



THE PENDULUM

" *I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them.*"

—Someone Famous

OVERVIEW

Students will identify people or situations that trigger shifts in their emotions and practice talking to others about their emotional experiences.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- To increase students' self-awareness
- To help students process their emotions
- To increase students' understanding of each other

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤15 minutes

LEVEL

- Middle School
- Upper Elementary

MATERIALS

- Equipment to watch [video](#)
- Paper
- Pencil/pen

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Identify the people and places that trigger changes in their emotions
- Analyze positive and negative consequences of emotional expression in different settings

- Discuss what triggers their emotions to change

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Empathy

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness

MINDFULNESS COMPONENTS

- Focused Attention
- Non-Judgment

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Think about a situation(s) or person/people that triggered a change in your emotions recently. Take a piece of paper and write the name of the person or the situation. Fold the paper and imagine it representing the change that occurred in your emotional response (e.g., I felt happy when I woke up, after meeting with my boss I felt irritated). Try to really imagine yourself experiencing that emotional change. Next, unfold the paper and this time, imagine your emotional response returning to the original state (e.g., from irritated to happy again). Take a few minutes to just breathe.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Pre-check the [video](#) to ensure the sound is working.
- Students will each need a piece of paper and something to write with.
- Students will need partners for this exercise. You can pre-select partners or choose them based on seating location.
- Play the following [video](#) for students
- Follow along with your students and model active participation.
- Have a discussion with the class using the questions below:

- Why is it helpful for us to be more aware of the many different types of emotions that we can experience?
- What are some strategies we can use when we begin to experience a negative emotion?
- How can we return to the emotions or feelings that we desire if we find ourselves feeling negative emotions?
- What are the positive and negative consequences of expressing your emotions? How does it feel to express your emotions to others?

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- Do you notice a change in how students respond to triggering situations?
- How can you create a safer environment so that students are able to talk about their emotions?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

[Research](#) indicates that greater emotional awareness is related to the use of more effective emotion regulation strategies. Particularly, individuals who express greater clarity about the kinds of emotions they are experiencing and greater ability to shift their attention towards or away from their emotions also report using emotion regulation strategies that have been associated with greater well-being (e.g., reappraisal and acceptance). Similarly people who report having greater awareness about the source that triggered their emotions report a lower engagement in emotion regulation strategies like suppression, which is not associated with greater well-being.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Middle school is challenging for many students, and puberty is associated with an increase in [emotional arousal and volatility](#). Such changes can make it difficult for students to stay focused in class or to build strong relationships with their teachers and classmates. Thus, helping students to develop greater emotional awareness is important as it impacts the kinds of regulation strategies that they use, which can affect their overall well-being. This is particularly important given the increased rates of mental health challenges among adolescents in the age of social media.

SOURCE

[Move This World Middle School SEL Curriculum](#)