

Lesson One – Everyone is Going Through Something You Can’t See

CREATIVE ACTIVITY – DRAWING AND/OR WRITING

Lesson Intention:

After having a panic attack during a nationally televised basketball game, Kevin Love published a very brave and vulnerable article sharing his struggles with mental health. The outpouring of support that came from Kevin sharing his story was the inspiration for this curriculum. Kevin opens the door to talking about emotions in a school setting, a place where emotions are often not thought of as appropriate to share.

In this lesson, students will learn that everyone goes through difficult experiences in their lives, and they can’t always see what their classmates, friends, or teachers are going through. The educator will explain that we all feel different emotions throughout the day, and it can be helpful to notice these emotions. For the creative activity, students will draw pictures and/or write about a time when they felt a strong emotion (such as sadness, love, anger, fear, etc.). This will help start a discussion about different emotions and encourage students to welcome all of their feelings. This lesson will teach students that everyone goes through tough times, and that it’s normal to feel challenging emotions.

Learning Goals:

- Destigmatize emotions that are often labeled as negative by our culture.
- Raise awareness that students are not alone in their sadness or challenging emotions and can share their emotions with their teacher or a trusted adult.
- Develop an understanding of how drawing and writing can be used as a tool to express emotions.

Materials for Lesson:

- [Lesson PowerPoint](#)
- [Download Lesson Plan \(PDF\)](#)

Prior to Teaching this Lesson:

1. Review classroom expectations and remind students that it is important to listen and to be kind when another student is speaking.
2. Tell a personal story through drawing and/or writing – have it ready to share with students.
3. Have paper, markers, crayons, colored pencils, or paint or pens available for students.

Lesson Plan:

Display the 'welcome slide' from the Lesson 1 PowerPoint as you begin.

**Slide 1*

- As discussed in the teacher training, remember to make the suggested language below authentic to yourself, meaningful for your students, and tailored to your students' age group.

Launching the Lesson:

**Slide 2*

- Explain that everyone feels many different emotions throughout the day. Share that this is part of being human. Share a few different types of emotions that you frequently experience within a day – joy, sadness, nervousness, frustration, etc.

Example of What You Could Say:

"Today, we are going to talk about emotions. Maybe this is a word that is familiar to you, and you know some of the names for emotions, or maybe this is something new to think about. Emotions are the feelings that we have like being happy, sad, angry, nervous, scared – there are so many different emotions, and they are all okay to feel. We all experience multiple emotions throughout each day.

Can anyone think of any emotions that you have felt today?

We can sometimes see other people's emotions through their facial expressions, like a smile or a frown (*give a few examples of various expressions*), or through their body language – the way they hold their arms, head, or shoulders (*cross your arms, hang your head, or slouch your shoulders to show students what this could look like*).

But other times, we can't see how people are feeling because it is inside of them (*you can point to your chest/heart or your head*). And they may not be able to see how we are feeling because it is inside of us.

Everyone feels different emotions, we all feel sad and angry and scared. When we feel strong emotions, one way to help us move through that feeling is to draw a picture or write a story about the experience that makes us feel the strong emotion. Can you think of a time when you felt really mad? Or really sad? Or maybe a time when you felt another strong emotion, like love. You are going to draw a picture or write a story about this experience. You can use color and shapes and words to show how you were feeling.

I want us to understand that we do not have to hide our feelings and pretend that we are okay when we are struggling. And to remember that we feel lots of different emotions throughout every day of our lives."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Introducing the Creative Activity:

- Share with your students either the picture that you drew or what you wrote. By doing this, you are modeling your own vulnerability, sharing an experience of a time when you were going through something difficult and no one would have been able to tell just by looking at you.
- Give ideas for what students can draw and/or write about.

Example of What You Could Say:

“Today, we are going to do a fun activity together. We are going to think of a time in our lives when we felt a strong emotion and draw/write about that experience. First, I want to show you my example. I drew a picture/wrote about a time when I felt a strong emotion. (*Share an age appropriate example of a time in your life such as missing a friend or a family member who lives far away, or maybe a story about the loss of a pet. You can highlight the words and images you used to show the emotion you were feeling.*) Now, you are going to draw/and or write about a time when you felt a strong emotion. You can use different colors and objects to express the different types of emotions. There is no right or wrong way to do this activity. We have paper and pencils/crayons/markers/paint, and we are going to draw/write for 10-15 minutes. I will walk around and help you if you need help with ideas.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Creative Activity:

**Slide 3*

- Pass out the Creative Activity handout included in the “Materials for the Lesson” section to your students.
- *If you’re unable to print the handout, a blank sheet of paper can be used as a substitute.
- Students spend approximately 15 minutes on their creative activity. Educators should walk around to support those who need help getting started and redirect those who need to be brought back to the activity.

Lesson Closure:

Invite students to share their drawing and/or writing. The hope is that students will share, but it is optional. It may take some time for the students to feel comfortable, especially if they don’t already know each other. The way to measure the success of the lesson and students’ engagement is not through their sharing aloud, but through their willingness to engage in the activity. For some students it might require a few lessons before they feel comfortable doing the activity. This can be viewed as a process, allowing students to grow comfortable in their own time.

Example of What You Could Say:

“Okay, let’s come back together again. Thank you so much for working on your beautiful drawing/writing. You all did such a wonderful job! Before I ask if anyone wants to share what they worked on, let’s remember to be respectful listeners. Does anyone want to share their drawing and/or writing? If you don’t want to share aloud, but you would like to share your drawing/and or writing with me, you can do that as well.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Additional Activities for Lower Elementary Students:

- Consider adding posters or images in your classroom that represent many of the emotions that students experience in their daily lives. One example could be an **EMOTIONS WHEEL** that a student could turn in order to show the emotion that they are currently feeling in that moment. Another example would be a **FACIAL EXPRESSION POSTER** where you move a cardboard frame each day to be placed over different facial expressions that matches the way the chosen student in the classroom is feeling that day.

Additional Activities for Upper Elementary Students:

- Kevin wrote a letter for the Players' Tribune called "[Everyone is Going Through Something.](#)" In this letter, Kevin shares his own experience with anxiety in an open and vulnerable way. Read an excerpt of the letter aloud or share the letter in its entirety. Then students can write a similar letter either as a **JOURNAL ENTRY** to keep to themselves or a **LETTER** to give to someone that they want to express their feelings to. In order to frame this lesson, educators can also play [Kevin Love's ESPY Award video](#). This video shows why he wrote his letter and communicates to students that everyone feels challenging emotions.