Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) Year 8 Theme 3

Learning opportunities
Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)

Year 8 Theme 3
Learning about me

Learning opportunities
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# Summary of Learning outcomes and Resource sheets Theme 3

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## 1 Overall learning outcomes

14. I understand that how I express my feelings can have a significant impact both on other people and on what happens to me.

**Year 8 learning outcome**
None specific.

## 2 Overall learning outcome

15. I have a range of strategies for managing impulses and strong emotions so they do not lead me to behave in ways that would have negative consequences for me or for other people.

**Year 8 learning outcomes**
- I can identify what my triggers are for feeling scared or anxious.
- I can tell people how I feel.
- I can manage strong feelings.

## 3 Overall learning outcome

15. I have a range of strategies for managing impulses and strong emotions so they do not lead me to behave in ways that would have negative consequences for me or for other people.

**Year 8 learning outcomes**
- I can identify what my triggers are for feeling scared or anxious.
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**Overall learning outcomes**

15. I have a range of strategies for managing impulses and strong emotions so they do not lead me to behave in ways that would have negative consequences for me or for other people.

17. I understand how health can be affected by emotions and know a range of ways to keep myself well and happy.

18. I have a range of strategies to reduce, manage or change strong and uncomfortable feelings such as anger, anxiety, stress and jealousy.

**Year 8 learning outcomes**

- I can manage my anxiety.
- I have thought about what makes me feel good and use this to make me feel well and happy.

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**Overall learning outcome**

17. I understand how health can be affected by emotions and know a range of ways to keep myself well and happy.

**Year 8 learning outcome**

- I can tell you what makes me feel good and use this to make me feel well and happy.

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**Overall learning outcomes**

9. I understand why feelings sometimes ‘take over’ or get out of control and know what makes me angry or upset.

**Year 8 learning outcomes**

- I understand that sometimes thoughts and feelings are triggered by emotional memories.
- I understand the power of emotional memories to trigger thoughts and feelings.
- I can understand that emotional memories can create feelings that can get out of control.

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**Overall learning outcome**

9. I understand why feelings sometimes ‘take over’ or get out of control and know what makes me angry or upset.

**Year 8 learning outcomes**

- I understand that sometimes thoughts and feelings are triggered by emotional memories.
- I understand the power of emotional memories to trigger thoughts and feelings.
- I can understand that emotional memories can create feelings that can get out of control.
| 8 | **Overall learning outcome**  
8. I know and accept what I am feeling, and can label my feelings.  
**Year 8 learning outcomes**  
- I can recognise what mood I am in and what might help me change it if I need to.  
- I understand the difference between feelings and moods.  
- I can recognise and acknowledge the moods I am experiencing. | Photocards  
- moods  
3.8.1  
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| 9 | **Overall learning outcome**  
14. I understand that how I express my feelings can have a significant impact both on other people and on what happens to me.  
**Year 8 learning outcomes**  
- I know what my triggers are for feeling excitement.  
- I can use different ways to manage my excitement. | 3.9.1 |
Year 8 SEAL learning opportunities
Theme 3: Learning about me

Theme overview

The theme provides learning opportunities that encourage pupils to become more aware of how they are feeling; to express their emotions more richly and fully, through their words, faces, voices, tone and body language; to gain strategies for managing their feelings; and to use this understanding to behave more appropriately, make better choices, learn more effectively and build better relationships with others.

The theme, in Year 8, includes learning opportunities that encourage pupils to reflect upon how thoughts can influence feelings and behaviour. They encourage pupils to learn from their experiences rather than engaging in unhelpful worrying, ‘rumination’ or catastrophising.

The theme ends with an opportunity for pupils to review their learning and to explore how they can elicit excitement in others and manage their feelings when giving a presentation.

Many of the activities require the pupils to work in collaborative groups or pairs. In this way they are given opportunities to practice social and emotional skills while they are learning more about these skills together.

These are not lesson plans but provide ideas for learning opportunities that are to be interpreted and used flexibly; some will span several sessions, others will be part of a longer session. Where the learning opportunities build upon earlier learning this is indicated.

Questions for reflection and enquiry

Use these questions to encourage pupils to consider the concepts explored in the theme in depth, taking into account some of the complexities and ambiguities of real life. There are many ways to use them: they might provide the basis for discussion or for a community of enquiry.

- Can you have more than one feeling about the same thing?
- Do you think that feeling sad can make you happy?
- Does hardship make you stronger?

You might like to display them on the whiteboard or noticeboard and encourage pupils to record their thoughts and post them there. These might be read out and discussed at the end of the week.

Warm-ups and starters

Gobble gobble!

Before you begin, build up a bank of words to describe feelings on the whiteboard or flipchart. Pupils should play in pairs: one player should be the leader, the other should be the follower. The leader chooses a feeling from the board and starts talking gibberish or ‘gobble gobble’ in the manner of the feeling. The follower should join in using their own gibberish in the manner of the same feeling. When you clap your hands, the leader should choose a new feeling. After several turns, the leader should become the follower and repeat the process.
Alliteration

Invite pupils to sit in a circle and to take it in turns to point to an object and describe it with a feeling beginning with the same letter: bored bulb, frustrated floor, lethargic leg, sad skirt, and so on.

Freddy

Sitting in a circle, one pupil should act as a caller and say a letter to one of the other people in the circle. That person should come up with a name of a person and how they felt, starting with the same letter. Extend this by adding a reason that starts with the same letter. For example:

- Freddy feels frightened (because he saw a fox)
- Samantha feels sad (because she slipped)

and so on.

If the person cannot think of a response, they can pass it on to someone else in the circle.

Silly face

Members of the group should sit with impassive facial expressions. The idea is to pass facial expressions from one person to the other, by turning to the person on the right with a facial expression. This person should pass it on and return to an impassive face. Invite one pupil to start and once this expression is going around the group, start again with another facial expression but this time send it round the other way.

Animal emotions

You will need two sticky notes for each person: on one you should write the name of an animal and on the other a word to describe a feeling. Stick these on the pupils’ backs so they cannot see their own sticky notes. Invite them to find out what their animal and feeling is by asking questions of the other people in the group, who can only answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ in response to questions.
Learning opportunity 1: How would I feel?

Overall learning outcomes
14. I understand that how I express my feelings can have a significant impact both on other people and on what happens to me.

Year 8 learning outcomes
None specific.

Preparation
Read through the situation cards on the Resource sheet and identify those that you think might be of particular use to your group. You might like to add other situations.

Resources
Resource sheet 3.1.1 – Situation cards

Starter/introduction
Explain that this activity is about ‘Understanding and managing feelings’ and it is designed to provide pupils with opportunities to explore ideas together to arrive at some common understandings. Emphasise that they are learning about this area all the time, both inside and outside school, for example through how other people behave and express their feelings towards them and reactions that others have to what they say and do.

Pupils might like to work in pairs or small groups to write ‘Understanding and managing feelings’ in a circle in the centre of a piece of paper and then jot down all they can about the topic. Provide some prompts to organise their ideas, for example:
- What feelings? Happy, sad, excited, angry and so on.
- Strategies they have for managing their feelings.
- Ways we express our feelings.
- Reasons for managing our feelings.

Provide ten minutes for them to come up with ideas and then draw the group together. As a whole group, construct a joint mind map of the pupils’ understanding of this area of learning. Encourage them to reflect upon prior learning both in primary school, Year 7 and in everyday life.

Ask the pupils to consider what they would like to gain from the theme and/or explain that you hope the theme will help them become more aware of their own feelings and how to cope and manage them.

Activity
Working in small groups, give each group a situation card from Resource sheet 3.1.1. Ask the groups to prepare a presentation to show how the ability to understand and manage their feelings is important using the situation on their card. They should identify what might go wrong if the people involved in the situation are unable to understand and manage their feelings and how things could have a better outcome with greater understanding.
**Plenary**

Pupils should share their presentations. Record any new points on the joint mind map. Use the map to identify key questions that might be helpful during learning in the theme.

**Applying learning**

The pupils should act as pupil researchers over the week and identify times when having a greater understanding about feelings and how to manage them might have been helpful. This might include characters on television, films, books or historical characters. They should report back to the next session.
Learning opportunity 2: Take my advice

**Overall learning outcome**

15. I have a range of strategies for managing impulses and strong emotions so they do not lead me to behave in ways that would have negative consequences for me or for other people.

**Year 8 learning outcomes**

- I can identify what my triggers are for feeling scared or anxious.
- I can tell people how I feel.
- I can manage strong feelings.

**Preparation**

Identify some romantic fiction books and find some final lines from the books.

**Resources**

Resource sheet 3.2.1 – Strip cartoon

Resource sheet 3.2.2 – Feelings (NB: This is taken from Year 7 SEAL)

**Starter/introduction**

Write the words, ‘... and they lived happily ever after’ on the whiteboard or flipchart. Ask the pupils to volunteer what this means to them and when and where they might hear it.

Invite them to identify as many words as they can that might describe the feelings and emotions that could lead up to reading or hearing this phrase in a book or film.

**Activity**

Give the pupils copies of Resource sheet 3.2.1 or display it on the whiteboard and ask them to read it through once. Suggest that they discuss and agree on what happens in the story and what might happen next.

They should then read the sheet again, this time identifying as many of the feelings as they can that the characters in the story might be feeling. You might like to provide Resource sheet 3.2.2 as a prompt.

Invite the pupils to read the story a third time, imagining that they are student advisers with a microphone and earpiece to communicate directly with the characters. What advice would they give them? This might be done through role-play if they wish.

Finally, they should role-play what happens when the characters return to the hostel and meet up with their friends.

Explain that relationships with a member of the opposite sex are only one example of a whole range of situations where emotions can take hold and lead us to behave in ways that might damage ourselves or others.

Provide some other examples for the pupils to develop into short scenarios. For example:

- in the classroom, when a teacher reads out a story you have written that you find embarrassing;
- on the way home when you are with your friends and another group starts calling you names.

Pupils might like to create a strip cartoon of one of these scenarios and could provide a commentary from a student adviser.
Plenary
Review the learning by considering how we can all be our own student advisers. Use the following questions to explore this:

- What is the most common advice that you found yourselves giving?
- If you were training student advisers to take this role in a new television programme, what key advice would you give?
- What would you avoid saying?
- What are the barriers to you using your own advice?

Applying learning
Pupils should identify examples when a character has not been able to manage and express their feelings appropriately in a favourite novel or TV programme and decide what they would advise them to do.
Learning opportunity 3: When worrying gets in the way

Overall learning outcome
15. I have a range of strategies for managing impulses and strong emotions so they do not lead me to behave in ways that would have negative consequences for me or for other people.

Year 8 learning outcomes
- I can identify what my triggers are for feeling scared or anxious.
- I can tell people how I feel.
- I can manage strong feelings.

Preparation
In preparation for this learning opportunity, ask pupils to find out the meaning of the words ‘rumination’, ‘worry’ and ‘anxiety’. The thesaurus suggests the following:
- Rumination: cogitation, reflection, ponderings, musing, thoughts, meditation
- Anxiety: feeling of worry, extreme apprehension
- Worry: be anxious, fret, upset

Resources
Photocards
53 Primary SEAL
51 Primary SEAL
29 Year 7

Starter/introduction
Explore the meanings of the words ‘rumination’, ‘worry’ and ‘anxiety’ and some of the definitions that the pupils have discovered. Explain that they probably have all heard the words ‘anxiety’ and ‘worry’ but they might not have heard of the word ‘rumination’.

You might like to show a picture of a cow chewing the cud and explain the word ‘rumination’ in this context as the process of regurgitation, chewing, and re-swallowing of food, carried out by ruminants such as cows. It is now used to describe the process of emotional introspection – spending excessive amounts of time worrying and ‘chewing over’ anxieties and concerns.

Explain that excessive and prolonged rumination is considered by some as both a symptom and cause of depression. This means that spending too long ‘ruminating’ might cause you to feel depressed and when you are depressed you might spend too much time ‘ruminating’.

Emphasise that most of us worry but it only becomes a problem if it is excessive and stops you getting on with your life. Pose the question: ‘How do you know when rumination or worrying is excessive?’

To illustrate that most of us worry at some time, you might like to share some of the things you worry about. For example:
- being late for an important event;
- having said something to upset someone;
- a test;
● the environment;
● having to make a decision and not knowing what to do for the best.

Ask the class to explain what they already know about worrying and prompt the pupils to get a broad picture. You might like to find out where the pupils learned the ideas they present. Ideas about how to explore worrying and how to manage it can be found in Primary SEAL, Good to be me and in Theme 1 A place to learn in the Year 7 resources. This work on worries and worrying encourages pupils to consider whether the worry was a useful thought or a useless worry.

Ask them to consider the worries you have shared and decide whether they are ‘useful’ or ‘useless’. How might you deal with a useful thought (e.g. do something about it) and how would you get rid of a useless worry (e.g. talk to someone)?

Activity 1

Display the photocard of the young child and ask the class to consider what this child might be worrying about. Repeat the process with each of the photos, asking pupils to record their ideas on sticky notes. Finally, display the photo of the teenager and ask:

● What might this person be worrying about?
● What makes you think this?
● Does what we worry about change as we get older? Why might this be the case?

Invite the pairs to join to make fours and consider the sticky notes that they have produced in the activity. They should classify them into groups and label them. They should then share their classifications and explain why they have chosen to make these classifications.

Ask the pupils to consider:

● Is there any pattern to the worries they have identified?
● Is there a link between worrying and feelings of uncertainty and change?

Activity 2

It will be important to acknowledge that some pupils do not worry. However, it is also important that they understand what worrying is. Perhaps they have a member of their family who is a worrier and this will help them understand the feeling. The learning in this theme will be helpful to these pupils to understand other people.

How do you know if worrying is becoming excessive? In groups, the pupils should choose two ‘worries’ to explore in more detail – they should be ones that are of particular relevance to the group, for example the way we look, exams, our future, and so on. They should decide what worrying might look like in this example (the thoughts and feelings that there might be) and then try to agree what they think might be described as excessive in this circumstance.

From this thinking they might try to determine if it is possible to agree one set of criteria that they can all use to know when they are worrying excessively. They should then agree what they might do to control excessive worrying (or rumination). Consider their suggestions in the light of the ideas below:

● Identify useful and useless worries and dismiss useless worries as ‘mind junk’ and think of a ‘good enough’ plan for ‘useful’ worries.
● Give yourself short periods that you are allowed to worry and stop yourself from worrying any other time.
● Ask yourself these key questions:
  - What’s the evidence?
Can I ever control this?
- Am I overestimating the risk?
- Will this matter next year, next month?

Examine irrational beliefs such as:
- The world should be fair and just.
- I must be liked by everyone.
- I must be excellent at everything.
- I can avoid discomfort by worrying.

Do not make a mountain out of a mole hill.

It is important that pupils feel able to talk to someone if they think they cannot manage worry themselves or if there is a genuine problem. Ask them to consider what they would do in a difficult situation and together draw up a list of people who might help, for example, friend, form tutor, school councillor, peer mediator or buddy.

Pupils should work in pairs to identify one worry that they might seek outside help about and devise a script to explain their concern. The most important thing to identify is the first few words, for example ‘Please can I talk to you …’, ‘I just can’t stop worrying …’, ‘It might be irrational but …’

**Plenary**

Ask pupils to consider what they have found out about worrying through the activity by using the following questions:
- Does everyone worry?
- How can we tell when worrying takes over and becomes excessive?
- What key ideas do you think might help?
- What might I do when worrying stops me from getting on with my life?
- What might I do when worrying gets in the way of learning?

Make a list of any strategies that the group identifies that they find helpful.

**Applying learning**

During the next few days pupils should identify any times when they worry and use some of the techniques to manage their worries. Those pupils who do not tend to worry themselves might consider people they are close to who do worry, and suggest what they might do if worrying becomes excessive.
Learning opportunity 4: Looking on the bright side

**Overall learning outcomes**

15. I have a range of strategies for managing impulses and strong emotions so they do not lead me to behave in ways that would have negative consequences for me or for other people.

17. I understand how health can be affected by emotions and know a range of ways to keep myself well and happy.

18. I have a range of strategies to reduce, manage or change strong and uncomfortable feelings such as anger, anxiety, stress and jealousy.

**Year 8 learning outcomes**

- I can manage my anxiety.
- I have thought about what makes me feel good and use this to make me feel well and happy.

**Resources**

Resource sheet 3.4.1 – Coping strategy cards

Resource sheet 3.4.2 – Catastrophe consequences

Resource sheet 3.4.3 – Catastrophe quiz

**Starter/introduction**

Explain that we are all different and how we cope can vary from day to day. Sometimes we feel negative and tend to look on the ‘dark side’ of everything and sometimes we feel positive and look on the ‘bright side’. Explain to the pupils that in this short game they will work in pairs to tell a story – one of them will be looking on the bright side the other should be looking on the dark side. Pupils should take it in turns to tell a story, a sentence at a time, alternating with ‘the bright side’ and ‘the dark side’. Ask for a volunteer to demonstrate this with you:

*I woke up and thought how good it was that it was Saturday. Then I remembered that I had a deadline and I would have to work all day. I thought how interesting my project was and that my friend was coming over. The phone rang and she cancelled. Well, the sun was shining so I took my work outside. It was really cold and I locked myself out.*

An example to start with might be:

*I was walking across the park when I met …*

Ask pupils to share what it felt like doing this task from either perspective.

**Activity 1: Coping strategies**

Explain that there are many ways that people cope with a difficult experience and that this depends upon the way they think about things. These strategies are provided on Resource sheet 3.4.1:

- **Acceptance**: resigning yourself to what has happened.
- **Catastrophising**: seeing the situation in the worst possible way.
- **Other-blame**: blaming others for the negative experience.
- **Positive reappraisal**: attaching a positive meaning to the event in terms of personal growth – for example you might have learned something from the experience.
Putting into perspective: thinking that the situation is not so serious compared to other things.

Refocus on planning: thinking about what steps to take in order to handle the negative event.

Positive refocusing: thinking about positive situations/issues instead of the negative event.

Rumination: thinking about the negative feelings associated with the situation.

Self-blame: blaming yourself for the negative experience.

Pupils should work in pairs to look at the coping strategy cards and put them in order of how helpful they think they might be, as a way of keeping well and happy. Ask them to share the three that they think are most helpful and compare them with research that found that the most helpful response is considered to be positive reappraisal. This is when we consider the event useful in that it improves us in some way – perhaps we learn something from it. Rumination, self-blame and catastrophising are linked with depression.

Activity 2: Be positive

Explain that this next activity is designed to help pupils think of how they might use positive reappraisal more and avoid catastrophising. Point out that some people tend to look at things in a negative way while others tend to be positive – when things go wrong we can either think of it as a total catastrophe, be realistic or be unrealistically positive.

For example: You lose your car keys you could think:

a) Oh no! I can’t find the keys. Someone must have taken them. They have probably broken into my house already and stolen everything. When I get home there will be nothing there just an empty house. I won’t have my photos or all my favourite things. They will probably set fire to the house to hide any evidence. What about my dog … oh dear.

b) Let me think. Where have I been today? I will go back through all the places I have been. If I don’t find them I will then have to have my locks changed – a nuisance but I will just have to pay. I will decide to put my keys in the front pocket of my bag in future and make sure I get into the routine.

c) I can’t find the keys – well you never know where that might lead. I will walk home and perhaps I will meet someone really exciting or find out something that will change my life. I am sure it will be a real opportunity.

Ask for a volunteer to be the ‘actor’ and give them a scenario, for example:

- waiting for the bus to school but it is late;
- getting ready to go to a party and the heel comes off their favourite pair of shoes;
- forgetting their homework and if they go back home for it they will be late for school.

Ask for six more volunteers – two will be catastrophers (see every problem as a catastrophe), two ‘keep your headers’ (use positive reappraisal) and two will be hypers (unrealistically optimistic).

These six people will take it in turns to provide thoughts for the ‘actor’, keeping in their roles. You might like to model the idea yourself using the example above. Encourage the positive reappraisal group to give realistic thoughts and ideas about how they might learn from the experience.

Repeat with a new set of volunteers.

Activity 3: Catastrophe consequences

This activity is based upon the game of consequences. Each pupil will need a copy of Resource sheet 3.4.2 and a pen. Pupil 1 should describe a situation that might be a problem in the first box at the top of the page. They should pass their paper to Pupil 2 who should write a catastrophising outcome. They should fold the paper so that the problem situation can be seen but the catastrophising outcome can not be seen, leaving space for two more responses (the paper will fold like a concertina). They should pass this on...
to Pupil 3 who should write a realistic or positive appraisal outcome before folding the paper so that only
the problem situation can be seen. Pupil 4 should write an over-optimistic outcome.

The paper should be returned to Pupil 1, who should open the paper out to see the responses. An
example of the finished product might be:

You arrange to meet with your mum to go shopping after school. You wait for an hour but she doesn’t turn up.
You try to phone her, but you keep getting the answer phone.

Do you?

a) Think that she left the house and there must have been a terrible accident as she waited at the bus
stop. She has been taken to hospital. She must have dropped her phone and it has broken.

b) Think that there are many reasons she might be late. Perhaps she has missed the bus and her mobile
phone might have run out of battery. Remember next time to have a back-up plan if people don’t turn
up.

c) Think that she has won the lottery and has gone to get her winnings. She is probably so excited that
she has totally forgotten about your arrangement to go shopping.

Pupils should look at the results of this game, choose five or six of the ‘catastrophe consequences’ to
create a ‘catastrophe quiz’ (using Resource sheet 3.4.3). They should make sure that there is one of each
type of response and use it with their friends and families to see if they tend to catastrophise or not.

Plenary

Recap on the main learning from the session. Emphasise that how we respond to things can change the
way that we feel. This can improve our well-being, and can even reduce depression later in life.

Ask pupils to summarise what they know about thinking positively about a problem – particularly trying
to grow personally from experiencing a difficult situation. You might like to use the following questions:

- Can you think of some examples of when you have learned from an experience and used this
learning?
- What are the barriers to learning from your experiences?

Applying learning

Pupils might try out their ‘catastrophe quiz’ on a friend or member of their family. Encourage them to try
to teach at least one other person about catastrophising and the benefits of positive reappraisal when
things seem to be going wrong. They should report back on their success. They should all try to use the
positive reappraisal approach if things go wrong.

Teachers’ note: If your school has a buddy system the buddies could provide help to ‘positively reappraise’
situations.
Learning opportunity 5: Positive psychology

**Overall learning outcome**
17. I understand how health can be affected by emotions and know a range of ways to keep myself well and happy.

**Year 8 learning outcome**
- I can tell you what makes me feel good and use this to make me feel well and happy.

**Preparation**
Prepare some ideas of things that you feel grateful for, for example: you are healthy, you have a job you like, your children are healthy, you have enough food, and so on.

**Starter/introduction**
Explain that you are going to be looking at the things that help us to feel good in life. Stress that we all have lots of things to be grateful for and explain some of the things you have thought of in preparation for the session.

Ask pupils to jot down all the things that they might be grateful for. These can be as far-fetched as they like but they should not be sarcastic or cynical.

**Activity 1: Keeping happy**
Explain that if you search on the Internet you can find a whole range of ideas about keeping well and happy. An example of one of the writers is Tal Ben-Shahar who works at Harvard University as a professor in Positive Psychology.

He suggests the following two strategies to keep you feeling positive and build your emotional resilience later in life.

**Keep a gratitude journal.** These can be big things (like ‘I’m grateful for my family’) and small things (like ‘I’m grateful for that nice meal I had today.’) ‘When we focus on the positive, we stop taking our lives for granted, and we become happier.’

**Sweat it out.** Working out can do wonders for the way you feel. In fact, a recent study at Duke University showed working out for 30 minutes three times a week is equivalent to popping Zoloft (this is a drug that can be used to help people who are depressed or anxious).

Other strategies we might consider are:

**Socialise.** When we are with people we like it often lifts our spirits, especially if we ‘have a laugh’ or do something together.

**The power of music and song.** Music is a great way to change the way we feel, but we need to choose wisely what we listen to. When we feel down we often choose music that fits the way we feel and that makes us feel even ‘lower’.

Ben-Shahar, T. *Tips for Happiness* © Tal Ben-Shahar. Used with kind permission
Ask the pupils if they think these strategies are useful and if they have any other ideas. Invite them to work in groups to design an investigation to find out which of the strategies is most effective.

The pupils will need to:
- decide upon how to measure ‘happiness’ or well-being;
- make sure that they are setting up a fair test;
- agree how long it might take to see the results.

They should then carry out their investigation and see which of the strategies is most useful. The pupils might develop their ideas then further explore these as part of a science lesson.

**Mini-plenary**

Ask pupils to feed back their ideas for their investigation to the rest of the group.

Which of their own strategies for feeling well and happy might they wish to investigate further? You might like to tell them the things that keep you emotionally well.

**Activity 2: But …**

It is important that pupils understand that life is a balance and when people talk about ‘happiness’ and well-being it doesn’t mean that you have to be happy all the time. Read these quotes from the Positive Psychology Professor, Tal Ben-Shahar:

- **Accept life as a roller coaster.** Optimistic people have ups and downs like everyone else. ‘The difference is that happy people realise that if they’re sad, they’ll get over it,’ he says. ‘There’s a misconception that being happy means being on a high and having positive moods all the time. That’s not what happiness is. If you’re happy, you have a life – overall – that you find both meaningful and pleasurable.’

- **Feel your pain.** We’re all under a lot of pressure to be happy – but we need to allow ourselves to feel pain and sadness, too. ‘Paradoxically, when you allow yourself to feel negative emotions, you’re likely to be happier in the long run,’ he says.

Use a community of enquiry, if you are familiar with this approach, to explore one or both of these ideas. If not, use them as a starting point for discussion:
- What do you think the author meant by the ideas expressed?
- Do you think we are under pressure to be happy all the time? If so, where is this pressure coming from?
- Does anyone agree with the author’s view? Why do you think this?
- Have you any examples to show why you think this?
- Do you think this is always the case? Are there any exceptions?
- What do you think someone who disagreed with the author might say?

**Plenary**

Summarise key ideas from the discussion or community of enquiry and agree some actions that everyone can try out.

**Applying learning**

When the pupils have carried out their investigations, they should feed back what they have found and decide what they might do differently in the light of their findings.
Learning opportunity 6: Emotions and memory

**Overall learning outcomes**
9. I understand why feelings sometimes ‘take over’ or get out of control and know what makes me angry or upset.

**Year 8 learning outcomes**
- I understand that sometimes thoughts and feelings are triggered by emotional memories.
- I understand the power of emotional memories to trigger thoughts and feelings.
- I can understand that emotional memories can create feelings that can get out of control.

**Preparation**
It will be important to find out about the pupils in your class and be aware of any particularly difficult experiences that they might have had, before using this learning opportunity.

Emotional memories can be very strong and you will need to be careful to ensure that the pupils feel comfortable during this learning opportunity. Keep vigilant about how the pupils might be feeling and provide opportunities for support to any pupils who you identify are feeling uncomfortable.

**Resources**
Invite the pupils to collect photographs depicting both strong emotions and others that are emotionally neutral from the internet, newspapers or magazines, and number each one. Prepare six to eight sets (one for each small group) of about 12 to 18 photographs or pictures.

**Starter/introduction**
Ask the pupils to each think about the things that they remember and jot down the first things that come into their heads. They do not need to share these memories with anyone but should think about why it is they remember these particular things and note down the emotions that are associated with each memory.

Ask for any ideas about what makes one thing easy to remember and another thing difficult.

If the pupils don’t volunteer that strong emotions helped them remember, you might explain that scientists have found that strong emotions such as falling in love, fear, horror, anger, excitement all help us to remember. Ask them to consider if this is true in their experience.

The power of strong emotions to help us remember things is often beneficial but sometimes it causes people particular problems. We might see something that reminds us of a frightening event and feel the emotion associated with the event. Ask the pupils to look at their list again to think about whether there is any particular thing that makes them remember an incident or experience – it might be an object or a sound or smell.

**Activity**
Hand out the photographs so that each group has about 15 pictures. They should write the numbers 1–15 down the left-hand side of a piece of paper and for each picture the group should agree the emotion it elicits and a rating for how strong the emotion is (i.e. very strong, quite strong, weak, no emotion). They should store their ratings for reference later.
They should then pass their photographs on to another group who place the photographs upside down on the table and turn them over in turn. Provide three minutes viewing time before covering the photographs.

The pupils should then test their memory by writing down what each picture or photograph represents. They should return the pictures and their responses to the original group who can analyse the responses to find out:

- Which pictures were remembered most?
- Were pictures with a strong emotional component remembered most?
- What does this tell us about the way that we remember things?

Further analysis of the data might be carried out in mathematics lessons.

**Plenary**

The groups should feed back what they have learned from the work they have been doing. They should consider:

- What do their findings mean for how they learn?
- What do their findings mean for life in general?
- Did they find it easy to agree what emotion went with the picture and how strong it was?

In the following learning opportunity they will be exploring how understanding how we feel about something can help us.

**Applying learning**

Pupils might ask members of their family or older adults if they have any memories they would like to share. They should find out what prompts the memory, for example, is it a piece of music or a smell?
Learning opportunity 7: Emotional memories

Overall learning outcome

9. I understand why feelings sometimes ‘take over’ or get out of control and know what makes me angry or upset.

Year 8 learning outcomes

● I understand that sometimes thoughts and feelings are triggered by emotional memories.
● I understand the power of emotional memories to trigger thoughts and feelings.
● I can understand that emotional memories can create feelings that can get out of control.

Preparation

Ask pupils to bring in objects that remind them of pleasurable or important events. Emphasise that they should not bring in anything valuable or that they do not want to share with others, but they will need to be able to explain why they have brought in that particular object to a partner. You should bring in an object of your own to share. You might need to offer to look after some of the objects at the end of the lesson.

Resources

Resource sheet 3.7.1 – Did it really happen?

Starter/introduction

Remind the class of the previous learning opportunity if you used it and explain that during this learning opportunity you will be continuing to explore the issue of emotional memory. This time you will look at how it might get in the way of learning.

Show the object you have brought in and the memory associated with it. Tell the group, ‘This … always makes me feel … because it reminds me of … ‘. Provide an opportunity for the pupils to share their objects, the feelings they illicit and the memories behind them with a partner. They might use the sentence stem given above.

Provide an opportunity for pupils to volunteer to share their partner’s objects, feelings and memories with the class. The ‘owner’ of the memory should give permission.

Activity

Read out one of the scenarios from Resource sheet 3.7.1. Explain that these are all likely to remain as memories with a strong emotional trigger. Ask pupils to identify the strong feelings that will be associated with the event. How might the character feel when they return to the scene?

Ask pupils to work in groups to read a scenario and identify the feelings associated with the event and the place. It might be helpful to remind them of the ‘fight flight’ response. This was explained in both Primary SEAL and used in the Year 7 materials. The presentation from Primary SEAL (Fight or flight) might also help. The memories might trigger the strong feelings and a desire to flee, fight or freeze. The pupils should discuss what the characters involved might do to ensure that the memories don’t get in the way of their learning.
Ideas might include:

- Recognise how you are feeling.
- Calm down – relax, exercise, use distraction.
- Think of other positive things that have happened.
- Use self-talk – ‘there is no reason to feel like this because …’.

They should present their ideas to the class.

**Plenary**

Remind pupils of the learning outcomes and explore the learning with the following questions:

- What have you learned about memory and emotions?
- What advice would you give to someone who finds it hard to return to somewhere where they were embarrassed, angry or scared?

**Applying learning**

Keep a journal of an experience during the week that is associated with a strong feeling or that elicits an emotional memory.

Try to identify how you might predict what that emotion might be and how to calm down or manage those feelings. Some pupils might require support to do this.
Learning opportunity 8: Feelings and moods

Overall learning outcome
8. I know and accept what I am feeling, and can label my feelings.

Year 8 learning outcomes
● I can recognise what mood I am in and what might help me change it if I need to.
● I understand the difference between feelings and moods.
● I can recognise and acknowledge the moods I am experiencing.

Resources
Photocards – moods
Resource sheet 3.8.1 – Scenario cards
Resource sheet 3.8.2 – Feeling prompt cards

Starter/introduction
Explain the difference between feelings and moods: a feeling is short term and is usually a response to a situation, a mood is more long-standing and is not in response to an immediate stimulus.

Show the photocards that represent a range of moods and ask pupils to work in pairs to discuss the mood they think the person in the photocards might be feeling and record them on a mini-whiteboard.

Activity 1
Divide the class into groups and allocate to each group a mood from the list compiled in the introduction. Do not let the other groups know the moods being explored.

The groups should discuss what it means to be in this type of mood. They should consider what they would do, think and feel in the situations described in the scenario cards from Resource sheet 3.8.1.

Ask them to use one side of their mini-whiteboards to record what they would be thinking and feeling and the other what an observer would see or hear so that they might know what mood the person was in.

Draw the class together and ask for one or more volunteers from each group. They should carry out a simple activity – for example walking across the room and settling down to work in the manner of the mood their group has been exploring. The rest of the class (not their group members) should guess the mood they are portraying.

Activity 2
Regroup the pupils so that the new groups include a mixture of ‘moods’ and ask them to work together using a scenario from the Resource sheet to role-play the event. Each person should do this keeping to the ‘mood’ they were allocated in the first activity.

The groups should take it in turns to show their role-play scenario to the class. The rest of the class should be able to stop the role-play at any point and volunteer to replace one of the actors in the scenario – they should do this in the mood they were allocated in the first activity.
**Activity 3**

Ask the class to consider the difference between moods and feelings, re-emphasising that a mood is the way you are feeling over time, probably caused by a sequence of events (or sometimes we just wake up in a happy or sad mood and we don’t know why). Whereas a feeling is usually in response to an event, for example, if you find out you have won a competition, you are going to see a friend or you see a dangerous animal, you might respond by feeling excited, happy or scared.

They should repeat their scenario in the light of the feelings generated by one of the feeling prompt cards on Resource sheet 3.8.2.

**Activity 4: Debrief**

Check out how the class is feeling and explore how the group might make sure that everyone leaves the room feeling in a positive mood. The group might get into their ‘mood’ groups from Activity 1. The groups who have had a more positive mood should act as consultants to try to make sure that those in more negative mood groups are feeling alright.

Alternatively, you might ask them to lead a warm-up game from those listed at the beginning of the theme.

**Plenary**

The plenary will be important to draw together the class understanding about mood. Questions to start the discussion might include:

- How easy was it to change and stick to your allocated mood?
- How did you do this in your groups?
- What difference does your mood make to what happens to you?
- What moods do you prefer to be in? Why?
- How can we change our mood?

List the strategies suggested.

**Applying learning**

In their groups, pupils should use some of the strategies identified in the learning opportunity over the week and report back on their impact. Ask pupils to spot their friends’ and families’ moods, check if their guess is right and help them to change that mood, if they want to.
Learning opportunity 9: Review of the theme

Overall learning outcome
14. I understand that how I express my feelings can have a significant impact both on other people and on what happens to me.

Year 8 learning outcomes
- I know what my triggers are for feeling excitement.
- I can use different ways to manage my excitement.

Resources
Resource sheet 3.9.1 – Review of the theme challenge

Preparation
Prepare for the lesson by identifying some of the things that make you feel excited about teaching, particularly the group you are working with.

Write a ‘script’ or think through how you might demonstrate that excitement when you enter the classroom and prepare yourself for this. It will help if you are very ‘upbeat’.

Starter/introduction
Start the session using your prepared script, making your excitement as authentic as possible by the way you present yourself: level of activity, bounce in your step, facial expression, body language, and so on.

Explain that the learning opportunity is about the feelings of excitement at the same time as providing an opportunity to reflect upon the learning over the theme, and preparing for the new year/theme through a small-group challenge. Explain that the groups will only be successful if the pupils can demonstrate high but appropriate levels of excitement.

Pose the question: What do we find exciting? Ask pupils to share some things that they have done that they have found exciting.

Activity
Pupils should work in groups to complete Resource sheet 3.9.1 and all the groups should share their presentations. Provide an opportunity for the rest of the class to give feedback against the criteria on the challenge sheet.

Plenary
Remind the class about the learning outcomes. Explore whether the pupils felt excited prior to sharing their presentations and how they managed these feelings. You might use these questions:
- How did you feel before your presentation?
- What things make you excited?
- How can you manage those feelings?
- How would you feel if you were to deliver your presentation to another class? The whole school?
Applying learning
Negotiate an opportunity for pupils to share their presentations to a Year 7 class or to their parents.

Reinforcement across the school day
- Use starters, plenaries and reflection in lessons to encourage pupils to review ‘how we are feeling right now’, ‘how I felt at the time’, ‘what my body language is telling me’, ‘instead of thinking x I could have thought y’, and so on.
- Use language about feelings and extend the emotional vocabulary – across subjects.
- Work on relaxation and visualisation techniques, for example in PE or drama.
- Add thoughts on ways of dealing with difficult feelings to the class charter, such as ‘our favourite worry beater’, ‘beating the blues’ and ‘ways to calm down’.
- Make scrapbooks, posters or laminated cards with class or personal reminders. For example ‘our best worry beater’, ‘ten things to do when you feel blue’, ‘calming-down tricks’, ‘don’t explode, instead…’ and ‘reasons to be cheerful…’.
- Use self-review checklists with questions about how the pupils understood and managed their own emotions.

Whole-school approach
- Use modelling by staff – of emotional awareness, careful and precise use of language, coping with difficult emotions in a rational and responsible way, promoting own well-being and happiness, encouraging (the right kind of) laughter and fun.
- Refer to ways to manage worries and anxiety.
- Use routine inclusion of discussion on how people feel about things, such as change, moving into new subjects, new building, moving up to the next class, the coming Ofsted inspection, illness of headteacher or preparing for tests. This may be done formally, such as with questionnaires and evaluation, or informally in discussion.
- Consider how different parts of the school make people feel – colour, tone, mood – and build on suggestions for improvements.
- Encourage the pupils to think about how to make the school feel better, such as friendly, warm, welcoming or calm.
- Develop chill-out rooms, relaxation rooms and rooms to let off steam.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on incidences of poor behaviour and include key questions on how people felt about what happened, the role, tone and body language played in an incidence and what they might have done differently. Give opportunities to calm down before dealing with the problem. Provide opportunities to make others feel better.