



Lesson Plan: Emotional Regulation

How hot or cold does your emotional “engine” run?

Grade level: High School

Approximate time frame: One class period

Introduction/rationale

In the following lesson students will consider the influence of emotions on thinking and behavior and come to understand how managing one’s emotions typically leads to better outcomes. After exploring how fictional characters’ decisions and actions are affected by the intensity of their emotions, students are encouraged to think about parallel instances in their own lives.

Instructional objectives

Students will...

- Demonstrate an understanding of the concept of emotional intensity through discussion and written work
- Identify a character’s level of emotional intensity in a work of fiction using evidence from the text to support their assertions
- Apply understanding of this concept to their personal lives and discuss its relevance

Curriculum standards

English/Language Arts:

- Summarize in a coherent and organized way information and ideas learned from a focused discussion
- Write coherent compositions with a clear focus, objective presentation of alternate views, rich detail, well-developed paragraphs, and logical argumentation

Health:

- Identify and describe the experience of different feelings (such as elation, joy, grief, and rage) and how feelings affect daily functioning



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Materials needed

- Work of literature (novel, chapter, or short story)
- Whiteboard
- Paper
- Pencils

Student activity/handout

Revved Up or Shut Down?

Student reading assignment

Brain Driver’s Education: Operator’s Guide section: “How hot or cold does your emotional ‘engine’ run?”

Procedures

Anticipatory set:

Imagine you walked into class today and were given a pop quiz worth 25 percent of your grade. How would you react? Would all of you react the same way or with the same level of intensity? No – because our emotional engines run at different speeds.

As we’ll see in the story/novel, there are ways to recognize when we are feeling strong emotions or have particular intense reactions to events in our lives, and that is the first step in managing these feelings and reactions.

In literature writers give clues to the characters’ level of emotional intensity using word choice, tone, imagery, dialogue, and the reactions of other characters. In actual life, we can use similar clues to figure out our own level of emotional intensity.

Step-by-step instructions/activities

1. Start by reading a scene in a recent text in which a character has a clearly high or low intensity reaction to an event within the story. Ask students to pay special attention to any clues that describe the character’s emotions. Ask students to take notes to be used in the discussion that will follow.



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2. Before discussing the text, introduce the concept of an “emotional engine” as described in the Student Reading Assignment “How hot or cold does your emotional ‘engine’ run?” in the *Brain Driver’s Education: Operator’s Guide*:
 - The brain is like an engine that generates the thoughts, memories, and moods that form our emotions.
 - Using the driving metaphor, students conceptualize taking charge of their emotions, instead of being controlled by them.
 - People experience emotion along a spectrum of intensity. At one extreme, they feel shut down, disconnected from emotion. At the other extreme, they are revved up and feel emotions very powerfully.
 - If we are aware of our feelings, we have the ability to adjust their intensity to a level that’s appropriate for the situation.
3. Ask the students if they can determine what the main character is feeling in this scene. How does the reader know this?
4. How are other people reacting to that character in the scene?
5. Ask the class what level of emotional intensity the character is feeling—is he/she revved up or so shut down as to be devoid of feeling at all? Is the intensity appropriate to the situation the character is in? Why or why not? (Again, make sure students can support their assertions with evidence from the text.)
6. Draw a line on the board that visually represents a spectrum of intensity from “shut down” to “revved up” with “balanced” in the middle.
7. Ask the students where the character fits on this spectrum. (Again, ask for evidence.)
8. Ask students why it might be useful for the character to be aware of his/her level of emotional intensity and how such awareness might be helpful to them (the students) in their everyday life.
9. Provide students with a composition assignment, using the Student Activity handout “Revved Up or Shut Down?” (Students will choose a character from a story or novel they have read this school year and analyze the character’s level of emotional intensity.)



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10. Optional: Allow students to present information from their composition to the class or discuss their answers to the “reaction” section of the assignment.

Assessment

Use class discussion and Student Activity handout composition to assess student understanding.