

We're gonna explore emotional literacy and we really have done the, we've done through the physical literacy lessons, we've gone through the mental literacy lessons, and we've really scaffold-we really scaffolding with those two, to be able to get to these emotional literacy lessons. We're looking at these two different types of practices where again, we're not I really don't--I really like to stay away from calling them negative emotions and positive emotions. But, there are certain emotions which can be destructive, which can be difficult to hold, which can be kinda overwhelming. And there's certain type of emotions which are really generative, right?

Certain type of emotions that really support, kinda pro-social emotions and fueling more connected to ourselves and to the world, and to feel more healthy.

So, it's really what supporting us in growing that those emotions, or those emotional states that feel really healthy and then understanding how to regulate and to work with those, the emotional experiences which get us into trouble or that are self-critical or difficult.

I do really like to frame that at least to ourselves 'cause it's very easy to fall into the consciousness of we're trying to make kids happy and to get rid of anger, right? And, even for some people, if they're just focusing on happiness, enjoy and like they're just trying to get rid of everything else, that can actually be kinda destructive if it just like too much, to like just trying to be too joyous all the time, that can be emotionally off-balance, right? And sometimes, sadness is the very appropriate response, sometimes we need a little more sadness, right?

Sometimes, something really sad happens, and if we're really not in-touch with it, it can be destructive, so we want to actually be able to feel a healthy connection with our sadness. So, with these emotional literacy lessons, we're really looking at how do we create a healthy relationship with our emotions.

To start, we could look at the working with difficult emotions, and all these tell-all story relating to it, I think it's on my first book, but, when I started doing this work as a therapist in schools, one of the practices I started using is we would have all of these kids with anger management issues we're sent to me for like the teacher's who were like, can you take these specific kids, just middle school and work with them, these--they're all kinda acting out and having behavioral issues and so, with four or five kids and middle school kids, and I love that middle school age because these are like boys who are, you know, kind of in, a little bit in the kinda gang world but not quite, you know, they're--you can still get--they're still like these cute little kids and yet they are like acting fully like men and like bad-asses and so, there's this like interesting middle--middle age where I still can relate to them as like, as kids. They're still these like really sweet little kids and they're swaggering, and they're--so, we would do this practice and I would always recommend that you start, you know, we did the kind of base camp breathing, the anchor breathing.

You want to first give them a practice where they can come back to. So, if you're getting into the emotional water, you really want to have something that can regulate, that you don't wanna just throw them in the deep end and just you want--okay, this is the--this is what we're dealing with, okay, now, let's come back. So, what I would teach them is something called "the vacuum cleaner breath", which we could all learn.

I first learn it from my Philosophy teacher who--who we talked about it as the French press, like the coffee French press breathe, which look the kids don't have as much of an image for it. Vacuum Cleaner works better. So, you--so, but I do like that French press image. So, what you're basically doing is you are breathing, you're--first your noticing in the body and this is why we've done the body practices first. You kinda look through the body, you scan through the

body, you notice, is there any tension anywhere, is there any discomfort anywhere, is there any, you know, anxiousness, is there any--and you kinda scan, do a quick scan through for a minute, we could all do that just for a moment, just scan through the body, notice is there any tightness in the shoulders, in the belly, in the face, any places you're kinda holding a little agitation.

And then what we do if it's the French press, the same as the--what we do, the French press is you'd imagine your pressing from the top of the head down through the body, like pressing all of that any gunk, any stress, any tension, down to the pit of the stomach and holding it there for three seconds, and then exhaling totally letting go. And this is the same with the vacuum cleaner, imagine you have a vacuum cleaner in the pit of the belly, and what you do is you breathe in, you pull in any stress, any tension from anywhere, long in-breathe, drawing it all into the bottom of the belly, holding it there for three seconds, and then just totally exhaling as if you're emptying the vacuum cleaner and you're letting everything go, you're breathing it all out. So, just try that a few times. Okay, good job.

So, it just, for me, that is a--is a really beneficial practice, you know, if I'm about to give a big speech or something, that's and I feel a little anxiousness, that's go-to. It's-just a few of those holding in, there's a way that it--for me, it works really well, there's a lot of practices like that, kinda progressive relaxation things where you kinda tighten up and you let go, so that's the one that seems to work best for me, and I've had the most luck with kids on.

There's a lot of them, different types of progressive relaxation, different types of deep breathing practices, ways just to bring some sense of relaxation and calm and ease. Pretty relatively quickly to the body, you need some of those on hand that the kids vibe with, before you take 'em into these stress waters, right? So, with these kids I was working with, what we would do and, you know, we've been building up for kinda weeks and weeks kinda talking and doing some

games and counsel practices and we'd--you know, we've gotten pretty friendly with each other, and there was a little nerf basketball hoop in my rim and--let me see if I have a, oh yes, perfect, this rock.

We would--we had a little basketball hoop that was in the rim and little red nerf ball, and the kids, when they would shoot, when they would talk with their share in the counsel, they'd take the ball and they shoot it afterwards and then would go to the next person. You know, just kind of part of our sharing process. So, one day, I was having a kid and I said, okay, take that ball and--he just happen to be sharing and he started telling us story about, you know, really terrible thing in his life, I'm saying type of abuse from his dad, he's really like very hard thing he's sharing and he's like you know, has the ball in his hand and--so, I said to him like, take that ball, do like do put all of the anger into that ball and so he's doing, he's like slamming it on the ground, he's like really trying to do that, so okay, so now that it's all in there, what I want you to try to do is to see if you can hold on to it as tight as you can and we're all gonna do some of our vacuum cleaner breathes with you, and I want you to just like keep feeling that anger and tightness as long as it's there and at any point, if you--once the vacuum cleaner breathe has relaxed it, if at some point, it's gone, the tension's gone, let it drop. right?

And so, we did it, he holding it, you could see him kinda relax and then tighten again and after a couple minutes, you know, it drop. And there was something like in that moment which was--which like, you could see all of the other kids were like, "well, what was that?" and then, all of them wanted to try it, you know, all of them we're like, "I wanna talk about that kid, they were like jumped me the other day and--" they were like talking about the things that pissed them off and trying to do this vacuum cleaner breathe game where they're talking about it, they get to

share it, they get to be heard, and then they get to be empowered enough to be able to not be affected by it on some level.

And so, we do that all the time, and they would come back to me and tell these like amazing stories of like yeah, these kids started, you know, saying crap to me and I did my vacuum breath and then I wasn't pissed and they were like really confused and didn't know what to do, you know, or one kid said to me, he said, "it's kinda like the--that hot potato game, where like you know, but it's like in our school like people are just like passing anger around and like if somebody knew mindfulness they could like drop it but like, we don't so we just keep passing it around." I was like, oh my God.

That practice, you can do it, you don't even need to go through all of these stuffs I just did, like I mean in the classroom, you wouldn't have, maybe able to have that time. And I just like, we'll have kids pick up a--their pencil, and just think about something that is annoying to them. And well, this is just a--an important one to say, when you invite kids into an experience of some type of difficult emotion, you want to be really sensitive to how you're doing it. So, I would never say, "Okay, picture something you--that's upsetting to you." even just saying that, 'cause who knows what these kids are gonna say. I'm a therapist I'm working with the kids in the classroom, and you know, we have a whole thing but, in a classroom, you know, you don't want kids all of a sudden to be talking about some type of abuse or difficult thing. So, I'm really particular just to say "let's picture something that happened recently that was just a little bit annoying." right?

You can--just by saying something a little bit annoying and they picture not being to get something they wanted or you know, a teacher talking to them weirdly or something like that, they'll be able to feel it in their bodies, right? And so, I have them hold on to that thing and just if

it's a pencil, like put all of the tension into that pencil and feel that and then when you're ready just let it go. When you're doing the vacuum cleaner breathe, there's something to that about just giving them this experience of like the tension of something and the letting go of it and releasing, that's really, it's an eye opener for them.