



Short Description

Students identify the purpose behind five key emotions and investigate tips for creating and maintaining a healthy emotional balance throughout life's ups and downs.

Materials Needed

Copy of Disney Pixar's movie "Inside Out"
Copies of the [Measuring My Emotional Wellness](#) worksheet (one per student)

Required Set-Up/Preparation

Students will need access to the Internet

Lesson Outline

- Introduction – Inside Out
- Instruction – Understanding Emotional Wellness
- Student Assignment (Group) – Emotional Wellness Toolkit
- Reflection (Individual) – Measuring My Emotional Wellness
- Extension Activity – Relationship Between Mental and Emotional Health
- School Climate Impact – Improve Emotional Wellness on Campus

Introduction – Inside Out

Show the class the Disney Pixar movie “Inside Out.”

This movie embodies the importance of emotional wellness in our ability to navigate life. It is recommended that the movie be shown in its entirety if your school media policies allow for it. If you are not in a situation where you can show an entire movie to the class, show clips of the following scenes:

8:50 - 11:10	In this scene, Riley arrives at her new house and exhibits all of her emotions in different ways.
22:25 - 25:00	It is Riley’s first day at her new school and when the teacher calls on her to introduce herself, she bursts into tears in front of the class.
1:20:17 - 1:24:04	Riley has run away and Sadness is the one who gets her to turn around and go back home to her parents.

At the conclusion of the movie, ask students to summarize in their own words the point of the story. Ensure through class discussion that students understand the story of Riley’s move from Minnesota to San Francisco is used to convey to the audience that within each of us there exist multiple emotions and each of those emotions serves a purpose. The movie points out that it is unhealthy to think we should be happy at all times and that the other emotions we feel and how we react when we feel them play an important role in our overall emotional wellness.

Instruction – Understanding Emotional Wellness

Ask the students what they think the term Emotional Wellness means. Their answers might lean toward stress management; if so, make sure they understand that emotional wellness is more than just stress management.

Define emotional wellness as: the ability to be aware of, accept, and learn from your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors so that you can enjoy life despite its occasional ups and downs.

Begin a discussion on what we do to address our physical wellness by providing the following scenarios and having the class call out how they would address each:

- You accidentally cut your finger while cutting an apple. The cut is pretty deep and is bleeding.
- You rip half of your thumbnail off, down into the quick.

- You stay out by the pool or lake too long and get a sunburn.
- You notice a big pimple right in the middle of your forehead while getting ready for school.
- Your stomach is growling.
- You have a headache.
- Your eyelids are heavy and you can't stop yawning. You have no plans for the next few hours.
- You want to lose weight or get into shape.

Point out to students that for the most part, we all do a fairly good job of tending to our physical wellness, but we often forget that our emotional wellness is just as important to our overall health and well-being.

Pose the question to the class to see why they think this disparity exists between physical and emotional wellness.

Use their answers to shift the dialogue to focus specifically on the stigma around showing emotions other than happiness. Have students identify the most taboo emotions to express in the presence of others. Different students might hold different opinions as to this answer and if that proves to be the case in your class, help students get to the reason why some emotions are harder to publicly display for some people as opposed to others.

Ask the class to think back to the movie "Inside Out." Use the following questions related to the movie to discuss the stigma related to showing some of the emotions present in the movie:

- Why is it that Sadness feels she is 'having a breakdown' and not in control when Riley bursts into tears in front of her new class?
- Why does Joy continuously try to suppress Sadness throughout the film?
- What realization did Joy finally come to about the importance of Sadness?
- What role did each of the other emotion characters - Disgust, Anger, and Fear – play in Riley's overall health?

Student Assignment – Emotional Wellness Toolkit

Divide students into 7 groups. Assign each group one of the following strategies for improving emotional health:

- Brighten your outlook
- Reduce stress
- Get quality sleep, exercise, and a balanced diet
- Strengthen social connections
- Be mindful
- Cope with loss
- Accept mistakes/failure

Each group is to do research on the Internet and become an expert on their assigned strategy for improving emotional health. As such, they need to gain an understanding of what the strategy is, how the strategy relates to emotional wellness, and tips for improving one's ability to successfully implement that strategy.

Groups will then share their findings with the rest of the class.

Reflection – Measuring My Emotional Wellness

Students should take what they have learned about the seven emotional wellness strategies and audit their current use of each of these strategies. Use the rating and reflection handout [Measuring My Emotional Wellness](#) to assist with this portion of the lesson.

Extension Activity – Relationship Between Mental and Emotional Health

For more on emotional wellness, show one of the following Harbor episodes and use the accompanying Critical Thinking Guide as either a whole group discussion or as an individual writing assignment.

[Harbor Episode: Ross Szabo](#)

Ross Szabo's journey through depression and bipolar disorder inspired him to become an advocate for treating mental health the same way we treat physical health.

[Harbor Episode: Health and Wellness](#)

Small changes to our habits around eating, sleeping, and physical activity can make a huge difference in how we feel, and cultivating these habits at a young age can lead to a much healthier life.

Additionally, within this curriculum, the lesson titled *Coping Strategies* is directly related to the content in this lesson.

School Climate Impact – Improve Emotional Wellness on Campus

Have students focus on small ways to improve the emotional wellness of students and adults on your campus. A few ideas to help spark their creativity include:

Fill Your Cup – Think of emotional wellness as a cup that gets filled and emptied as we go through each day. The Fill Your Cup initiative brings that concept to life by literally placing someone's name on a cup or a jar and asking others to fill their cup with kind words, funny jokes, their favorite treats,

or recollections of favorite memories/moments shared with them. This could be done for staffulty members and even students throughout the campus.

Emotional Wellness Spirit Week – Similar to a homecoming spirit week where days are assigned themes and dress up suggestions, a spirit week could be designed around emotional wellness themes and strategies. This could be a way to make a public/school service campaign fun and engaging.

Stress Busters – Especially during stressful weeks in school year such as state-wide testing windows or finals week, explore ideas that provide access to stress busters for both staffulty and students.

