

THE BIG ADVENTURE

Recognizing your emotions and learning to calm down

Target competency	Manage one's emotions and stress effectively
Cross-curricular competency (QEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct their identity
General objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize some of one's own emotions and those of others Use a method to calm oneself



INTRODUCING THE CHARACTERS AND THE PROGRAM

Before beginning the workshop, introduce the characters and the program using the materials provided on the [OFF-TRAIL website](#), under [Workshops and tools for students/Basic workshops/Introduction to the program and the characters](#). You can also use the pattern found there to make puppets of Leo and Charlie with your students. If your students are unfamiliar with certain items connected with a camp, you can bring sample objects to class to facilitate their understanding (flashlight, sleeping bag, etc.).

THE ADVENTURES OF LEO AND CHARLIE

A big adventure is about to begin. On the first day of school, all the students go to Camp OFF-TRAIL. When they arrive in the morning, students get on the bus that will take them to camp for the day.

On the bus, Leo and Charlie sit together, even though they don't know each other.

Leo is very shy. He usually likes to do things with his mom and dad. Leo wishes his parents could have gone with him to camp for the day. He already misses them. As the bus starts moving, he gets tears in his eyes. His mouth looks like an upside-down banana. He curls up in his seat and looks out the window. Oh my! What's the matter with Leo?

Next to Leo is Charlie. She's grinning from ear to ear. She's smiling so hard, her eyes are almost completely closed. She's always dreamed of riding in a yellow school bus. And she loves visiting new places. She's looking all around and has butterflies in her stomach. How is Charlie feeling right now?

Charlie looks at Leo and thinks he looks sad. She remembers a time when her own mouth looked like an upside-down banana. At that moment, her mom took her hand which made her feel good. Charlie decides to ask Leo if he'd like her to hold his hand. He says yes and smiles at her. Leo feels better. He no longer feels alone. And off they go to camp!

DID YOU KNOW?

From an early age, children learn to recognize their own emotions and those of others. From the age of 3, children can identify certain emotions on the faces of others, such as joy, anger, sadness and fear. On the other hand, they sometimes make mistakes and can mix up certain emotions. As they grow up, students develop their emotional skills and become quicker and more accurate at recognizing other people's emotions by observing their faces.

There are many advantages to encouraging students to develop their emotional skills. Among other things, it enables students to read other people's emotions correctly so they can modify their behaviour to maintain positive relationships, facilitates academic success by enabling them to cope better with difficulties, and helps them with conflict resolution and empathy.

(Naître et grandir, 2014)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Before starting the activity, print out (in colour if possible) the *Emotion Cards* worksheet (below) for each student. You can cut the cards out, laminate them and group them together on a ring for safekeeping.
2. Explain to the students that we can learn to read emotions by looking at our own faces or those people's face, as Charlie did with Leo. Ask the students what Charlie saw on Leo's face and what Charlie's face looked like.
3. Hand out *the Emotion Cards* to each student and ask them to describe what they notice on the faces.
4. Place the students in a circle. Explain that they will take turns imitating an emotion. The rest of the group must try to figure out which emotion is being imitated by the student.
5. Whisper into one student's ear an emotion to imitate (anger, sadness, fear, disgust, joy or surprise). When the other students have guessed the emotion, repeat with another student.
6. When students guess the right emotion, ask them to name the clues they saw on the student's face that helped them identify the emotion being imitated.
7. If you have access to a large mirror or several small ones, you can invite students to observe their faces as they mimic an emotion. They'll be able to observe and recognize the clues on their own faces when they're experiencing an emotion.
8. Conclude the activity by explaining that when we're feeling an emotion, we can use tricks to calm ourselves down. Invite them to go get a stuffed animal (stuffy) and settle down in a quiet corner. Students must be able to lie on their backs. Once the students are lying down, you can turn off the lights and play soft music if you wish. The aim is simply to create an atmosphere of relaxation. Ask the students to place their stuffy on their stomach. Explain that they will be experimenting with belly breathing (a.k.a. diaphragmatic breathing). On inhaling, i.e., when they breathe in through their nose, they must try to inflate their belly so that the toy rises toward the ceiling. On exhaling, they release completely. Guide them for at least 10 belly breaths.
9. Ask students how they feel after this exercise and invite them to use it as often as they like to calm themselves down.



8



9



10



11-13



CHALLENGE

Suggest the following challenge:

- Before the next OFF-TRAIL workshop, show your parents how to do belly breathing.



14

ENABLING REINVESTMENT

To encourage reinvestment in learning, keep the emotion cards in the classroom. When a student experiences a situation that evokes an emotion, ask them to use the cards to identify and name the emotion they are experiencing.

You can integrate belly breathing into your daily classroom routine, so that students practice the technique regularly and learn to use it on their own. You can set aside specific moments in the routine, suggest breathing when you feel the group needs it, or propose breathing as a way of calming down when a student is experiencing an intense emotion. You can also have students experiment with other ways of taking breaths. Here are a few ideas: blow out a candle, imitate the sound of the wind, smell a perfume or flower, etc.

READING SUGGESTIONS

- Lienas, A. (2018). *The Color Monster: A Story About Emotions*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.
- van Hout, M. (2011). *Today I Am*. Fish Book Co.
- Witek, J. (2014). *In My Heart: A Book Of Feelings*. Harry N. Abrams.



Text is under a [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) licence. Graphics designed with Canva are under [Canva's content licence](https://www.canva.com/branding/content-licensing/). © [OFF-TRAIL program](#) by Centre RBC d'expertise universitaire en santé mentale (2025), Université de Sherbrooke.



HANDOUT TO PRINT
Emotion Cards in colour

ANGER



JOY



SADNESS



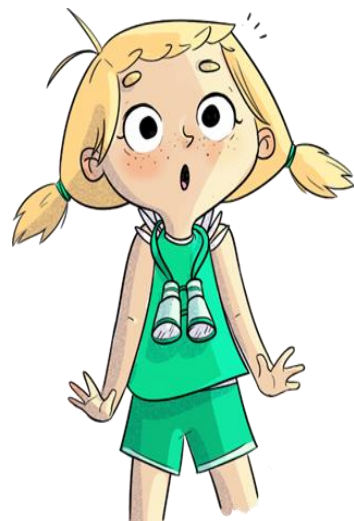
FEAR



DISGUST



SURPRISE



HANDOUT TO PRINT
Emotion Cards in black and white

ANGER



JOY



SADNESS



FEAR



DISGUST



SURPRISE

