

Emotional Release Activities



Emotional release activities video capsule



Rationale:

Activities that help students express their emotional energy and process all that is within them. It is a time for expression without words and to take frustrations or fears into play. They are done with a class as a whole but can also be done one-on-one for those that require additional support getting big emotions out. When students have a venue to play out their impulses to attack or destroy, their levels of frustration are reduced. Frustration and outbursts of aggression decrease as students release their emotions through play. Emotional release activities have several objectives, including releasing energy, feeling our emotions, and becoming more attuned to others. These activities can be adapted to the size of the group and to the age range of students.

Benefits:

- By using mediums through the creative arts, it provides opportunities for emotions to express themselves freely and without repercussions because it is done in play mode (allows the student to be open and vulnerable more easily).
- The *'get it out'* portion of the activity models how to release emotional energy in a safe and constructive way.
- The *'feel'* segment of the activity allows students to discover, connect to, and reflect on their emotional world and become more self-aware of their body and emotions. This paves the way for building self-regulation, emotional maturity, and resilience.
- The *'care and connect'* part of the activity permits students to explore individual differences and become more attuned to others. Modeling how to appreciate what we have in common while respecting differences. This leads to building safe spaces to share and to awaken empathy and caring feelings for others.
- Releasing pent-up physical and emotional energy on a regular basis, and in preventative manner leads to less incidents during unstructured times, such as the school yard at recess.
- Decrease in frustration and aggressivity towards adults and peers.
- Increase in enjoyment at school.
- Allowing students to welcome all emotions without suppressing them or labeling them as "bad".



Tier 1 intervention

Emotional Release Activities

Examples of emotional release activities:

- Listening to music: feeling the symphony
- Signing activities: excited, mad
- Activities using musical instruments: pool noodle drumming
- Dancing activities: fast, slow
- Miming and dress up activities: monster, superhero
- Drawing and painting activities: happy, sad, frustration monster, shape of our feelings
- Writing activities: feeling poem, journal
- Play fighting activities: pool noodle swards, pillows
- Building and creating activities: Legos, playdough
- Jumping and destroying activities: ripping paper, stomping

** For more ideas, consult the Inside Out Handbook written by Hannah Beach (free when you buy her book Reclaiming Out Students)*

Emotional playgrounds:

- Laughter and humor
- Arts and crafts
- Drama and theater
- Movement and music
- Irony and wordplay
- Stories and writing
- Teasing and silliness

Suggestions when trying out an emotional release activity with your students:

- Collect them before embarking on the activity (make sure they are attentive and engaged).
- Make sure there is a clear beginning and end to the activity (using a song, a clip, or a timer) to help then transition in and out of the activity as smoothly as possible.
- Build a culture of enjoyment by joining in and taking part in the activity. This will allow you to deepen and strengthen your relationship with your students and it will give you the opportunity to model for them as you take the lead and guide them through it.
- An activity may not succeed at first try, and that's okay! It is to be expected that there will be a learning curve and that students will need time to get the hang of it and lots of practice. Sometimes an activity needs small adjustments to fit the needs of the students.
- Anticipate that students may need several tries before they can become comfortable enough to be open and vulnerable emotionally. Some students may find it really difficult and awkward to open up in front of their peers; they may benefit better from a one-on-one setting.
- Take your students outside! Nature engages our senses, and it can feel quite refreshing. Bonus: there's more space outside for students to do big wide movements.
- Consider using activities that offer different levels of energy; having upbeat activities with fast movements, but also slow-tempo activities as well. Not all students respond well to high level energy activities; for some it may feel overwhelming rather than helpful. Try out and explore what works for your students.



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Reminder:

Emotional release activities are meant to be a much-needed support measure and not a privilege. Those that need it the most often lose access to these opportunities when they are conditional to good behaviour.



Links to supporting documents, videos & activities:

- (Scribble time, Drawing the music, Be the conductor/you are the music) [Helping our students find release](#)
- [Frustration monster activity](#)
- [Drumming and squeeze away activity](#)
- <https://reclaimingourstudents.com/> (to download the Inside Out Handbook)
- <https://www.cebmmember.ca/tier-1-universal-practices>
- <https://hannahbeach.ca/which-leaf-am-i-expressive-activity-for-children/>