a decreased likelihood to engage in self harm. (Mikolajczak, Petrides, & Hurry, 2009). Conversely, a positive correlation has also been found between low trait emotional intelligence and alcohol dependency (Uva et al., 2010), narcissism (Petrides, Vernon, Schermer, & Veselka, 2011), and truancy (Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham, 2004), just to name a few.

Since the conception of emotional intelligence, researchers have determined a distinct difference between aspects of emotional intelligence that relate to one’s actual cognitive ability to manage emotions and relationships of self and others, known as ability emotional intelligence, compared with one’s self-perceptions of such emotional ability, known as trait emotional intelligence. (Petrides, 2011; Brannick, Wahi, Arce, & Johnson, 2009).

Autism

By definition, autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are characterized by difficulties with social interactions, among other challenges, such as pragmatic communication, repetitive or perseverative behaviors, and an assortment of comorbid issues. One of the most common interventions for children with an ASD is the direct instruction of social skills. In young children, the goal is to improve social relationships and communication. In a young adult, the goals become more complex, as it is not simply enough to improve social interactions, but to also help him or her move toward living independently, finding success in college and career, and developing romantic relationships (DeMatteo et al., 2012). Traditional social skills programs focus on the pragmatic skills of social interactions, such as making eye contact and engaging in conversations, versus the areas of emotional intelligence that contribute to one's self-efficacy, as prescribed by the theory of trait emotional intelligence.

There has been debate about whether adolescents with ASDs are impacted by anxiety of social interactions versus lack of cognitive ability in conducting these interactions (DeMatteo et al., 2012; Gilliot, Furniss, & Walker, 2001). One study showed that youth with an ASD were intact with their cognitive ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions, but that applying these skills to everyday interpersonal interactions was problematic (Montgomery, et al, 2008). This can be compounded by the lack of opportunity for authentic practice and application of social skills if the anxiety or other interfering behaviors, such as tics or perseverative interests have led to social isolation (DeMatteo et al., 2012).

These students are in need of emotional self-efficacy, as one study has found that there is a positive relationship between symptoms of depression and perceived social ability among adolescents with Asperger Syndrome (Barnhill, 2001). Another study showed that though young adult males with Asperger Syndrome displayed ability emotional intelligence, their trait

emotional intelligence was impaired, particularly qualities associated with resiliency and adaptability (Montgomery et al., 2008).

Measure

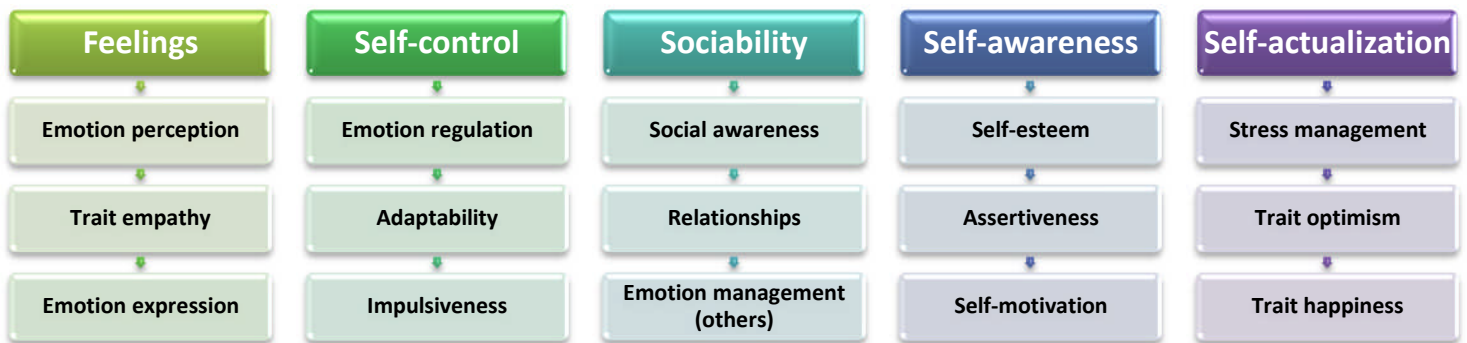
There are a variety of assessments used to measure emotional intelligence. Among measures that are used to assess trait emotional intelligence, the concurrent and incremental validity of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) has been found to be superior (Gardner, 2010). Developed by Dr. K.V. Petrides of the University College London, the TEIQue is a self-report inventory that assesses the 15 facets of trait emotional intelligence, resulting in a score of global trait emotional intelligence. There are two versions for adolescents. The Adolescent Form is a lengthier questionnaire of 153 items (TEIQue-AF), while the Adolescent Short Form contains only 30 self-report items (TEIQue-ASF). These measures are readily available free of charge, and can be self-scored (Petrides, 2014).

Intervention

Because measures have shown that people with ASDs demonstrate lowered emotional trait emotional intelligence, the direct instruction of social skills as an intervention should be focused on improving emotional self-efficacy by incorporating the fifteen facets of trait emotional intelligence. Methods of direct instruction should include empirically supported interventions, such as the use of social stories (Elder, et al., 2006), group treatment (Longhurst, et al., 2010; Plavick, et al., (2013), peer-mediation (Corbett, et al., 2014; DiSalvo & Oswald, 2002; Sperry, Neitzel, & Engelhardt-Wells, 2010), special interest groups (O'Halloran & Doody, 2013), video based instruction (Plavnick, et al., 2013), video self-modeling (Bellini & Akullian, 2007; Delano, 2007), role play (Corbett, et al., 2014; Lerner, Mikami, & Levine, 2011), cognitive behavioral (Laugeson & Park, 2014; Schohl, 2013) and an assortment of others (Wong, et al, 2014).

The TEIQue, which is readily available and can be self-scored, should be administered as both pretest and posttest to measure changes in factors of trait emotional intelligence. (Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, & Frederickson, 2006).

To determine order of instruction, the 15 facets of trait emotional intelligence were divided into five groups and organized by a broad interpretation of Maslow's hierarchy, as a result of independent analysis by this researcher.



Emotion Perception

A clear understanding of the emotions in oneself and in others.

Brainstorm

Using chalkboard/white board, brainstorm vocabulary for feelings or emotions as a class and group similar feelings together.

Color Wheel of Emotions

Display color wheel of emotions and discuss new words for feelings. Ask students to select a color to represent their current state of emotions.

(<http://media-cache-ec0.pinimg.com/originals/83/4c/f1/834cf1440da02f3cc6ef1e494c59ff1f.jpg>)

Emotions Collage

Look through magazines to find examples of 10 – 15 different emotions and paste on posterboard. Students can work individually or in groups of 2 or 3.

The Eye Test

Group reviews “The Eye Test” together. Students can be divided into teams to play as a game. (Implementation of Reading the Mind in the Eyes, developed by Dr. Simon Baron-Cohen, University of Cambridge). (<http://kgajos.eecs.harvard.edu/mite/>)

Clay Faces

Students use modeling clay to make a face to reflect an emotion (individual or in pairs). Students guess emotions other students have depicted.

Mood Charades with Reflection

Students play Mood Charades or develop a role play. Students draw a prepared slip of paper with moods or feeling word and must silently depict the target emotion, while remaining students guess. Students should phrase answers using sentence frame:

“He/She seems _____. (angry, sad, happy, ecstatic, etc).”

**It may be necessary to include neurotypical peers in this activity.*

Trait empathy

Ability to take another's perspective.

Old/Young Woman

Display ambiguous image such as “My Wife & Mother-in-law” for all students and ask group to silently write down what they see. Students should stand. Ask students who saw the old woman to move to one side of the room. Students who saw the young woman should move to the other side of the room. Begin class discussion on perspectives (*Were you surprised there was more than one way to view the image? How do you feel about the group that saw the image differently from you? Can you share an experience when someone had an opinion or perspective that was different from yours? How did that experience affect you?*).

(http://www.americanthinker.com/legacy_assets/articles/assets/Young_Lady_Old_Woman_Illusion.jpg)

Mind Mapping

To create a visual reminder that others are different and have different interests from them, students should take out a sheet of paper and fold into quarters (half, then half). Students open the sheet of paper and draw a circle in the middle, incorporating a small corner of each of the four portions. Students then find a partner and write the name of their partner inside the circle.

Students will interview their partners to discover information they will write into each of the 4 quadrants:

- 1) Special interests, activities, or hobbies
- 2) Information about school or job
- 3) Information about family
- 4) Favorite foods or restaurants

Students can complete the visual mind map for anyone with whom they would like to be friends as a reminder to consider interests and needs of others.

Borgman, S. (2010). Here's a simple step to teach empathy to your Asperger's child. *Ezine Articles*. Retrieved from <http://ezinearticles.com/?Heres-a-Simple-Step-to-Teach-Empathy-to-Your-Aspergers-Child&id=4044453>

Walk a Mile in a Another Man's Shoes

Working individually or in partners or small groups, students read each scenario, determine what the characters are feeling, explain how they know this. Students can then role play the scenario and include an empathetic response. **It may be necessary to include neurotypical peers in this activity.*

*Variation - Display two or three scenarios for group to review and discuss together. Then divide students into three groups, assigning each one their own scenario. The group discusses the situation amongst themselves and presents the role play to the entire class, deciding for themselves what type of ending to use. Audience can discuss whether group's presentation included an empathetic response or an unempathetic response.

KidsHealth in the Classroom. (2006). Personal health series: empathy. Walk a mile in another man's shoes. *The Nemours Foundation*. Retrieved from http://kidshealth.org/classroom/9to12/personal/growing/empathy_handout1.pdf

Active Listening

Teach students about paraphrasing, reflecting, and clarifying while listening to others to demonstrate active and empathetic listening (Leutenberg & Liptak, 2008).

Role Play & Acting Coaching

A 2012 study showed that adolescents with ASD who received one year of training in acting showed significant gains in empathy and Theory of Mind (Goldstein & Winner, 2012). Role play should be utilized consistently throughout this program, but also direct instruction in acting techniques. The assistance of an acting coach would be beneficial.

Emotion Expression

Communicating feelings to others.

Brainstorm

Using chalkboard/white board, brainstorm with group the ways people express emotions (spoken language, visual arts, music, writing (*journaling, poetry, creative stories, narratives*), body language, (*holding hands, smiling, hugs, clenching fists*).

Expressive Arts Demonstration

Present group with various forms of expressive arts using YouTube or print media and ask students to reflect on the emotions being depicted. Examples can include ballet, modern or classical art, such as Picasso's La Guernica, classical compositions, contemporary music such as heavy metal, pop, trance, ballads, etc., written expressions such as poetry, performances of slam poetry, or movie scenes. Ask students to find songs, poems, or artwork that reflect emotions they experience frequently.

Sentence frames

Students practice expressing emotions verbally using sentence frames. Provide students with the opportunity to first write frame before sharing orally with the group:

"I feel _____ when/because _____."

Scenario Cards & Role Play

Students work independently or in pairs using individual white boards. Group leader presents a scenario card, while students use white boards to indicate what emotion is being represented. Students then work in small groups to role play the scene described on the scenario card. **It may be necessary to include neurotypical peers in this activity.*

(Emotion and Scenario Cards. (n.d.). Retrieved September 1, 2014, from <http://www.do2learn.com/activities/SocialSkills/EmotionAndScenarioCards/EmotionAndScenarioCards.html>)

Emotion Regulation (self)
Ability to control one's emotions

Brainstorm Coping Strategies

Using a chalkboard or white board, students brainstorm the ways people react to feelings of anger, sadness, frustration, or embarrassment. Have students circle or put an asterisk next to strategies that are effective.

Variation: Allow students to work in pairs or small groups. Provide each group with a pack of Post-It notes which are used to write individual coping strategies, and a large sheet of paper or posterboard. Paper is divided into two sections and labeled with Effective Coping Strategies and Ineffective Coping Strategies. Students sort Post-its into appropriate categories.

Role Play

Students form groups and select an *effective* coping skill to demonstrate. Groups create their own scenarios and perform in front of others. **It may be necessary to include neurotypical peers in this activity.*

Coping Cubes

Using a template and construction or origami paper, students create 3D cubes. Students choose six different effective coping strategies to write on each side of the cube once cubes are constructed. This creates a visual and tactile resource to enhance learning.

Angry Toilet Paper Toss

As a group, students write down things that make them angry on a large paper table cloth, which gets hung outside against a wall. Students then throw wads of wet toilet paper at the tablecloth, aiming for the events that triggered their anger. As the tablecloth becomes saturated, ink begins to run, causing the anger triggers to become blurry and illegible, symbolizing the release of the anger.

This can be modified to writing the causes of anger on individual napkins which are dipped in tempera paint and thrown against a large sheet, tablecloth, or canvas to create a visual piece of art. Alternatively, students can use individual pieces of paper or strong toilet paper to write down their causes of anger and physically discard them in a trashcan or toilet, respectively.

A study concluded that when participants physically discarded, versus imagined, a representation of their thoughts, the thoughts were, in turn, mentally discarded (Briñol, et al., 2013).

Wickstrom, Amy. [Amy Wickstrom]. (2011, April 3). *Angry toilet paper toss: teach your child anger management with this play therapy activity*. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9potFuYAOY>

Zones of M&M Game

Utilizing the color system from The Zones of Regulation curriculum students take turns drawing an M&M from a bowl and must share about a time they were in that zone or a strategy that can be used to get into that zone (red, yellow, green, blue). Orange and brown candies can be wild or be used to answer miscellaneous questions.

Kuypers, L. (2011). The zones of regulation. San Jose: Think Social Publishing.

Stress Balls

Lead group in making their own stress balls. A latex balloon can be filled with flour, uncooked rice, sand, or Play-Doh. Use a funnel to fill the balloon and tie it off when filled. Insert inside another balloon for more durability.

Adaptability

Flexibility and willingness to adapt to new situations.

Change Games

Cross Your Arms – Ask students to cross their arms as if they are bored or waiting for something. Then ask students to cross their arms “the other way.” Many students will struggle with this task. Begin discussion about adaptability, empathizing with students that sometimes change can be difficult:

- *How did it feel when you were asked to cross your arms the other way?*
- *Did it come naturally or did you have to stop and think about it?*
- *Were you comfortable with doing this differently from your normal process?*

Change Your Seat – Ask students to stand and move to a new seat (can be random or assigned). Once they are sitting in their new places, once again discuss how change can be a little strange, but it isn't scary or impossible.

Stroud, J.D. (2010, February 26). The change game: engaging exercises to teach change. *iSixSigma*. Retrieved from: <http://www.isixsigma.com/training/training-materials-aids/change-game-engaging-exercises-teach-change/>

Flexible Brain vs. Rock Brain

Acquire a brain shaped stress ball or splatball (online or toy store) and a similarly sized rock. Demonstrate the pliability of the brain toy compared to the rock. Pass around the brain toy explain to students that our brains are flexible like the toy and not hard and rigid like the rock to help us change and adapt.

Accidental Inventions

Using a website or props such as chocolate chip cookies, Coca-Cola, potato chips, Post-Its, etc., present students with inventions that were invented accidentally, that weren't the intended invention. Explain to students that because the inventor used a flexible brain, he or she was able to make a new invention instead of being upset and stuck that the original idea didn't work out.

Baer, M. (2014, May 27). Accidental inventions that changed the world. *Business Insider*. Retrieved from: <http://www.businessinsider.com/accidental-inventions-that-changed-the-world-2014-5?op=1>

Helium Stick Game

Ask students to line up in two rows facing each other. Have students point their index fingers, with palms down. Place a yardstick or broomstick between them, resting on top their index fingers and explain that can only touch the stick with their fingertips. Explain that the challenge is to lower the stick to the ground with the stipulations that everyone must be touching the stick at all times, and the stick can only rest on top of their fingers. Students will have a clear assumption that it will be easy to lower the stick to the ground, but they will discover it is more

challenging that it appears and they must adapt their thinking and movements depending on the actions of other group members.

Helium Stick. (2013, April 28). *The Wilderdom Store*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.wilderdom.com/games/descriptions/HeliumStick.html>

Impulsiveness

Reflective and less likely to give in to urges

Marshmallow Test

First conducted by Dr. Walter Mischel in the late 1960s to study self-control in children, the “Marshmallow Test” can be used as a guided exercise to help students practice delayed gratification. Provide students with a small treat, such as a marshmallow or M & Ms, with the promise of more if they are able to wait the allotted time. As they are waiting, help students strengthen their inner voice by vocalizing encouragement, such as, “ Wait just a few more minutes,” or “You are strong! You can do it.” Debrief with successful students, asking them to share what helped them. They may share that they distracted themselves or didn’t look at it so they wouldn’t think about it. Hearing these strategies from peers can help others in the future. This exercise can be repeated over multiple sessions until all members in the group are successful.

Mischel, W., Shoda, Y. & Rodriguez, M.L. (1989). Delay of gratification in children. *Science*, 244(4907), 933–938.

Mindfulness Training

Studies have shown that mindfulness improves impulse control among children, teens, and adults. Mindfulness training involves an assortment of strategies and techniques that must be practiced over time in order to be effective. This practice can be introduced with mindful attention to breathing, gradually incorporating more detailed mindfulness techniques.

Papies, E. K., Barsalou, L.W., & Custers, R. (2011). Mindful Attention Prevents Mindless Impulses. *Social psychological & personality science*.3(3), p. 291 - 299.

Walker, G. (2013, July 2). Mindfulness for children & teenagers. *Everyday Mindfulness*. Retrieved from: <http://www.everyday-mindfulness.org/mindfulness-for-children-teenagers/>

Token Economy System

When implemented throughout the program, a token economy or reward system provides positive reinforcement and encourages the development of delayed gratification and impulse control. One must first determine the target behavior, then select the “token” in the form of stickers, poker chips, raffle-type tickets, or self-designed item. A reward must be identified, such as items from a prize box, free time for a self-selected activity, vouchers, or anything that might motivate the students. Finally, the student must understand for what behaviors the tokens are given and what the requirements are to receive the reward.

Cosgrave, G. (2014). Token economy. *Educate Autism: Tools to Help You Teach*. Retrieved from: <http://www.educateautism.com/token-economy.html>

Social Awareness

Accomplished networkers with excellent social skills.

The Hidden Curriculum

Students need to access the unspoken social rules that exist within the school or society-at-large. There are a handful of resources that can be purchased for individual use such as books or the Hidden Curriculum on the Go App for Smart Phones (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/hidden-curriculum-for-adolescents/id351227770?mt=8>). Students should work together to brainstorm examples of unspoken social rules that they have had to learn and should keep an ongoing record or journal of new social rules that are learned. The participation of neurotypical peers may also be helpful in learning the hidden curriculum of the school, such as explaining where certain social groups or cliques sit in the cafeteria, or what is the “acceptable time” to arrive at the dance, even though it officially starts at 8:00pm.

Social Skills Autopsy in Media

To help students better understand missed cues in social situations, the group can perform a Social Skills Autopsy, in which social situations are viewed objectively and analyzed to determine what went wrong or what could be done differently in the future (Lavoie, 2005). To introduce this process, video clips can be found online of social situations that were misunderstood. Examples can be found in popular media such as Mr. Bean, 3rd Rock from the Sun, Elf, or The Big Bang Theory, to name a few. Conducting a “Social Skills Autopsy” of a fictional situation may help reduce anxiety before discussing personal stories.

PEERS Curriculum

PEERS (Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills) is an empirically based curriculum for the direct instruction of social skills (Laugeson & Frankel, 2010).. The program for teens is a 14 week set of weekly lessons that is available directly from the Semel Institute at UCLA or can be purchased online.

Special Interest Groups

A 2012 study showed improved social interactions between adolescents on the autism spectrum and their neurotypical peers as a result of their participation in special interest groups that were formed within the students’ schools. ASD teens were able to engage in and maintain social interactions due to a shared interest. (Koegel et al., 2012).

Relationships

Capable of having fulfilling personal relationships.

Mind Mapping (from Trait Empathy)

To create a visual reminder that others are different and have different interests from them, students should take out a sheet of paper and fold into quarters (half, then half). Students open the sheet of paper and draw a circle in the middle, incorporating a small corner of each of the four portions. Students then find a partner and write the name of their partner inside the circle.

Students will interview their partners to discover information they will write into each of the 4 quadrants:

- 1) Special interests, activities, or hobbies
- 2) Information about school or job
- 3) Information about family
- 4) Favorite foods or restaurants

Students can complete the visual mind map for anyone with whom they would like to be friends as a reminder to consider interests and needs of others.

Video Self-Modeling

Video self-modeling is a method of positively reinforcing certain behaviors, such as waiting in line or playing a game with a friend. In this method, the student is videotaped performing the desired behavior. It is often necessary to splice and edit the video so that the negative behaviors are removed. The result is a video that the student can watch of himself performing the behavior, which helps him develop self-efficacy in that area (Bellini & Akullian, 2007).

Mike's Crush

This curriculum helps teens with autism spectrum disorder understand appropriate and inappropriate relationships and behaviors in a school setting when someone has a one-way romantic interest, such as in a crush. There are 8 lesson plans that include the use of a DVD to view "Mike" respond to his crush appropriately and also inappropriately (Nowell, 2011).

Emotion Management (others)

Capable of influencing emotions of others

PEERS Curriculum

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Survival Debate

To encourage the development of persuasion skills, present students with the scenario that there are a certain number of people on a ship that is sinking and not enough space in the lifeboat to save everyone. Provide students with detailed role cards so that they may decide among themselves which characters should be saved and which should remain on the sinking ship.

Bucket Filling / Random Acts of Kindness

Introduce students to concept of “bucket filling” (McCloud, et al., 2006). Have students brainstorm ideas of ways to metaphorically fill buckets and discuss emotions surrounding having buckets that are filled versus buckets that are empty. Challenge students to “fill a bucket” by performing random acts of kindness throughout their day or week ahead. Convey to students that being a “bucket filler” is a way to make others feel good about themselves, which reflects directly onto them.

Role Play

Prepare scenarios for students to practice skills such as sportsmanship, active listening, conflict resolution, negotiation, and conflict resolution.

Self-esteem

Successful and confident

Self-Collages

Students create a collage, using images, words, or symbols either digitally or clipped from magazines, that represent things hobbies, interests, favorite things, places they have been, people they admire, or careers they desire. Display for other students to view and guess which collages belong to which students (Chaika, 2012).

Self-Compliments

Challenge students to write down three compliments to themselves. Encourage them to do this on a regular basis, perhaps weekly or even daily.

My Commercial

Students should work in pairs or small groups to create 2 – 3 minute commercials advertising themselves to an imaginary prospective employer that would convince the employer to hire him or her. Commercials should depict the students' special qualities (Chaika, 2012).

Changing Negative Self-Talk

Students should fold a sheet of paper length-wise. While folded, ask students to make a list of all of the negative things they say to themselves. Ask students to share a few with the group and then introduce the next step. Have students open their folded paper, on the same line, but on the opposite side of the paper, coach students to rewrite a new positive thought to counter each negative thought. When lists are complete, instruct students to be aware of their negative thoughts and immediately stop them, by telling themselves, "STOP!" or another word or phrase of choice. Once they have halted their negative thought, they should rephrase it to the positive statement from the right side of their papers.

High Five

Building self-esteem in yourself and others is an easy task when giving and receiving compliments. A large sheet of colored construction paper taped to the back of each person and a colored marker or crayon. Each person will move around the room and write at least one positive comment on every other person's paper. Comments should draw attention to that person's strengths. When finished, ask each person to remove the paper and read what others have said about him or her. Open discussion should follow based on the comments shared.

Assertiveness

Forthright, frank, and willing to stand up for their rights

I-Messages

Introduce students to the difference between “I” statements versus “You” statements. Provide students with sentence frames for forming “I” statements, such as “*I feel _____ when _____ because _____.*” (Martin, 2004). “

Assertiveness Hamburger

Explain to students that expressing negative feelings to others can be less intimidating if they surround the message with positive thoughts or compliments. They should imagine a hamburger, where the “meat” of what they want to say, is surrounded by a fluffy white bun. For example, [POSITIVE] I love having you for a sister, [NEGATIVE] but sometimes I feel upset when you make fun of me. [POSITIVE] I would really like to feel that you are there for me and are on my side. Could we agree to not make fun of each other?

(<http://media-cache-ec0.pinimg.com/originals/cb/1a/85/cb1a851542a5953df0f3ce58ac9df601.jpg>)

Passive, Aggressive, or Assertive Scenarios & Role Play

Demonstrate the differences between being passive, being aggressive, and being assertive. Discuss possible body language or verbal language that accompanies each. Present students with multiple scenarios and ask them to determine if the person is responding passively, aggressively, or assertively. For passive or aggressive scenarios, ask students to think of ways to change the response to an assertive response. Provide additional scenarios for groups to role play (Nybakken et al., 2003). **The participation of neurotypical peers may be helpful in this activity.*

Responding to Conflict

Prepare students for the possibility of an unfavorable reaction from others when learning to assert oneself. Lead the group in a discussion about fears they may have of how to handle others’ reactions and what kinds of responses or internal reactions could be appropriate or useful. Using scenarios from the previous activity, students can practice diffusing conflict or dealing with passive aggression or manipulation by responding with I statements, active listening, remaining calm, identifying ineffective communication in the other person, etc.

Self-motivation

Driven and unlikely to give up in the face of adversity

Reflected Best Self

Each student should ask three different people to write a story via email of when they felt the student was at his or her personal best. Once the stories arrive, students should try to identify patterns in the stories to identify their strengths. Students can work with partners to solicit opinions from others' regarding the strengths identified in their personal stories (Spreitzer et al., 2009).

Resilient Role Models

Ask students to research a "Resilient Role Model," or someone they admire who has overcome adversity. Ask students to describe the adversity and how they overcame it. Students should reflect on the personal characteristics, values, or skills their role model demonstrates.

Personal Anthem

Begin the lesson with clips from YouTube, featuring songs such as *The Eye of the Tiger* in *Rocky III* and *Let it Go* in *Frozen*, pointing out the emotions that music can generate. Explain that music is strategically placed in films to enhance the feelings that they want the audience to feel. Explain to the students that they can inspire those own feelings when they play certain music. Task the students with finding their own personal anthem that will serve to motivate them when they need it. Students should pay attention to the meaning of the lyrics, as well as the music. Students should share their selections with the group and explain why they selected the song.

Vision Board

Students should each create a Vision Board as a visual way to activate an emotional and tangible connection to dreams or goals. Using images or words from magazines or digital media, students should cut, sort, and strategically arrange the images onto poster board or foam board that inspire them. They should include representations of both short-term and long-term goals. Students should be encouraged to dream as big as they can, while keeping in mind the dreams should be somewhat realistic. Students should understand that Vision Boards are drafts that are subject to change as a result of life circumstances, and that they should feel comfortable adjusting their boards to reflect these changes. Students should share their Vision Boards with the group and reflect on the values that are represented through the images they have selected (Loo, 2007).

Stress Management

Capable of withstanding pressure and regulating stress

Organize Yourself

An organized backpack/planner/locker/bedroom will reflect onto an organized mind. Help students make sure their study materials and personal effects are organized so that they can find things and prioritize assignments and schedules. The use of a planner/agenda or single binder system can be very effective.

Worry Cards

Distribute index cards to students and ask them to write down one worry or source of stress per card, as many as needed. Once complete, ask students to sort their cards into categories, such as friendships, family, work, school, etc. Once categories have been determined, students should analyze each worry within a category. While considering each worry, students should determine one of three things to write on the back of the card: I can control; I can't control; Not true anymore. Cards from all categories should then be sorted into the three different control piles. Cards that are "not true" can be discarded. Finally, prioritize each card and put them in order. Things that can't be controlled go at the back of the pile. The order of the "can control" cards should be sorted by things that can be accomplished that day (Lively, 2010).

Circle of Influence/ Circle of Concern

Develop a hypothetical scenario or use a character from a popular TV show or movie to brainstorm a list of things the fictional person is worried about or stressing over. Then display two concentric circles for all to see. Explain that the inner circle is the "Circle of Influence" or "Circle of Control" and represents the things the person can control in his or her life. The outer circle is the "Circle of Concern" meaning things that concern them but that they have no control over. As a group, discuss which among the list of the brainstormed stressors belong in which circle and visually place those worries there. Next distribute mini sticky notes to students and ask them to write down all the things they worry about in a typical day. Distribute blank graphic organizers with two concentric circles and ask students to determine which of their own worries are things within their control and things beyond their control. Engage in a group discussion to debrief with students about what they discover about themselves. Coach students to let go of the worries about which they have no control. Help them how they can control their own reactions to situations they can't control. For example, weather cannot be controlled, but carrying an umbrella is a proactive solution to a situation they can't control. Becoming aware of the amount of stress caused by things beyond one's control can help lessen the burden of stress (Covey, 2004). *(Can be used in place of Worry Cards or can be incorporated into Worry Cards activity).*

Mindfulness Training

Studies have shown that mindfulness improves impulse control among children, teens, and adults. Mindfulness training involves an assortment of strategies and techniques that must be practiced over time in order to be effective. This practice can be introduced with mindful attention to breathing, gradually incorporating more detailed mindfulness techniques (Walker, 2013).

Mind Jars

To assist with mindfulness breathing exercises as a relaxation aid and timer, choose a container and heat enough water to fill almost to the top (hot, but not boiling). Whisk glitter glue into the water, as well as any regular glitter if another color is desired. Add a few drops of a clear dishwashing soap (like Dove) and glycerin to thicken the water and make the glitter drop more slowly. The shaken jar represents how busy and chaotic the mind can be at times. The student should concentrate on deep breathing while watching the glitter settle.

Discarding Thoughts

Ask students to sort through all of their thoughts and think of the worst negative thought they have about themselves. Tell students their brain is like a box or a container and they need to fill that space with information and knowledge and only the best thoughts that will help them succeed. By keeping those negative thoughts inside, they are taking away valuable space from the positive things they absolutely need. Provide each student with a piece of paper and ask them to write it down, telling the students that the only way to get these negative thoughts out of their brain is to express them in words by talking about them or writing them down. Today, they are going to get rid of that negative thought by writing it down. They should do so mindfully, concentrating all attention and energy on getting that negative thought onto the paper. When they are ready they are going to approach the waste basket one by one and say good bye or “good riddance” to that thought (Briñol, et al., 2013).

Brainstorm Activities

Ask students to share with the group what activities help them relax and write them in a visible space for all to see. Share additional ideas, as applicable. Lead group in discussion about importance of hobbies, pursuing passions, and finding time for self care and relaxation. Address concerns of guilt regarding poor time management of when engaged in activity, such as a student spending extended time on a video game

Stress Balls

Lead group in making their own stress balls. A latex balloon can be filled with flour, uncooked rice, sand, or Play-Doh. Use a funnel to fill the balloon and tie it off when filled. Insert inside another balloon for more durability.

Trait Optimism

Confident and likely to look on the bright side of life

Half Empty or Half Full

Display three glasses: one full, one half, one empty. Ask students to look at the middle glass and determine if it is half empty or half full. Lead class in discussion about different perspectives of the same situation.

Optimistic vs. Pessimistic Sort

Create scenario cards depicting both optimistic attitudes and pessimistic attitudes. Make a set for each student and have them sort the cards into the appropriate categories. Discuss the difference between the two attitudes.

Graduation Letter & Wordle

Ask students to write a letter to their future selves that they will read on the day they graduate from high school. What would they say to themselves? How do they imagine they will be feeling on that day? Students can use an online word cloud generator, such as wordle.com, to create an optimism word cloud from the text in their letter.

Reframing Negative Self-Talk

Ask students to make a list of all of the negative thoughts they have about themselves. Students should put these lists aside, then, as a group, ask students to volunteer examples of negative thoughts that one might have. Next, ask students how they might reframe the belief into something more positive, much like the example of the half empty / half full glass. Use a scenario for inspiration if students need assistance with the activity. Once the group has adequately discussed how a negative situation or thought can be viewed differently in a more positive light, ask students to conduct the same activity on their own lists of negative thoughts. Finally, provide students with index cards onto which they should write their improved, optimistic thoughts. They should carry the index cards with them throughout their week so that they can review to combat negative self-talk.

Trait Happiness

Cheerful and satisfied with their lives

Top 10 Playlist

Students should imagine they are creating a playlist of songs that make them feel truly happy. Ask them to select ten of their favorite songs that they would add to this playlist. Students should share with a partner. (Bicknell, 2009).

Bucket Filling / Random Acts of Kindness *(from Emotion Management)*

Introduce students to concept of “bucket filling” (McCloud, et al., 2006). Have students brainstorm ideas of ways to metaphorically fill buckets and discuss emotions surrounding having buckets that are filled versus buckets that are empty. Challenge students to “fill a bucket” by performing random acts of kindness throughout their day or week ahead. Convey to students that being a “bucket filler” is a way to make others feel good about themselves, which reflects directly onto them (Price-Mitchell, 2013).

Happiness Journal

Provide students with writing prompts to reflect on previous occurrences of feeling happiness or joy, such as “Describe the best day of your life,” or “Describe a time when you felt joyful.” Encourage students to be mindful when experiencing feelings of happiness and to log these moments in a journal. Students can later review log entries to look for patterns or reoccurring themes (MacConville, 2008).

Celebration

Celebrating accomplishments, appreciating compliments, enjoying the company of family and friends, and savoring pleasurable moments are an integral part of trait happiness. As students have reached the conclusion of the trait emotional intelligence unit, ask them to reflect on their experience and help them celebrate this achievement. Encourage students to celebrate their future successes and to appreciate all life’s happy moments in the future (MacConville, 2008).

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