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# The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

## Emotional

## Development

**Introductory Guide**  
for Teachers and  
Educational Managers

Better  
Learning

# Why teach Life Competencies?

Our world is changing fast and we need to prepare our students with the skills and experiences that go beyond simply learning an additional language.

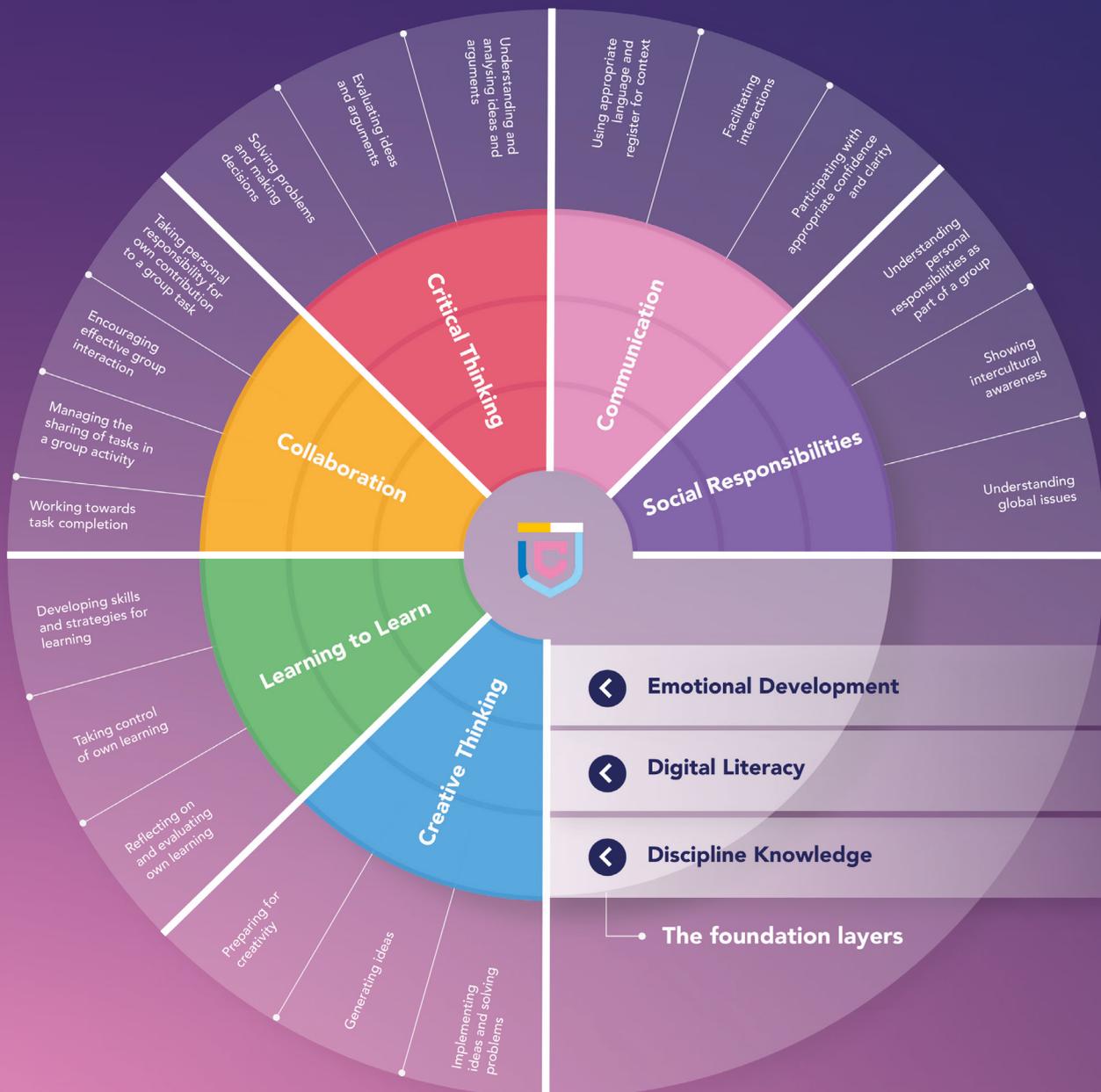
We see the increasing need to work together with people from around the world, to think creatively and solve problems, to analyse sources more critically, to communicate our views effectively, and to maintain a positive mindset in an increasingly complex world.

We understand that the engaging and collaborative nature of the language classroom is the perfect place to develop and embed these key qualities and the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework supports teachers in this challenging area.



## Cambridge Life Competencies

A framework to develop skills for life



# What is the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework?

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework has been created in response to educators who have asked for a way to understand how life skills, or 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, can be integrated into English language programmes. It is made up of six **Competencies** that describe how these essential skills develop and vary across different stages of education, as learners grow and change.

<b>CREATIVE THINKING</b>	Learners actively participate in creative activities, generate new ideas and use them to solve problems.
<b>CRITICAL THINKING</b>	Learners identify patterns and relationships, evaluate ideas and use these skills to solve problems.
<b>LEARNING TO LEARN</b>	Learners develop practical skills to support and take control of their learning and reflect on their own progress.
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	Learners choose the most appropriate language to use in different situations, manage conversations effectively and express themselves clearly and confidently.
<b>COLLABORATION</b>	Learners work well together in groups through actively taking part in group activities, listening to others, sharing tasks and finding solutions to problems.
<b>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	Learners recognise and describe different roles and responsibilities in a variety of groups and understand cultural and global issues.
<b>EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	Learners describe and manage emotions and develop positive relationships with others.

## The Learning Journey

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework supports learners at all stages of their learning journey, from very young pre-primary learners right through to adults in education and at work. The framework maps out how learner behaviours typically found within each competency can change and develop as learners encounter new situations and circumstances in their lives, both within and beyond the classroom.

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework allows us to support learners throughout their education and into the careers of the future.



# Understanding the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework is made up of six **Competencies** – *Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Learning to Learn, Communication, Collaboration* and *Social Responsibilities*. Each broad competency is broken down into **Core Areas** that describe these competencies in more detail. These are then analysed further into **Components** that, along with example **Can Do Statements**, describe the observable behaviours that learners are likely to be able to demonstrate by the end of each stage of learning, if they have had the opportunity to develop in these areas.



Linked to the competencies are the three foundation layers of the framework – *Emotional Development, Digital Literacy* and *Discipline Knowledge*. Development of skills in these foundation layers underpins all other competencies.

Along with this structured breakdown, we provide **example language** that learners may use to express the actions and behaviours found in each of the Core Areas at each stage of learning. The examples used have been informed by both our Functional Language Phrase Bank, a collection of spoken data from expert speakers of English from children to adults, and input from experienced ELT practitioners from around the world. See this example for one Core Area within Emotional Development at the Primary stage:

COMPETENCY	CORE AREA	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Identifying and understanding emotions	Recognising and describing emotions	Describes different emotions	I feel really [bored/ excited].
		Understanding emotions	Describes what makes them feel happy, sad or upset.	[The sun] makes me happy.

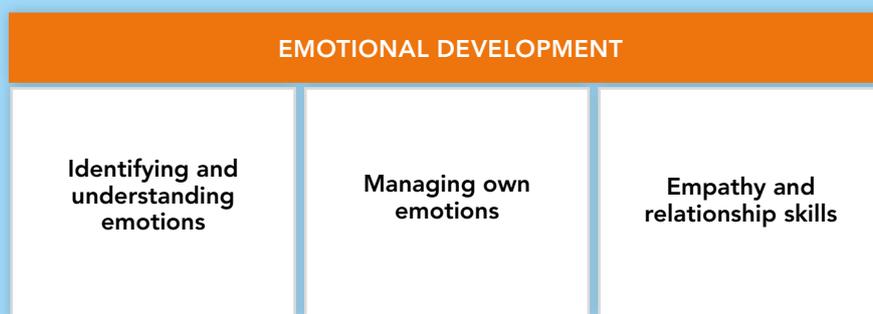
By clearly defining these areas of development in a structured and detailed way, we can ensure that our teaching and learning materials take a systematic approach to delivering and developing these skills in our learners, as they progress. This means that teachers can be assured that our resources bring out the best in their students, without creating extra work.

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework is an ongoing project, evolving through stages of validation and teacher feedback. Go to [cambridge.org/clcf](https://cambridge.org/clcf) to see how you can get involved.

# What is Emotional Development ?

Emotional development is an important foundation for success at all ages and emotional skills underpin and support both social and cognitive development in learners. Indeed, emotional development impacts on academic and social success over and above the effect of cognitive ability (Izard, 2002; Qualter et al., 2011). It affects our learning and our ability to carry out tasks effectively at work or in education. It is distinct from the other areas of competency in that the approach to supporting and evaluating emotional development is in most cases less explicit or teacher-directed. Generally, the recommended approach is to support emotional development by creating activities around other learning objectives that also give learners the opportunity to develop their emotional skills.

We have identified three **Core Areas** within Emotional Development:



- **Identifying and understanding emotions** refers to a learner's capacity to become aware of, understand and express how they feel in different situations and contexts. It involves understanding what may cause different emotions and the effects that these emotions might have on behaviour. This could be achieved through reflection and self-appraisals of their strengths and weaknesses, thinking about their emotions and verbalising them, and identifying and describing their beliefs, values and actions.
- **Managing own emotions** relates to the ability to utilise emotions once they have been identified, in order to deploy coping mechanisms in emotional situations, to minimise negative emotions and to enhance positive ones. Learners are able to adapt to aversive or distressing emotions by using self-regulatory strategies that lead to emotional resilience.
- **Empathy and relationship skills** involve understanding others' perspectives and being able to empathise with and support others. This is important in building and maintaining relationships and handling interpersonal problems such as conflict with respect and care.

Within these Core Areas we break things down further, defining the **Components** that make up each Core Area:

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	<b>Identifying and understanding emotions</b>	Recognising and describing emotions
		Understanding emotions
	<b>Managing own emotions</b>	Monitoring and reflecting on own emotions
		Regulating emotions
	<b>Empathy and relationship skills</b>	Establishing and maintaining positive relationships
		Showing empathy for the feelings of others
		Supporting others

# Emotional Development across the learning journey

Core Areas may be realised in different ways across the different stages of learning. In order to demonstrate this, each Core Area and Component is contextualised by an example Can Do Statement. This illustrates what kinds of behaviour students who are competent in this area might display by the end of each stage of learning. These example Can Do Statements can be used as a starting point in the development of a curriculum, programme or assessment system and will vary in their suitability for learners in different contexts. The example language is provided for teachers to consider what kind of language they could encourage their students to use in these kinds of tasks.

## PRE-PRIMARY

CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
<b>Identifying and understanding emotions</b>	Recognising and describing emotions	Identifies core emotional states (e.g. happy, sad, excited, bored, angry, scared or hurt).	[I'm] happy/sad/angry/excited/bored/scared.
	Understanding emotions	Names things that make them feel good and/or things that make them feel sad.	[Dogs] scare me.
<b>Managing own emotions</b>	Monitoring and reflecting on own emotions	Verbalises what emotion they are currently experiencing.	[He] made me sad.
	Regulating emotions	Attempts to control own impulses.	It's my turn now.
<b>Empathy and relationship skills</b>	Establishing and maintaining positive relationships	Starts to create friendships.	Do you want to play with [us]?
	Showing empathy for the feelings of others	Begins to show understanding of interactions that are hurtful or unfair to others (e.g. lying, ignoring, teasing, hitting, excluding, etc.)	It's wrong to [tease people].
	Supporting others	Consoles others (e.g. by hugging them or offering them a toy).	Do you want a [hug/toy]?

**PRIMARY**

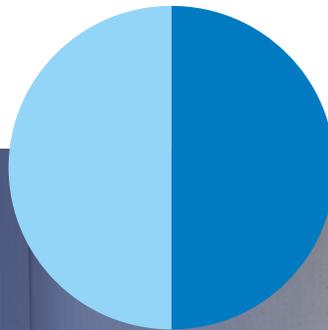
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	Understanding emotions	Describes what makes them feel happy, sad or upset.	[The sun] makes me happy.
<b>Managing own emotions</b>	Monitoring and reflecting on own emotions	Engages in self-talk and/or talk with others about their emotions.	I don't understand why...
	Regulating emotions	Uses strategies of controlling emotions when upset or stressed (e.g. breathing techniques).	When I'm angry, I count to ten.
<b>Empathy and relationship skills</b>	Establishing and maintaining positive relationships	Identifies ways of making friends and being a good friend (e.g. sharing, listening, helping, respecting other people's belongings etc.)	Are you alone?
	Showing empathy for the feelings of others	Shows concern and compassion for other children when they are hurt or upset.	Are you OK/alright?
	Supporting others	Helps and comforts others where necessary.	Let me help you.

**SECONDARY**

CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
<b>Identifying and understanding emotions</b>	Recognising and describing emotions	Describes a wide range of different emotions.	I'm over the moon!
	Understanding emotions	Discusses what makes them feel different emotions.	It's frustrating when...
<b>Managing own emotions</b>	Monitoring and reflecting on own emotions	Discusses and reflects on emotions (mainly with friends).	I keep thinking of...
	Regulating emotions	Manages emotions by using strategies such as re-evaluating or changing the situation.	I was really annoyed when she..., but it probably wasn't on purpose.
<b>Empathy and relationship skills</b>	Establishing and maintaining positive relationships	Works at maintaining healthy relationships.	How are you getting on?
	Showing empathy for the feelings of others	Shows understanding of other people's perspectives and feelings.	I [know/see] what you mean.
	Supporting others	Negotiates conflict constructively.	I understand, but...

## HIGHER EDUCATION

CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
<b>Identifying and understanding emotions</b>	Recognising and describing emotions	Distinguishes between different emotions, even those that are similar (e.g. happiness and joy).	We were pleased/happy.
	Understanding emotions	Articulates what creates stress or difficult situations.	[Too much homework] stresses me out.
<b>Managing own emotions</b>	Monitoring and reflecting on own emotions	Reflects on own experience of emotions and emotion management (e.g. by keeping an emotion diary).	I've noticed that I'm often [emotion] when...
	Regulating emotions	Uses strategies for dealing with areas that create stress, frustration or anger.	I try to [breathe deeply] when I'm nervous.
<b>Empathy and relationship skills</b>	Establishing and maintaining positive relationships	Maintains appropriate social relations with peers and instructors.	How are you/How are things?
	Showing empathy for the feelings of others	Expresses things that might cause a disagreement or argument sensitively and respectfully.	It's just that...
	Supporting others	Provides practical support for others who are struggling.	Do you want me to [help/explain it/talk to...]?



## AT WORK

CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
<b>Identifying and understanding emotions</b>	Recognising and describing emotions	Describes own emotions in an appropriate way for their workplace or team culture.	I'm not really [concentrating/focusing] today because...
	Understanding emotions	Recognises how different emotions might influence work-related decisions.	When I panic, I usually make bad decisions.
<b>Managing own emotions</b>	Monitoring and reflecting on own emotions	Notices their reactions to different situations and whether these are helpful or not.	It doesn't matter right now.
	Regulating emotions	Uses strategies for managing stress (e.g. from workload / customer or supplier behaviour).	I'm going to ask for some [help/training].
<b>Empathy and relationship skills</b>	Establishing and maintaining positive relationships	Maintains appropriate social relations with colleagues, managers and clients.	How are [you/things going]?
	Showing empathy for the feelings of others	Identifies emotional issues among colleagues.	Is everything alright?
	Supporting others	Is an attentive listener for colleagues' problems.	Would you like to talk about it?



# Emotional Development in the classroom

Language classrooms are not just academic spaces where learners acquire a new language. Learners can also acquire the skills to grow in their self-knowledge and to connect with the people around them, impacting their overall wellbeing. Because of such potential, the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework includes an Emotional Development area with the purpose of interweaving language instruction with wellbeing objectives.

By cultivating effective emotional management skills, learners can improve their motivation, become more persistent in practising what they acquire, respond more positively to feedback, and hone their other new life skills. The benefits of teaching emotional development include improved social effectiveness and better social relations. In terms of classroom behaviour, heightened emotional development can lead to:

- Higher test scores and grades;
- Minimal disruptive behaviour and confrontation;
- Maximised on-task behaviour;
- Increased social skills.



## Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list.

### STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

#### *Incorporate an individualised approach*

- Acknowledge that all learners experience emotions in different ways; for a strategy to be effective, it must fit the individual learner and the specific context.
- Coach learners in understanding and managing emotions and fostering effective relationships with others.

#### Example activity: 'Name it to tame it'

Simply put, naming feelings helps individuals understand them and develop an 'emotion vocabulary'. There are two ways of using this activity: dealing with negative emotions and understanding others' feelings.

##### 1. Dealing with negative emotions:

Teachers encourage learners to say silently or aloud, or write down, the negative emotion they are experiencing – as they are experiencing it – in order to gain distance. If learners can recognise their emotion, they do not have to accept it – they can consciously become aware of their bodies and minds and disengage from the emotion.

##### 2. Understanding others' feelings:

Teachers use the idea of labelling emotions as a means of developing an understanding of the emotions in play during interactions with other learners. Simply silently naming the emotion being felt by the other, for example asking themselves 'what is this person feeling right now?' brings it to consciousness and provides information necessary to respond more empathetically. Empathetic teachers and learners understand and share the feelings of others, which first necessitates that they can identify the emotion.

### Minimise students' anxiety

- Create the conditions to provoke positive reactions in your students. Some learners may feel anxious in class which causes physical reactions, such as their heart racing. Students should be supported in recognising these physical symptoms of their emotions and re-directing this energy into enthusiasm. If students can recognise these reactions, they can develop coping strategies when experiencing these situations.
- Create environments conducive to less anxiety, for example by reducing competition between learners or practising using the language in different ways.

### Example activity: 'Three good things'

Learners write down three things that went well during the day and briefly describe the reason. The 'reason' step is critical as it requires more genuine thought than merely writing down events. This task can help boost happiness and give the learner a sense of achievement whilst reducing negative emotions. The following template can be used:

Three good things that happened today	Reasons

### Raise awareness of how emotions can affect students

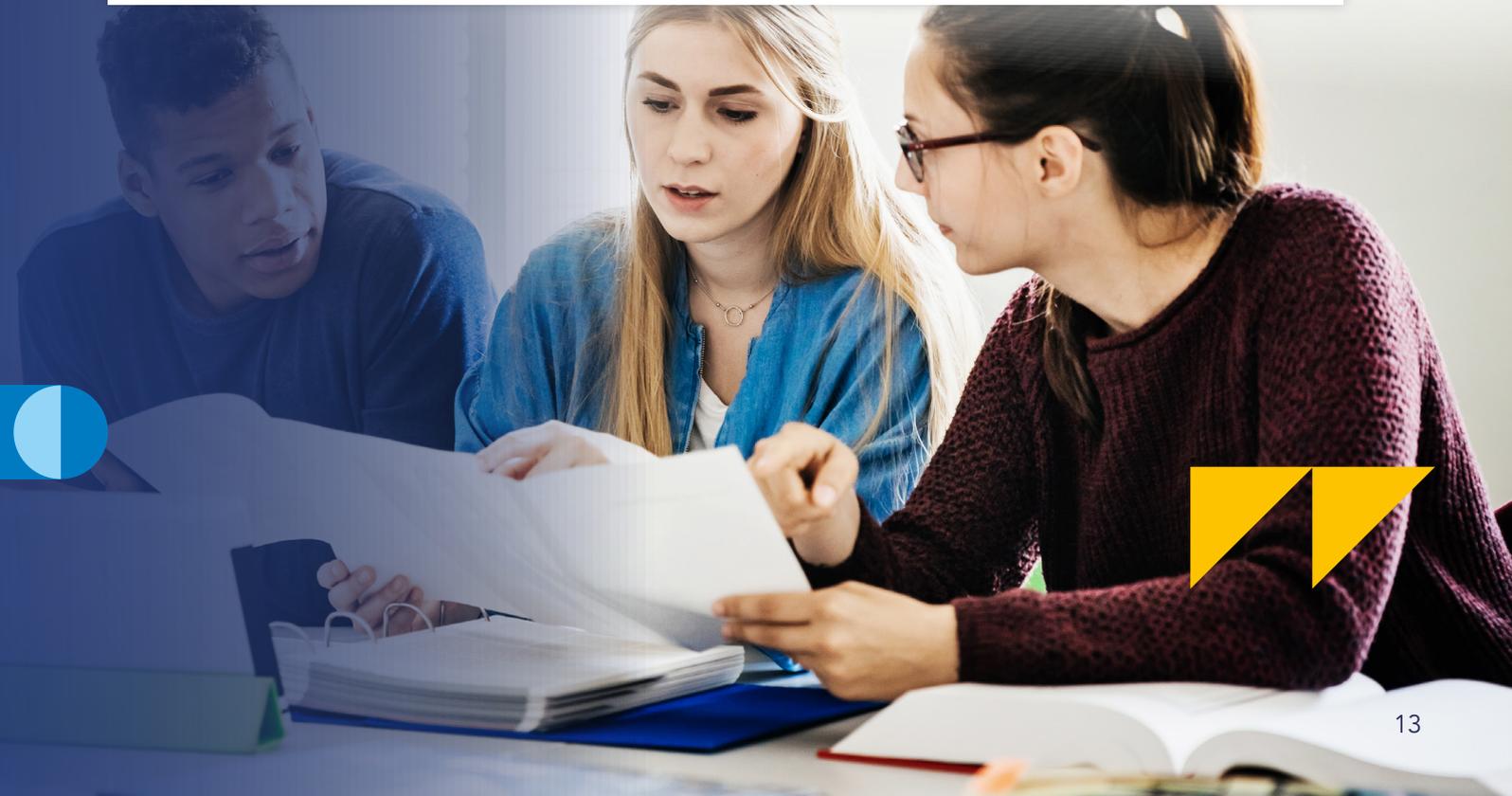
- Build positive self-beliefs amongst students and encourage them to adopt incremental beliefs about intelligence.
- Support students in understanding how to regulate their emotions by changing their perspective or situation, to enable their emotions to shift.

#### Example activity: 'Finding the silver lining'

Learners in this activity pay particular attention to problems – big and small – that arise in their classes or lives outside of school. The aim is to engage the student in finding the positive side of a negative situation by creating a habit of considering both the positive and negative consequences that the situation may have.

Learners can use their language skills to verbalise their 'silver linings' of any situation to teachers and classmates or document each episode in writing. Teachers need to challenge learners: every time they encounter something problematic, the learner has to find at least one good thing about it. This could be done using the following template:

Situation:	
What is negative about this?	What is a positive consequence of this?





### *Encourage students to express their emotions*

- Create opportunities for students to talk about their emotions with peers and their teacher.
- Provide students with the language and communication skills they need to express their emotions.
- Encourage mindfulness by showing students different techniques and activities they can do to achieve this.

#### Example activity: 'Savouring'

Savouring refers to being mindful of pleasant experiences and intentionally reminiscing, experiencing them in detail and making them last. Learners concentrate attentively on a particular experience, event or achievement to become totally immersed in the pleasure of the moment. To develop savouring skills, teachers encourage learners to stop and notice something enjoyable and use their language skills to share it with others. They could then be encouraged to take something from the event, like a photo or memento to reminisce over and remember the positive emotions they associate with the event.

For example, teachers can take learners on a 'nature walk' and ask them to find three things that they would not have noticed before. Learners could touch them, smell them, and carefully observe them so that when they get back to the classroom, they can share their savoured experience with their peers. Teachers could challenge learners to make this a daily habit.

#### **➤ Over to you...**

1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
  - When planning the activity, you may find the guidance above helpful. You could follow the instructions here or adapt the activity to suit your class.
  - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to recognise and express their emotions.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities that you may be using in your classes in the next week or so.
  - Consider how you could adapt these activities to raise awareness of emotional development strategies and to encourage your students to think about their own emotions.

# Emotional Development

## in learning materials

PRIMARY

Here, children learn about emotions by identifying characters' feelings (Tomás is sad, then excited in exercise 2A; Valentín is sorry, then happy in exercise 2B). Through a role play activity (exercise 2) they are asked to practise expressing emotions, showing empathy and consoling others.



When Tomás came back he was surprised to find that El Viejo wasn't there. 'Where is he?' he said. 'Oh, he walked away down the hill,' Valentín answered. 'I don't know where he was going.' Tomás started crying. 'No!' he said. 'He can't! El Viejo! Come back!' Before Valentín could stop him, Tomás ran back to the house shouting, 'Mummy! Daddy! El Viejo has gone!'

5

When Valentín got home, he found his brother sitting at the kitchen table. His mother and father looked at him in that special way, the one they used when they weren't pleased with him. Valentín said, 'I'm sorry, Tomás,' and then he asked his brother to go back to the hill. 'We'll make another El Viejo,' he said, 'lots of them.' 'Can we?' Tomás asked. 'Can we, Valentín?' And that was what the brothers did for the rest of the day. They filled the hillside with snowmen. Valentín was happy that his brother was excited and he thought to himself, 'Well, there's always tomorrow – I'll go snowboarding then.'



### 2 Role play a conversation with a partner. Imagine you are Tomás and Valentín.

- A** You are Tomás. You're very sad about El Viejo. You were very excited when you made him and you were very sad when you saw that El Viejo wasn't there. Tell Valentín how you feel.

I'm very sad, Valentín. I liked the snowman so much!

- B** You are Valentín. You're sorry that you made Tomás sad. You only wanted to go snowboarding. Say sorry to Tomás, tell him what happened and talk about the new snowmen you can make together.

I'm very sorry, Tomás. I didn't want you to be sad. Let's make lots more snowmen. They'll be bigger and better than El Viejo.

Social and emotional skill: Showing remorse

65

## SECONDARY

Here, students engage with the topic of emotions by identifying and describing a range of feelings (exercises 1 and 3). They are encouraged to reflect on their own emotions and draw conclusions for behaviour that supports mental health (for example, 'Stay happy!' article, part 2: This week I will make three wishes about...).

### VOCABULARY

#### Feelings

1 Read the leaflet about happiness. Do you recognise the feelings it describes?

7.01 2 Match the words in **bold** in the leaflet with the words and phrases 1–13. Then listen, check and repeat.

- |                     |                                        |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1 happy <b>glad</b> | 8 quiet and calm                       |
| 2 angry             | 9 in emotional pain                    |
| 3 unhappy           | 10 extremely happy                     |
| 4 very silly        | 11 finding something funny             |
| 5 feeling thanks    | 12 positive about the future           |
| 6 not confident     | 13 pleased you have achieved something |
| 7 enthusiastic      |                                        |

7.02 3 Listen to the conversations. Complete the sentences with a word from the leaflet.

- Sally feels absolutely ...
- The boy feels ...
- Mark felt absolutely ...
- The girl feels really ...
- Monica is feeling a bit ...

### LEARN TO LEARN

#### Remembering adjectives

Writing a sentence about your personal experiences with new adjectives will help you remember them.

4 Do Part 1 in the Stay happy! leaflet. Write a sentence for each adjective.

*I feel amused when I watch comedy films.*

5 **COLLABORATE** Work in pairs. Read out your sentences. Do you have similar or different ideas?

*I feel satisfied when I score a goal in football.*

*Really? Well, I like art so I feel really satisfied when I've drawn a good picture.*

6 **Use it!** Now do Part 2 of the leaflet. Tell your partner your plans. Do they think you will really do them?

## Stay happy!

Adolescence can be an emotional rollercoaster. Sometimes you're absolutely **thrilled** to be alive, then suddenly you feel **down** for no reason. You often feel **insecure** about who you are, and **annoyed** with every adult on the planet. You can feel **ridiculous** when you don't know something all your friends seem to know, and **hurt** that nobody seems to care about what you're feeling. Of course, people do care, which is why we've created this exercise for developing positive emotions.

**Part 1** For each word below (**amused**, etc.), think of an activity or situation that helps you feel that emotion.

**Part 2** Choose two positive emotions you want to practise. Using your ideas, do something which will increase those emotions every day for a week. We've given you some examples.

I feel ...	This week I will ...
<b>amused</b> when my best friend tells me jokes.	ask him to tell me some every day.
<b>hopeful</b> when I make a wish.	make three wishes about ...
<b>peaceful</b> when I walk on the beach.	...
<b>grateful</b> when my brother helps me with my homework.	...
<b>eager</b> when I start a new art project.	...
<b>satisfied</b> when I've tidied my room.	...
<b>glad</b> when my friends are happy.	...

### Explore it!

**Guess the correct answer.**

Complete the expression *Laughter is the best ...*

**a** communication **b** exercise **c** medicine

**Find out a fact about smiling and write a question for your partner to answer.**

Here, students learn about identifying, managing, and expressing feelings (exercises 4d and e; and exercises 6a and b). These exercises could be extended by asking students to respond to others, expressing emotions (in exercise 6b), thereby showing empathy and practising skills to maintain positive relationships.

#### 4 USEFUL LANGUAGE

##### Describing how you felt

- a** 3.66 Complete what Tessa says with the words in the box. Then listen and check.

get believe can't surprised so over couldn't

I \_\_\_\_\_ it. I was \_\_\_\_\_. First prize! I still \_\_\_\_\_ it.

- b** Discuss the questions.

- How does Tessa say she felt?  
a) happy b) disappointed c) surprised
- Which word has the main stress in each sentence?  
Practise saying the sentences.

- c** Here are some more ways to describe how you felt.

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 I wasn't expecting it. | 3 I was really pleased. |
| 2 It was quite a blow.   | 4 I was expecting it.   |

Which mean ... ?

- I was surprised.
- I was happy.
- I wasn't surprised.
- I was shocked or disappointed.

- d** Choose one of the situations below. Make notes to describe how you felt and why, but don't mention what happened! Use expressions in 4a and 4c.

- Your boss called you into his office and said that you were fired.
- You have won £10,000 on the lottery.
- You didn't prepare for the exam and you failed it.
- Your best friend told you he/she is getting married.
- Someone stole your wallet.
- You were promoted.

- e** Read out your sentences. Can other students guess the situation?

I really wasn't expecting it.

I was so surprised because I only bought one ticket.

I still can't believe it.

#### 5 CONVERSATION SKILLS

##### Interrupting and announcing news

- a** 3.65 Watch or listen to Part 3 again. Complete the remarks.

- Hold \_\_\_\_\_.
- There's something \_\_\_\_\_ we have to celebrate.
- Hang \_\_\_\_\_ a minute.
- I know you won't \_\_\_\_\_ this ...
- Just a \_\_\_\_\_.
- One more \_\_\_\_\_.

- b** Which remarks ... ?

- are ways to stop people ending a conversation
- are ways to show you are about to say something important

- c** Answer these questions.

- At the end of each remark, does the voice ... ?  
a stay high  
b go down
- Does this show the other person ... ?  
a that you've finished speaking  
b that you haven't finished speaking

- d** Practise saying the remarks.

#### 6 SPEAKING

- a** Work in groups of four (A, B, C and D). You're in a restaurant. You each have an important piece of news to tell your group.

Student A: You've just been offered a new job.

Student B: You've won a free trip to Paris for two weeks.

Student C: You're getting married.

Student D: You've won a prize in a poetry competition.

Work alone and decide:

- what details you will give
- which expressions you will use in 4a, 4c and 5a.

- b** Have a conversation. Take it in turns to announce your news. Then continue talking until the next person interrupts.

#### Unit Progress Test

##### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

You can now do the Unit Progress Test.



# Further Reading

## For more information on this topic, please see:

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**Laura and Olivia**  
Language Research Team,  
Cambridge University Press



# Cambridge Life Competencies

A framework to develop skills for life

You can find information about the other competencies in the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework at [cambridge.org/clcf](https://cambridge.org/clcf)

- ✓ Creative Thinking
- ✓ Critical Thinking
- ✓ Learning to Learn
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Social Responsibilities
- ✓ Emotional Development