



Yale

Center for Emotional Intelligence



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA

EMPOWERING YOUTH Through Emotional Intelligence



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION:

| | |
|---|------|
| A Social and Emotional Learning Approach to Bullying..... | 3 |
| Background Information on Bullying | 4-7 |
| Preventing Bullying with Emotional Intelligence..... | 8-11 |

SECTION 2: PROGRAM:

| | |
|---|-------|
| Session #1: A Day of Emotions..... | 12-13 |
| Session #2: Emotions Matter for Everything!..... | 14-19 |
| Session #3: The Mood Meter..... | 20-23 |
| Session #4: What is Emotional Intelligence?..... | 24-26 |
| Session #5: Reading Emotions in Faces..... | 27-28 |
| Session #6: Expressing Emotions..... | 29-32 |
| Session #7: Expressing Emotions: Your Voice..... | 33-38 |
| Session #8: Bullying and Emotions..... | 39-42 |
| Session #9: Regulating Emotions | 43-46 |
| Session #10: Bullying and Emotion Regulation | 47-49 |
| Session #11: When You Are Being Bullied | 50 |
| Session #12: When You Witness Bullying | 51 |
| Session #13: When You Have Treated Someone Badly..... | 52 |
| Session #14: Developing a Public Service Announcement (PSA) | 53-55 |
| Tip Sheet for Adults..... | 56-59 |
| What to Do When You Are the Target of Bullying..... | 60-61 |
| What to Do When You Witness Someone Being Bullied..... | 62-63 |
| If You've Treated Someone Badly or Been Accused of Being a Bully..... | 64 |

A SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING APPROACH TO BULLYING

Raising awareness about the destructive impact of bullying helps.
But it's not enough.

Sharing research on the benefits of positive climate is great.
But it's not enough.

Bullying prevention programs are well intended and offer important information.
But they're not enough.

Yet, it is common knowledge among educators, parents and mental health professionals that bullying is bad for health – physical and mental.
So, what do we do?

Evidence shows that many bullying prevention programs don't work to stop bullying because youth lack the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of their lives. Evidence also shows that what *does* work is building skills and changing the social climates in which youth spend time. This is the work of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).

What does Social and Emotional Learning offer?

When children learn how to identify, understand and effectively express their emotions, they have alternatives to aggressive behavior; they build awareness to walk away when someone is mistreating them; they know their own limits and boundaries and can communicate that to another; and they can express and assert themselves when necessary.

With the foundational skills of RULER, the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence approach to Social and Emotional Learning, Clubs can do more than intervene – they can build a culture of respect, kind communication and co-regulation, where children are encouraged to be their best selves and where effective ways of expressing and regulating emotions take the place of unnecessary aggression on the one hand or social withdrawal and being frozen with fear on the other.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON BULLYING

1. What is bullying? **Bullying is intentional harm that is repeated and involves a power imbalance.** Let's unpack this.

a. **The first part of this states that bullying is intentional** – it isn't something that happens by accident, but rather the person doing the harm means to do it and means to do it specifically to the target. Generally, the bully and the target are not strangers.

b. **Next, bullying is repeated or has the potential to be repeated.** Bullying doesn't happen just once, but is instead done over and over by the same aggressor to the same target (though there may be more than one target for the bully and more than one bully for the target). One exception to the need for repetition in the definition is if there is a threat of repetition or the implication that the behavior may happen again.

c. **And finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is a power imbalance between the bully and the target.** We often think of bullying as a big brute beating up on a skinny bespectacled kid. Certainly, this kind of physical power imbalance exists, but it is usually the case that the power imbalance involves social status, age, cultural identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, and differences in ability including identification as having a disability. The imbalance becomes evident in the repetition.

d. **In addition to knowing what bullying is, it's important to understand what it is not: the key differences between a bullying incident and one that simply involves aggression is the lack of repetition and irrelevance of a power imbalance.** Two young people getting into a fight is not necessarily bullying, even if one is bigger or has higher status. What needs to be present is the imposition of the bully's power over the target.

2. Roles in bullying – the role of bully and target are obvious, but they are not the only players in a bullying situation. In most cases, the bully wants an audience – people who can see the results of the power imbalance. There are three kinds of witnesses: people who watch and encourage or egg the bully on, people who watch and do nothing, and people who watch and do something about the situation (though not always in the moment – it sometimes isn't safe to stand up to the bully in the moment). It is through the reactions of the witnesses that bullies exert their power and show their dominance. Without an audience, the bully's actions do not show or increase their power and dominance.

3. What are the different kinds of bullying?

a. **We often think of bullying as what is known as direct bullying.** This kind of bullying involves harming someone physically – by hitting, shoving, spitting on, and/or damaging their property – or verbally by making fun of someone, name calling, belittling, insulting, threatening with harm, and/or intimidating them.

b. **Another kind of bullying – called indirect bullying** – involves hurting someone's relationships with others by spreading rumors, gossiping, or excluding or isolating the person. By engaging in these behaviors, the bully tries to exert power by cutting off the target from their friends.



c. **The third kind of bullying is cyberbullying.** This kind of bullying happens through email, texts, and social media like Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram. This kind of bullying can be direct or indirect. Just as in in-person bullying, direct cyberbullying can involve verbally harming someone by threatening them, making fun of them, insulting or belittling them. Indirect cyberbullying involves hurting the target's relationships by spreading rumors, gossiping, and excluding or isolating them.

d. It is important to recognize all kinds of bullying because they all cause damage, not just to the target, but also to the witnesses and bullies themselves.

4. Prevalence of bullying: According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than one out of every five (20.8%) students ages 12-18 report being bullied at school during the previous 6 months ([National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016](#)). A similar survey focused only on middle school students found that 45% report being bullied at school ([Center for Disease Control, 2015](#)). Nearly 80% of youth report having been bullied at some point in their lives. Girls are slightly more likely to be bullied at school than boys.

Cyberbullying is less common than bullying at school, but 24% of middle school students report having been bullied on social media in the last 6 months ([Center for Disease Control, 2015](#)). 90% of teens who

report being cyberbullied have also been bullied offline ([“Seven Fears and the Science of How Mobile Technologies May Be Influencing Adolescents in the Digital Age,” George and Odgers, 2015](#)).

The reasons for being bullied that are most often reported by students are looks (55%), body shape (37%), and race (16%) ([Davis & Nixon, 2010](#)). Nearly a dozen studies in the U.S. have found that children with disabilities are two to three times more likely to be bullied than their nondisabled peers ([Disabilities: Insights from across fields and around the world; Marshall, Kendall, Banks & Gover, 2009](#)). African American children are more likely than children of other races and ethnicities to report being bullied (24.7%). The group most likely to be bullied are LGBT youth. 74.1% of LGBT students were verbally bullied (e.g., called names, threatened) in the past year because of their sexual orientation and 55.2% because of their gender expression ([National School Climate Survey, 2013](#)), 36.2% of LGBT students were physically bullied (e.g., pushed, shoved) in the past year because of their sexual orientation ([National School Climate Survey, 2013](#)), and 49% of LGBT students experienced cyberbullying in the past year ([National School Climate Survey, 2013](#)).

Many instances of bullying go unnoticed because they are not reported. A recent study found that only 36% students reported the bullying they experienced ([Petrosina, Guckenburg, DeVoe, & Hanson, 2010](#)).

5. Outcomes associated with being bullied: Students who experience bullying are at increased risk for poor school adjustment, sleep difficulties, anxiety, and depression ([Center for Disease Control, 2015](#)). Students who experience bullying are twice as likely as non-bullied peers to experience negative health effects such as headaches and stomachaches ([Gini & Pozzoli, 2013](#)). Youth who self-blame and conclude they deserve to be bullied are more likely to face negative outcomes, such as depression, prolonged victimization, and maladjustment ([Perren, Ettakal, & Ladd, 2013](#); [Shelley & Craig, 2010](#)).

6. Outcomes associated with bullying others: Students who engage in bullying behavior are at increased risk for academic problems, substance use, and violent behavior later in adolescence and adulthood. Students who are both targets of bullying and engage in bullying behavior are at even greater risk for both mental health and behavior problems ([Center for Disease Control, 2015](#)).

7. Effects on witnesses: Those who witness bullying also experience negative impacts. Youth who witness bullying experience anxiety and insecurity, activation of social pain processing regions of the brain (especially for empathic teens), and symptoms of trauma (Janson, Carney, Hazler & Oh [2009]; Masten, Eisenberger, Pfeifer & Dapretto [2010]; Rigby & Slee [1993]).

8. Interventions: Youth were surveyed to find out what helped the most when they had been bullied. The researchers found the following ([Davis & Nixon, 2010](#)):

- Bullied youth were most likely to report that actions that resulted in support from others made a positive difference.
- Actions aimed at changing the behavior of the bullying youth (fighting, getting back at them, telling them to stop, etc.) were rated as more likely to make things worse.
- Students reported that the most helpful things teachers can do are: listen to the student, check in with them afterwards to see if the bullying stopped, and give the student advice.

- Students reported that the most harmful things teachers can do are: tell the student to solve the problem themselves, tell the student that the bullying wouldn't happen if they acted differently, ignored what was going on, or told the student to stop tattling.
- As reported by students who have been bullied, the self-actions that had some of the most negative impacts (telling the person to stop/how I feel, walking away, pretending it doesn't bother me).
- Students who experience bullying report that allying and supportive actions from their peers (such as spending time with the student, talking to him/her, helping him/her get away, or giving advice) were the most helpful actions from bystanders.
- Students who experience bullying are more likely to find peer actions helpful than educator or self-actions.

For more information on bullying, visit these websites:

- <https://community.wwe.com/diversity/programs/be-star>
- <https://www.facebook.com/safety/bullying>
- <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/stats.asp>
- https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying_factsheet.pdf
- <https://www.stopbullying.gov/index.html>
- <http://www.nea.org/home/neabullyfree.html>

Emotions and bullying:

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/02/19/21brackett_ep_h33.html?cmp=cpc-goog-ew-dynamic+ads&ccid=dynamic+ads&ccag=school+bullying+dynamic&cckw=&cccv=dynamic+ad&gclid=Cj0KC-Qjw557NBRC9ARIsAHJvVVPZZWgot6KRtJpRR3Altep-7DzCdm1uIOJr64aekLRxHEMob43GMcQaAg-6GEALw_wcB



PREVENTING BULLYING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

By Marc A. Brackett and Susan E. Rivers

February 18, 2014

Emotions matter, and they matter a great deal in school. A child who feels anxious, jealous, hopeless, or alienated will have difficulty learning, making sound decisions, and building relationships.

Emotions also are at the heart of bullying—a major public-health problem facing our nation’s schools. At least a third of all American kids report that they have been bullied, a terrible experience for any child that can manifest in many ways, including through physical aggression, verbal abuse, and ostracism. At the root of each of these symptoms is a lack of emotional understanding and self-regulation.

The nation’s awareness about bullying in schools may be at an all-time high. Most educators probably could recite the definition of bullying—a repetitious, intentionally aggressive pattern of behavior involving a power imbalance. Many realize, too, that though bullying has occurred since time immemorial, it should not be regarded as a rite of passage.

Bullying has adverse emotional consequences for all players. The targets are at a higher risk for depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The perpetrators experience depression, anxiety, and hostility, and are prone to substance abuse and antisocial behavior. The bystanders often feel hopeless, insecure, and show symptoms of trauma. And the bully-victims—the targets of bullying who also bully others—can suffer the most, including having a greater potential to inflict pain on others by committing crimes and partner abuse later in life. Everyone involved tends to have poorer school attendance and academic performance. One incident of bullying can derail an entire school community, disrupt the well-being of many families, and leave indelible scars on children’s lives.



It is true that bullying-prevention efforts are on the rise. In fact, 49 states now have anti-bullying legislation in place, and the number of schools using anti-bullying programs continues to grow. These legislative and programmatic actions demonstrate a commitment to addressing a critical problem. They have cost our nation billions, and, yet, according to nationwide surveys, bullying rates have not declined. The results of six meta-analyses confirm that current anti-bullying programs are not working. Most are ineffective because they address the symptoms of bullying, not the underlying causes, which likely include a lack of emotional intelligence—a set of skills for understanding, communicating about, and regulating feelings.

Emotional intelligence needs to be a central component of bullying-prevention efforts from preschool to high school classrooms. Taking the law-and-order approach, characteristic of many existing programs, does not offer youths or adults the fundamental skills needed to regulate powerful emotions that, when unregulated, can lead to psychologically and physically harmful behaviors. Developing emotional intelligence is typically absent from the roll call of anti-bullying policies: zero tolerance, “hot spots” monitoring, rule creation, and one-shot assemblies. Even well-intentioned bystander interventions can have inadvertent consequences. For example, encouraging children to stand up to bullies can create anxiety and possibly lead them to be at risk for retaliation. We know that current practices are failing our nation’s children.

What all children need instead is an education in emotional intelligence. This will help prevent children from resorting to pushing, picking on, or hurting peers as an emotional release. And for the moments when bullying is inescapable, it will help targets of bullying and bystanders develop the skills they need to manage their fear and anxiety, communicate their needs, and get support.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize emotions in the self and in others; understand the causes of emotions and their consequences for thinking and behavior; label emotions with a sophisticated vocabulary; express emotions in socially appropriate ways; and regulate emotions effectively.

Emotionally intelligent children and adults experience a broad range of emotions—from elation and serenity to grief and anger—and they use this information to maintain healthy relationships. They experience greater well-being and fewer instances of depression, anxiety, and aggression. Their relationships are more supportive, and they perform better at school and work. Those who lack emo-





tional intelligence are prone to poorer mental health, a higher propensity to use illegal substances, and increased aggressive behavior.

Fortunately, emotional intelligence can be taught just like math or reading. It is easily integrated into the standard academic curriculum and can improve classroom instruction and school climate. The result includes a better school, with happier and more effective educators and students and a decline in bullying. But there is a catch: Adults need training, too.

Most of us have not had a formal education in emotional intelligence. In particular, teacher training does not include formal instruction on how to apply the science of emotion to engage students in learning, model effective self-regulation strategies, manage classrooms effectively, or create a positive classroom climate. How can we expect children to learn age-appropriate vocabulary and regulation strategies when it comes to expressing their emotions if their teachers have not had adequate training in these skills? Schools wouldn't ask a teacher without mathematics training to teach geometry, algebra, or calculus.

RULER, a program designed to teach the skills for recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing, and regulating emotions, is one effective approach to teaching emotional intelligence. Developed at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, which we direct, RULER has helped more than 500 schools integrate emotional intelligence into their daily routines, from language arts lessons to faculty meetings to the enforcement of behavior-management policies. RULER embeds best teaching practices and a shared language of emotions into everyday instruction across all grade levels. And, importantly, RULER provides professional and personal development for all adults in the learning community—school leaders, teachers, support staff, and families.

A step in this process is for school communities to write an “emotional intelligence charter.” Written collaboratively, the charter provides the backbone for creating an emotionally supportive learning environment. It can help community members articulate how they want to feel, what they will do to foster those feelings, and how the community can work together to prevent and manage unwanted feelings and conflict. A second tool, the mood meter, builds emotional self-awareness, helping everyone gauge their feelings throughout the day, set goals, develop self-regulation strategies, and realize learning objectives.

Research shows that children who attend RULER schools experience less anxiety and depression; have fewer attention, learning, and behavior problems; are better problem-solvers; display greater social and leadership skills; and perform better academically. Classroom climate also improves. Stronger and more positive teacher-student relationships, greater teacher-student engagement, better classroom focus, lower teacher burnout, and enhanced instructional practices are just some of the benefits.

A recent meta-analysis on social and emotional learning programs like RULER confirms that teaching emotional intelligence is the common feature among schools that have safe, caring, and productive learning environments. The best outcomes occur when lessons are taught regularly and with high quality. Indeed, in these schools, not only does bullying decrease, but mental health indicators and academic scores also go up.

We believe evidence-based SEL programming deserves federal funding. One House bill, the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2013 (HR 1875), would give the U.S. Department of Education the authority to allocate funds and establish programs to address children’s social and emotional needs. If it passes, and we are hopeful that it will, it will provide federal support for teacher-preparation programs which integrate social-emotional learning into their curricula.

Neglecting the emotional education of children and adults risks leaving children at the mercy of every emotion they feel and every aggressor who comes along. This neglect has created a gap in our educational system, one through which bullies and their targets have slipped. Systemic, evidence-based SEL programs fill that gap, giving children, and the adults who teach them, opportunities to develop the skills they need to be healthy, effective, and compassionate. As Aristotle wrote, “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.”

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http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/02/19/21brackett_ep.h33.html



SESSION #1: A DAY OF EMOTIONS

Overview:

Youth reflect on and become aware of the emotions they have all day long.

Materials:

Emotion Timeline worksheet (one per person), Pens or pencils

Icebreaker: Introductions – choose one:

1. Tell us your name and how you got it
2. Tell us your favorite TV show or musician and why

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Introduction | <p>Introduce the day:</p> <p>“Everyone has emotions all day, everyday. Today we are going to think about the emotions we have on a typical day. At every moment of our day, we are all feeling something, but we are often unaware of our feelings. This activity will help us become more aware of our emotions, and how they shift and change over the course of a day. As we progress through the Be a STAR program, you will learn why it is important to have a good understanding of our emotions, but for now, let’s think about our daily experience.”</p> |
| Activity Steps | <p>Show the following video (Inside Out – meet the emotions): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baCilbAqUms</p> <p>Emotions Timeline</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give each person a copy of the Feelings Timeline worksheet. 2. Tell youth to think about their day from the time they wake up until they go to bed and write the events of the day in the lines provided on the bottom of the timeline. 3. Now ask youth to write in a word telling how they felt during each of those events, from the beginning of their day to the end. 4. Ask youth if they were surprised by anything as they completed the activity. Ask for volunteers who are willing to share the different feelings they had. 5. Discussion: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What did you learn about your feelings during the day? b. Why does it matter that we know that our feelings change throughout the day? |

EMOTION TIMELINE WORKSHEET

| WHAT'S HAPPENING? | HOW DO YOU FEEL? |
|-------------------|------------------|
| I wake up | |
| I get to school | |
| | |
| Lunch | |
| | |
| | |
| School gets out | |
| I get to the club | |
| | |
| | |

SESSION #2: EMOTIONS MATTER FOR EVERYTHING!

Overview:

Youth learn about how emotions affect them in key areas of their lives.

Materials:

Worksheets, Pens or pencils

Icebreaker: Think of a time in the last week when a friend of yours had a strong emotion that was contagious. How did it affect you? Share with a partner.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Preparation | Watch: https://vimeo.com/52622353 |
| Introduction | Introduce the day: “The last time we did a Be a STAR activity, we thought about how our emotions changed all day long. Today we are going to think about how our emotions affect us.” |
| Activity Steps | <p>Explain that emotions matter for four areas of everyday life and give the examples listed below – or make up your own:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emotions matter for paying attention: Think about it – if you have an argument with your mother or a brother or sister before you leave for school, it may be hard to pay attention to your work during the morning. On the other hand, if you left the house feeling calm and excited about the school day, it will be easier to pay attention and learn. 2. Emotions matter for decision-making: Think about a time when you made a bad decision or did something you later wish you hadn’t – what were you feeling at that time? Too excited or angry? Or maybe you made a good decision because you were calm or in a pleasant mood when deciding what to do. 3. Emotions matter for your relationships: Emotions are information – they tell you whether or not to approach or avoid someone. Would you want to invite someone who has been in a terrible mood all morning to sit with you at lunch? This works the other way around, too. If you walk into the lunchroom in a good mood, it is more likely that someone will want to sit with you. 4. Emotions matter for your health: Think about how you feel when you have too much stress in your life. You might get a stomachache or a headache, or maybe you feel tired or depressed a lot of the time. Over a long period of time, these things can really take a toll on your body and your mind. But if you learn to manage your emotions, your health will be better over time. |

Activity Steps (continued)

Now divide the large group into 4 smaller groups. Each small group will be assigned one area of their lives that is affected by emotions.

Give each group one of the worksheets below. Groups should select a note-taker to record their thoughts. Explain that groups will be given 5 minutes to generate answers to the questions at the top of the worksheet.

Debrief: When time is up, ask someone from each small group to share their answers with the large group.

Ask youth why they think it is important to be aware of how emotions affect each area of their lives.

Closing: Ask if they could imagine doing anything differently now that they understand more about how emotions affect the four areas of their lives.

EMOTIONS MATTER FOR ATTENTION AND LEARNING

- In your own life, how have your emotions gotten in the way of you paying attention? Think of specific times and what emotions you were feeling.
- How have your emotions helped you pay attention, remember, or learn things? Think about a time you were learning about something that excited you – how did that affect your memory and learning about the topic?

EMOTIONS MATTER FOR DECISION-MAKING

- Have you ever made a decision you later regretted, like spending your money to go to a movie you didn't really want to see? What were you feeling when you made that decision?
- Think of a time you made a decision you felt really good about, like helping a friend with homework. What were you feeling when you made that decision?

EMOTIONS MATTER FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

- Think about a time when your good mood helped you have a good time with a friend. What other feelings might do this?
- Think about a time when your emotions caused an argument or some bad feelings between you and someone who is important to you. What were you feeling and how did your feelings cause the problem or make it worse?
- How else do your emotions affect your relationships?

EMOTIONS MATTER FOR YOUR HEALTH

- Have you ever gotten a stomachache or a headache when you feel nervous? What situations make you feel this way?
- Think of a time when you were feeling too much stress – like having a big test or worrying about your family. How does your body react when you are stressed out?

SESSION #3: THE MOOD METER

Overview:

Youth learn about a tool called the Mood Meter that can help them recognize, label, and understand their own and others' feelings.

Materials:

Select based on your preference for building a Mood Meter (see activities below).

Icebreaker (Choose one):

1. What feeling do you most like to have and why? For example, some people like to feel calm, some like to feel happy, some like to feel excited. Which is your favorite?
2. What is the feeling that you have most often during the school day?

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Preparation | <p>Prepare for this session by watching the video on the Mood Meter at this link: https://vimeo.com/52622350</p> <p>This video will help you understand the Mood Meter and be better able to guide the youth in your Club through the activities related to creating and using it.</p> |
| Introduction | <p>Introduce the day: "Today we are going to learn about a tool called the Mood Meter that will help us become more aware of our own and others' emotions and help us to better understand the emotions we feel all day, every day."</p> |
| Activity Steps | <p>Mood Meter</p> <p>1. The first step in learning about the Mood Meter is to create one. The materials you have available to you will determine how you make yours, but the steps are generally the same. Be creative!</p> <p>Example one: Draw lines to divide a large poster board into four equal sections. Ask youth to paint each of the sections in the four colors of the Mood Meter – the colors and order are important! The top left section should be RED. The top right section should be YELLOW. The bottom left section should be BLUE. The bottom right section should be GREEN.</p> <p>When the Mood Meter is painted, youth can write in numbers as shown in the Mood Meter handout below. If 0 is at the intersection of the lines, numbers will be -5 to -1 on the left horizontal line and +1 to +5 on the right horizontal line. Have youth do the same with the vertical line: with 0 at the intersection, write in +1 to +5 on the top half of the line and -1 to -5 on the bottom half of the line.</p> |

Activity Steps (continued)

Example two: Cover all or part of a bulletin board using construction paper to represent the four colors of the Mood Meter. Divide the space into four equal squares or rectangles and staple or tack the construction paper until you have covered the section. The top left section should be RED. The top right section should be YELLOW. The bottom left section should be BLUE. The bottom right section should be GREEN.

When the Mood Meter has been created, youth can write in numbers as shown in the Mood Meter handout below. If 0 is at the intersection of the lines, numbers will be -5 to -1 on the left horizontal line and +1 to +5 on the right horizontal line. Have youth do the same with the vertical line: with 0 at the intersection, write in +1 to +5 on the top half of the line and -1 to -5 on the bottom half of the line.

Example three: Using the worksheet below, ask youth to create their own Mood Meter by coloring with markers, crayons, or colored pencils. The colors and order are important! The top left section should be RED. The top right section should be YELLOW. The bottom left section should be BLUE. The bottom right section should be GREEN.

2. Explain: "Here's how it works: There are two axes on the Mood Meter."

a. The horizontal (sideways) axis represents pleasantness. On the far left – negative 5 – is the most unpleasant thing you can think of. On the far right – positive 5 – is the most pleasant thing you can think of. This is your private experience of pleasantness and is happening in your mind.

b. The vertical (up and down) axis represents energy – how much energy you have in your body. This scale goes from negative 5, or very low energy, to positive 5, or very high energy. So at the very bottom, your body feels like you can barely move it. At the very top, your heart is pounding, your muscles are tense, and your breathing is fast.

c. The lines in the Mood Meter cross to create four quadrants or sections. Red section feelings are unpleasant and have high energy. Blue feelings are unpleasant but have low energy. Green feelings are pleasant and have low energy. Yellow feelings are pleasant with high energy."

3. Ask youth to plot themselves on the Mood Meter, starting with the horizontal (pleasantness) axis, -5 to +5, and then the vertical (energy) axis, -5 to +5.

Combine the two points and locate yourself in one of the four sections of the Mood Meter.