

An interactive workbook grounded in the EMOTERS measure



**EMOTERS Emotion Teaching Rating Scale** 

# **About this workbook**

This interactive workbook is designed to support early education professionals, including teachers, coaches, and administrators, in developing an emotion-focused teaching practice that fosters children's early emotional development. The content of this workbook is based on research conducted using the EMOtion Teaching Rating Scale (the EMOTERS, www.emoters.org) and expands on the curriculum of the University of Illinois Chicago Alternative Licensure Program for early childhood educators.

Through a series of videos, reflection questions, and short readings, this workbook introduces the 3 domains of emotion-focused teaching practice and helps early education professionals see what these practices look like in the classroom.

For each module, users will:

- Learn about emotion-focused teaching practices and related topics by watching a videos and/or reading about them.
- 2. Observe emotion-focused teaching in action
- 3. Reflect on learning and teaching
- **4. Apply** learnings to their own teaching, include planning and practicing emotion-focused teaching in the classroom

The information in this workbook is based on more than a decade's worth of research conducted by Dr. Katherine Zinsser and Dr. Timothy Curby and is partially funded by the Institute for Educational Sciences and the U.S. Department of Education.

When referring to this workbook, please use the following citation:

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This workbook includes QR code links to lecture videos and examples of emotion-focused teaching. Scan these using your camera on your phone. Users may also choose to access a digital step-by-step version of the workbook online at emoters.org/trainings, using the password 'emotionteach'.

# How to use this workbook

This book can be used on its own as a self study, or, incorporated into a coaching program or professional learning community series. We recommend completing this workbook over the course of several weeks or months, so that there is time to reflect on and apply each concept in the classroom before moving on.

The following graphic displays how the content of this workbook can be integrated into a bi-weekly coaching cycle. First, teachers reflect on themselves and their classrooms using the prompts at the beginning at each module. Then, as small groups or professional learning communities, teachers learn about the module content and practice observing emotion-focused teaching, using the workbook as a guide. In addition to the workbook content, we recommend that learners incorporate a practice of recording themselves using the skills from the workbook in their classroom, reflect on what they see, and work with a coach to improve their skills.

### **Pre-reflection**

Individuals complete the pre-reflection in each module

### **Five Bi-weekly Coaching Cycles**

# Coach Review & Feedback

Coach reviews recording and reflection and meets to provide feedback, set goals, provide emotional support.

- 1. Emotion Development in Early Childhood
- 2. The Modeling of Emotions & Emotion Regulation Strategies
- 3. Responding to Children's Emotions
- 4. Instructing about Emotions
- 5. Becoming an emotion-focused teacher

# Video Recording & Reflection

Teacher-learners record themselves engaging with practice, and reflects on what they see

# Introduction of Practice

Learn about module content, observe exemplars of emotion-focused teaching, and discuss in small groups (e.g., PLCs) or pairs

# About the authors



Katherine (Kate) Zinsser, Ph.D. is an Applied Developmental Psychologist and associate professor at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC). She directs the UIC Social Emotional Teaching & Learning Lab (www.setllab.com) and conducts research on early childhood education systems and their impact on children's early social-emotional development. She also studies the use of exclusionary discipline practices in early education policy efforts to reduce racial disparities in school discipline. In 2022, she published No Longer Welcome: The Epidemic of Early Childhood Expulsion. Along with Dr. Curby, she is a co-developer of the EMOTERS tool and is evaluating efforts to proactively support teachers' engagement in emotion-focused teaching through the UIC Alternative Licensure Program (ALP). The ALP is the nation's only incumbent residency teacher preparation program that focuses on social-emotional teaching practices and is designed to retain the cultural and linguistic diversity of the early childhood workforce.



Timothy (Tim) Curby, Ph.D. is a professor in Applied Developmental Psychology at George Mason University. His work focuses on early childhood classroom experiences and applying advanced statistical models to school-based research. Specifically, he focuses on the interactions that teachers have with children as a mechanism for children's development. He, along with Dr. Zinsser, is the co-developer of the EMOTERS tool. Dr. Curby leads the quantitative evaluation of the ALP and uses the EMOTERS measure in the context of coaching and professional learning communities to assist in the professional development of residents.



Emma Casey, M.A., R.D. is a registered dietitian and doctoral student in Applied Developmental Psychology at George Mason University. She supports Dr. Curby's and Dr. Zinsser's work on the EMOTERS and the ALP. She designed the EMOTERS training on emoters.org and manages the training of internal research teams. She is interested in parent and teacher influences on children's social and emotional learning and eating behaviors in young children, and how awareness of bodily sensations relates to development in both areas.

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# Emotional Development in Early Childhood

# **Reflect:** Emotions in the classroom

Before engaging with the content in this module, spend a few minutes writing reflections to the following questions.

1. What are some typical emotions you see children experience in a given day?
Write your answer here
2. What does an emotionally competent child look like in the classroom? What are they able to do? What do they not do?
Write your answer here
3. Some teachers say that the most important thing kids learn in their classroom is how to manage their feelings. Do you agree? Why or why not?
Write your answer here

# Learn: Children's emotional competence and the impact of early adversity on brain development and emotion regulation



Watch the video online. You can refer to the content in written form here.

Children's emotions are an integral part of early childhood classrooms. In many ways, emotions are what make working with young children so rewarding. It's hard not to smile when observing excited and curious children building together in the block corner. The intense hug of an upset child helps you feel grounded and important. Seeing kids beam with pride when they've overcome a challenge is one reason many teachers stay in the profession.

At the same time, children at this age are not yet skilled at managing and regulating their intense feelings, which can cause conflict and disruption in the classroom. Children are still learning to appropriately express their frustration, resist the urge to push or grab when angry, and show excitement in the classroom without shouting. Unfortunately, this leads some people to see emotions as problematic and the cause of challenging behaviors in classrooms.

Children are still developing emotion competence, which is similar to emotional intelligence. Competence implies flexibility and growth and is something that all children (and even adults!) are working on developing over time. Competence is broken down into three components:

- Emotion knowledge: knowledge of their own and others' emotions
- Emotion expression: the ability to express emotions in a socially appropriate way
- Emotion regulation: the ability to manage their experience of emotions

### **Emotion knowledge**

Infants and toddlers are learning to recognize facial expressions and are connecting expressions to their physiological experiences of emotions (e.g., what does it feel like to be sad?). Very young children are working on developing language to label those experiences. Toddlers may demonstrate these new skills by labeling the emotions of characters in books or of the people around them. Preschool-age children can talk about what makes them feel happy and can anticipate how they will likely feel in different situations, like being afraid of sleeping without a nightlight or being excited to go to the Zoo.

They can also interpret how people close to them are feeling from their actions and are beginning to understand that some people express feelings in different ways and may act differently because of those emotions. For example, they may know that their brother yells when he's angry, but their mom gets really quiet and leaves the room.

Children are still working on how to interpret complex emotions that go beyond simple ones like happy, sad, or angry. Preschool children are cognitively egocentric at this age, making it difficult to predict how someone else might feel in the same situation. Preschool children also have difficulty with ambiguous emotions and the idea that one person might feel differently than another person in the same situation, especially if it conflicts with how they feel. Finally, children may not yet understand socially acceptable ways to express and experience different emotions across situations (e.g., knowing how to express enthusiasm on the playground versus in the library).

### **Emotional expressions**

You don't have to teach an infant how to cry. You don't have to teach an infant how to smile. But as children become older, they begin to experience and express more complicated emotions. These include emotions that are contingent or dependent on being part of a social group. For instance, guilt is dependent on your relationship with other people or and an understanding of their expectations for your behavior. Similarly, empathizing is social, in that you must both perceive that someone is having an emotion and be able to take their perspective. It is through social interaction that we gain skills around expressing and experiencing these different types of social emotions.

Preschool is also when children start to experience *blended emotions* – that is, they feel multiple emotions at one time. Sometimes, these emotions can be near opposites! A child is learning that they can be both happy that something happened to them and feel guilty that it didn't happen for others. Handling both of these emotions at the same time can be tricky.

Children also begin to demonstrate *patterns* of emotionality – tendencies to express emotions in more predictable ways. This has significant implications in the classroom. Peers are more likely to seek out relatively calm and positive playmates as opposed to children who seem easily upset and cry more often. Children that are volatile or unpredictable in their emotional expression may miss out on social opportunities and be more challenging for teachers to work with.

### **Emotion regulation**

You'll notice that throughout this workbook, we don't put values on emotions. Emotions are not good or bad; they are unavoidable and part of being human. It's also important to remember that while we don't necessarily have control over whether we feel different emotions, we do make choices about which emotions to express in front of other people and how big those expressions will be. On the other hand, just because we don't see a child cry doesn't mean they aren't feeling sad. We only see the outward expressions that others let us see.

Across different settings or situations, we make choices to regulate our expressions of emotions to achieve different goals. We adapt our emotion expressions through regulation to suit the situation. You may show less disappointment than you feel if your grandma gives you a really ugly sweater for your birthday because you don't want her to feel bad. This is called down-regulation. On the other hand, you may show more heightened emotions than you feel if you cry to get out of a speeding ticket. Turning on the waterworks can be an example of up-regulation.

### **Emotion Skills and Learning**

While emotion competence is something that accumulates over time and experience, these skills are the foundation of learning. Learning is a social process, and especially in early childhood, learning happens in the context of relationships. Children's emotional competencies help them build and maintain positive relationships conducive to learning, especially in a classroom context, and these skills will support their success well beyond preschool. Social-emotional competence in preschool predicts success in elementary school, even after we control for IQ and family income.

Children with poor emotional skills for their age will participate less in class, get less attention from their teachers, and their peers will be less likely to play with them. Over time, these children understandably like school less and less. If children aren't having a great time by the time they get to third and fourth grade, the chances of them dropping out are much higher than their peers who enjoy school.

### **Early Adversity and its Impacts on Emotion Development**

All preschoolers are working on understanding and managing their emotions, but those who have faced more stress and difficulties early in life benefit greatly from opportunities to develop these skills. Early adversity, including abuse, neglect, exposure to toxins, or stress changes the natural pattern of brain development. These stressors affect the brain regions, such as the amygdala, responsible for processing and regulating emotions. As a result, children who experience early adversity may perceive and experience the classroom environment very differently from their peers. For example, children with a history of trauma may appear much more emotionally volatile, seeming to overreact to minor events. An accidental bump on the playground may be perceived as an attack resulting in a child hitting or biting in response. Adults viewing this interaction will likely respond to the problematic behavior of hitting or biting without additionally attending to the underlying emotional skills.

Teachers' responses that focus only on behavior, without attending to children's emotional competence development, place children with histories of trauma, developmental delays, or other disabilities at risk of being excluded or expelled. Without support and intervention, children's maladaptive patterns of emotional regulation will negatively impact their academic and social success in kindergarten and beyond.

However, research has shown that early childhood settings can lessen the risks these children face. Preschool teachers' efforts to build supportive, nurturing, classroom environments, modeling emotional competence, and teaching emotional skills contribute to children's school readiness and social success. In collaboration with families and mental health professionals, teachers are essential in helping children learn to manage and express their feelings. In the next section, we will examine what it means to be an emotion-focused teacher.

# Reflect: Planning to be an emotionfocused teacher

### Think about the following questions before we dig deeper:

1. Which of aspects of children's emotional competence do you think can be changed by a teacher? To what degree?
Write your answer here
2. What is your favorite emotion to help children learn about?
Write your answer here
3. How do you think emotions help children learn?
Write your answer here

# Learn: Introducing the EMOTERS framework



Watch the video online. You can refer to the content in written form here.

Emotions are at the core of all social interactions, including those among teachers and students. Especially in early childhood, teachers have a great deal of influence over children's emerging emotional competencies. Yet, very little research has documented the practices teachers engage in that support children's emotional learning. With funding from the U.S. Department of Education, we conducted research and developed a new observational measure of preschool teacher practices that support children's emerging emotional competence. We call this instrument the EMOtion Teaching Rating Scale or, the EMOTERS.

In the development of the EMOTERS, we found that there were three types of emotion-focused teaching practices that contribute to children's emerging emotional competence:

- Modeling the adult expressions of emotions and display of regulation strategies,
- Responding teacher's reactions to children's emotions, and
- Instructing providing information about the nature of emotions or emotional content.

These practices all help children understand their own and other's feelings, how appropriate or valued various emotions are, and whether and how adults experience and express different emotions. Teachers' behaviors in the classroom contribute to children's emerging emotional competence. These behaviors inform how children experience, express, and manage their emotions which in turn impact their social relationships and learning. Importantly, children learn from teachers' behaviors, whether they're intentional or not. Through this workbook, we hope that you can begin to pay attention to and make intentional choices about how you engage in emotion-focused teaching.

Emotion-focused teaching is similar to, but not the same as, other practices. It goes without saying that supporting young children's emotions is not a new idea. However, the EMOTERS is focused on evidence-based specific teaching practices to promote children's emotional competence. As you learn about emotion-focused teaching, you may notice some overlap and alignment with other quality standards (e.g., the Head Start Performance Standards, Teaching Strategies Gold Curriculum, the Pyramid Model).

This should not be surprising since supporting children's social-emotional development is the core of high-quality early education. Notably, though, teachers who score high on other measures of global quality do not always use emotion-focused teaching practices.

The EMOTERS was designed to be used both as a reflection tool for professional development and as an assessment tool for research. The EMOTERS focuses on specific evidence-based practices and is strengths-based, meaning that it was designed to help teachers understand what practices they're already using and help identify areas for growth. In this workbook, we will use EMOTERS as a lens through which to observe and reflect on our own and other's teaching practices. Specifically, we will use an EMOTERS-based Guided Observation tool, which is intended to help teachers give feedback to themselves and others.

If you are interested in learning more about the EMOTERS, please visit https://www.emoters.org/contact to complete an interest form and receive access to the online instrument documentation and training materials.

# Learn: The impact of emotion-focused teaching on children and teachers



Watch the video online. You can refer to the content in written form here.

For over a decade, teams at the University of Illinois Chicago and George Mason University have studied the ways emotion-focused teaching practices benefit children's learning. Below is a brief summary of some of their findings. Additional resources can be found in the appendix. In the next three modules you will learn more about each of the practices of Modeling, Responding, and Instructing.

### **Emotion-focused teaching happens naturally.**

Emotion-focused teaching commonly occurs throughout the preschool day and is especially prevalent when teachers are working with small groups of children. Teachers use emotion-focused teaching the least during meals and transitions. Teachers tend to engage in Modeling practices frequently but may require encouragement and coaching to engage in Instructing practices, which are associated with greater improvement in children's social and emotional skills across the preschool year. When teachers are encouraged and coached to engage in more emotion-focused teaching, they can have a greater impact on children's emotional skills.

### Emotion-focused teaching supports children's social-emotional development

Being in a class with a more emotionally-focused teacher benefits children in several ways. Over the course of a school year, children in such classrooms engaged in less conflict with teachers and peers and showed greater control of their behavior. Additionally, children in these classrooms were more social and engaged more with peers, teachers, and classroom activities compared to children in classrooms with lower levels of emotion-focused teaching. Teachers also saw greater improvements in children's behavior and emotions, reporting that children expressed fewer negative emotions overall, less aggression and anger in particular, and were less withdrawn and anxious.

### **Emotion-focused teaching supports children's learning behaviors**

Being in a classroom with a more emotionally focused teacher also benefited children's learning behaviors. Children were observed to be more self-reliant, assertive, and better communicators. Teachers also reported that these children showed more persistence and motivation. Compared to children in less emotionally-focused classrooms, these children were seen to have generally more positive attitudes towards learning, which will be especially helpful in the transition to kindergarten.

### Emotion-focused teaching can be taught and coached

Incidences of emotion-focused teaching increase when teachers engage in planned and structured lessons, such as those in social-emotional learning curriculum. With coaching, pre-service teachers can significantly increase their emotion-focused teaching, especially their Instructing skills. Fortunately, teachers who received coaching on emotion-focused teaching found the material engaging and highly relevant to their classroom practice, so we hope you will too!

# **Observe:** Emotion-focused teaching in action



Watch the video online. Then answer the following questions.

1. What do you think the child learned from this teacher about emotions?	
Write your answer here	
2. In what ways were the teacher's interactions with the child emotion- ocused?	
Write your answer here	

# Reflect: Reflecting on what you know

## Reflect on what you have learned already in this module.

1. What do teachers do to promote children's emotional competence?
Write your answer here
2. What are teachers' contributions to children's emotional competence?
Write your answer here
3. What does a teacher who is good at promoting emotional competence do that is different than a teacher who is not yet as skilled?
Write your answer here

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# The Modeling of Emotions & Emotion Regulation Strategies

# Reflect: Expressing your emotions in the classroom

Reflect on how you express emotions in the classroom by answering the following questions.

I. Name five emotions you feel on a typical day in your classroom:  Write your answer here
2. Which of these do your children know you're feeling? How do they know?
Write your answer here
3. Some teachers talk about putting on their "teacher smile" when they come to work. What does this mean to you? Do you think you do this? Why or why not?
Write your answer here

# Learn: Modeling emotions and regulation strategies



Watch the video online. You can refer to the content in written form here.

Modeling in the Emotion-Focused Teaching framework refers to the visible things adults do with their emotions that teach children about emotions. Modeling can be verbal (things that we say), and it can be nonverbal (the things that we do). It is natural for teachers to experience and express emotions in the classroom and it is just as natural for children to notice and learn from teachers' expressions of emotions. Importantly, Modeling is not necessarily intentional.

Children are always observing their peers, teachers, and other adults. So, intentional or not, how we express our emotions in the classroom teaches children about how to express their emotions. This makes what teachers say about their emotions and how they describe their own emotions important.

Teachers might say, "I'm feeling kind of frustrated that we can't go outside today," and from this, children learn about what frustration is, how it's expressed, and the cause of the emotion. At circle time, a teacher might clap and smile to display their excitement, showing children what is appropriate to do when you're feeling excited in the classroom.

Through their Modeling, teachers can also show children what to do with their emotions and how to regulate or manage them. For example, even taking a big breath or sighing is showing a way to temporarily reduce a big feeling. When a teachers say "My friends aren't listening to me and I'm feeling upset so I'm going take a break in the calm-down corner and come back in a few minutes" that's another way children can observe what it's like for a teacher to experience an emotion and how they manage their feelings in the moment. Children learn from this teacher that when they feel upset, it is appropriate to step away to calm down.

When teachers express their emotions in the classroom, children learn what happens before and after an emotion. Through observation, they see what leads up to a teacher having an emotion, and what happens afterwards. Children also notice what kinds of emotions happen in certain situations, and where they tend to happen.

In the Emotion-Focused Teaching Framework, we can think about a range of teacher practices and behaviors stretching from those that provide just a little bit of emotion information to children to those practices that provide more emotion information to children. In general, we want to help teachers use the practices at the higher end of this range that provide more information about emotions.

Let's consider how different Modeling practices can provide different amounts of information to children. Imagine a scenario where Ms. Kim's students have been talking over her throughout Circle Time. She is starting to feel frustrated. Whether and how she expresses this feeling in front of her students will determine how much they learn about emotions. If she simply sighs and raises her voice even louder, the children will learn less than if she explains to her students why it makes her feel sad and frustrated when they talk while she is talking.

Modeling occurs anytime a teacher is experiencing and expressing an emotion where children can see. Therefore, Modeling can happen at nearly every moment of the day. During morning drop off, a teacher might express excitement and happiness. Later in the day, she may feel frustrated when the children are not listening. During free choice time, she may engage in some pretend play and pretend to feel a different emotion, which also counts as Modeling. In the afternoon, a parent calls the classroom phone and children overhear the teacher complain to her assistant that she hates it when parents call the room.

So remember, modeling is happening whether it is intentional or not. The degree to which teachers can be explicit and high-quality in their modeling throughout the day, the more children will learn about emotions.

# **Observe: See modeling in action**

On the next page, look at the "EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool" and read the Modeling items. Then, complete the following questions.

. Which practices do	you think would be the ea	asiest? Why?
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Write your answer here		

2. Which practices do you think would be more difficult? Why?

Write your answer here		



Then, watch the video online, and use the EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool to observe the teacher's emotion-focused Modeling.

# **EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool: Modeling**

Key Questions	Observations
Does the teacher display <b>positive</b> emotions, verbally or nonverbally (e.g., laughs or smiles)? Do they <b>label</b> any of these positive feelings?	
Does the teacher verbally express positive feelings about the child(ren) (e.g., "I missed you," or "You make me feel so good," or uses terms of endearment)?	
Does the teacher give <b>physical affection</b> to a child?	
Does the teacher display <b>negative</b> emotions, verbally or nonverbally (e.g., groans or frowns)? Do they <b>label</b> any of these negative feelings?	
Does the teacher verbally express negative feelings about child(ren) or refer to them using a hurtful name (e.g., "You're such a troublemaker!" or "You are so frustrating!")?	
Does the teacher have a <b>negative</b> emotional <b>outburst</b> (e.g., loud or startling expression of anger)?	
What is the teacher's <b>mood</b> like? Is it consistent? Does it shift?	
Does the teacher model any emotion regulation strategies (e.g., deep breath, talks to self, takes a break)?	

# **Apply:** Practice and reflect on your modeling in the classroom

Now it's time to reflect on your own modeling practices. To do this, try recording a short video of yourself teaching. Choose an activity where you'll be relatively stationary for about 10 minutes (circle time, book reading, or a mealtime).

Later, review the modeling items on the EMOTERS-based Guided Observation tool and then watch your recording. After watching yourself in action, complete the following questions:

1. Start with offering some compassion to yourself. Watching ourselves on video can be difficult and maybe even embarrassing. How did it feel to watch

Our own vide Write your a	answer here
	our strengths. What modeling practices did you employ? What ctices came naturally?
Write your a	answer here

were you feeling or thinking? How do you think that showed up in your modeling?
Write your answer here
4. Strive for slow, sustainable growth. What are one or two achievable goals for improving your modeling practice over the next couple weeks (e.g., label your own emotions more often)?
Write your answer here

3. Reflect on what was coming up for you when you were teaching. What

# Learn: Teacher well-being and modeling



Watch the video online. You can refer to the content in written form here.

Young children are keen observers of the adults in their lives, and they are particularly good at studying our feelings and reactions. When kids aren't sure how to feel or react to something new, they look to parents and teachers for clues. For example, when an unfamiliar dog walks down the sidewalk, a child may use their parent's facial expressions to know if this is a time to be excited or nervous. Seeing how their adults feel also helps children learn what is "normal" and expected of them in various situations. When the fire alarm sounds in a classroom, children look to teachers to know if this is a drill or if there's reason to be scared. Our calming presence enables them to stay calm and teaches them that they can handle this new situation.

In a busy preschool classroom, therefore, teachers' emotions play a critical role in influencing how children feel and act and what they learn about emotions. Under ideal conditions, teachers can guide children's understanding of how to express their emotions in healthy and productive ways, can show children what it looks like when adults are able to manage and talk about their feelings, and can show how to behave, even when experiencing a big emotion.

### Teachers' stress in the classroom

Unfortunately, not every teacher is working under ideal conditions. In fact, teachers are more than twice as likely to feel stressed out compared to other occupations and have higher rates of depression. These feelings are particularly common among early childhood educators. The demands of lesson planning, record keeping, administrative responsibilities, difficult relationships at work, and the constant challenge of meeting the emotional and physical needs of young children can all contribute to elevated stress levels at work. On top of work-related stress, early educators often also experience financial stress due to pervasive low wages and they struggle to meet their own families needs.

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When teachers are under stress, it can show up in their interactions with students. They may model more negative emotions such as impatience, frustration, or disappointment, especially in response to children's behavior. Teachers' unregulated negative expressions can detract from the overall classroom climate and are powerful examples for children about what it looks like when adults can't manage their own feelings

### Intentionally modeling negative emotions in the classroom

At the same time, research shows that it is important for children to see the adults in their lives experiencing negative feelings. When parents mask their anger, sadness, and frustration, children are left believing that their own negative feelings are inappropriate, leading to greater problems with children's behavior down the road. Emotion-focused teaching does not mean pretending not to feel. But emerging research shows that teachers' intentionality matters - when teachers are making active choices about how and when to model their emotions and emotion regulation skills in developmentally appropriate ways, it helps children learn through observation.

Take for example, Ms. Shannon, whose call to her prekindergarten students to join her on the carpet for circle time was a little less cheery than normal one rainy winter morning. She wasn't feeling like singing a song and her students could tell one of them gave her a spontaneous hug. Instead of muscling through the morning meeting, she paused, took a deep breath and let out an exaggerated sigh with big arm movements, which made her students giggle. "Children, I'm feeling sad today," she said. "Can you tell?" (Lots of heads nodded in response). "I'm feeling sad because my son left to go back to college this morning. He was home for winter break, and I'm really going to miss having him at home with me. I'm going to do my best to still have fun with you all today, but I wanted you to know why I'm feeling a little down. Telling you all is helping me feel a little better. What else can I do to feel better?" What follows is a spontaneous brainstorming session by the children in Ms. Shannon's classroom - she could go to the cozy corner and read a book, she could put on some happy music, she could call her son and ask him to come home, or she could ask for a hug. "Oh, these are all wonderful suggestions, thank you. I think that last one will really help. Would someone be willing to give me a hug?" 18 eager hands shoot up in the air and Ms. Shannon proceeds to receive a fortifying hug from each volunteer.

Rather than pretending everything was normal, Ms. Shannon brought her authentic feelings to work this day. She made an intentional choice to label how she was feeling and to invite the children, in an appropriate way, to connect her visible body language with an understanding of what was causing her feelings. Finally, she modeled help-seeking behavior and emotion regulation strategies while implementing an impromptu lesson. The whole interaction took less than 3 minutes but made for an authentic and important emotion-focused teaching moment.

# Reflect: Being intentional in the modeling of negative emotions

Let's take a few minutes to reflect on what it means to intentionally model and show your negative emotions with children. On your own or with a partner, reflect on the following:

Describe a situation in your classroom when you sometimes feel frustrated. Why are you feeling this way?
Write your answer here
2. When this frustrating situation occurs in the classroom, do children know you're frustrated? What do you think they are learning from your modeling?
Write your answer here
3. Knowing what you know now, is there something you could do before, during, or after, to feel less frustrated? What, if anything, do you want to change about your modeling practice? What steps will you take?
Write your answer here

# Responding to Children's Emotions

# Reflect: What children learn from our responses

Below are some ways teachers may respond to an upset child. What do you think the child learns from each reaction? Which of these have you said? Which of these do you want to try?



# Learn: Responding to children's emotions



Watch the video online. You can refer to the content in written form here.

All throughout the day, children feel and show their emotions in the classroom. For instance, children may get upset during play time with their peers, become sad when saying goodbye to their parents during drop off, or be excited or to go outside to play. This means that teachers have ample opportunities to react to those emotions. Our reactions to children's behavior and emotions conveys information about emotions that children can learn from.

Teachers' reactions to emotions have a significant impact on children. They can either encourage certain emotions by validating their emotion expression by saying "it's okay," or they might discourage certain emotions by invalidating their emotion expression by saying that it is "not okay." The teachers' reaction gives information back to the child about their emotions, such as what emotions are valid or acceptable to express in certain situations.

Invalidating responses might sound like, "You're just pretending," or "Stop acting like a baby!" Other examples include statements like, "I don't understand why you're so upset. It's not a big deal, just settle down," "You are stressing me out, chill out," or, "Come back to me when you've calmed down. You are very upset and I can't talk to you like this." Those are invalidating responses. They convey that the child's emotions are unwarranted or unacceptable.

Examples of validating responses are: "Yes. This is exciting, isn't it?" "If you don't like him touching you, tell him," or, "Let's go look for that toy. What can we do to help you feel better? I can see that you're really upset." These validating responses acknowledge the child's emotion, and allow its expression, even if the teacher suggests a different way to express it.

Responding to children's emotions can be difficult, especially when they are coupled with problematic behaviors. It's important to note that emotion-focused teaching is about validating the emotion, not necessarily the problematic behavior. Almost always the emotion comes first, and then the problematic behavior follows. For instance, you can validate a child's anger without validating his knocking over a chair. You can say, "I can see that you're feeling angry but that's not OK. What's something that you can do that would be OK?"

Just like Modeling, Responding can happen at any moment and throughout the day. We discussed above that children experience and express emotions throughout the day, so teachers have many opportunities to respond to their emotions. We know from our research that some classroom settings and activities might be more challenging than others to use emotion-focused teaching. For example, during drop off, a child arrives and is upset, but the teacher is busy setting up for breakfast and doesn't really notice. In this case, the teacher does not respond to the child's negative emotion and unintentionally invalidates the child's emotional experience. During table activities, a child is frustrated and the teacher praises the child's effort to calm down and gives them a little hug. The teacher recognizes and validates the child's experience of frustration. The teacher also provides praise for a child's effort to engage in regulation, which is a challenging emotion skill, and provides comfort through physical affection, which may help the child calm down.

The more we learn to be intentional with our responding, the more a child learns about their emotions and develops key emotion competence skills.

# **Observe: See responding in action**

On the next page, look at the "EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool" and read the Responding items. Then, complete the following questions.

1. Which practices do you think would be the easiest?	Why	√?
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Write your answer here		

2. Which practices do you think would be more difficult? Why?

Write your answer here		



Then, watch the video online, and use the EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool to observe the teacher's emotion-focused Modeling.

# **EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool: Responding**

Key Questions	Observations
When a child expresses a negative emotion, how does the teacher respond?	
Does their response acknowledge or allow its expression (validating)?	
When a teacher perceives any <b>behavior</b> as problematic, does the teacher address a possible underlying emotion (e.g., "Are you throwing things because you're frustrated?")?	
Does the teacher help a child <b>regulate</b> an emotion with comfort, distractions, or guidance (e.g., "Let's take 3 deep breaths")?	
When a child expresses a <b>positive</b> emotion, how does the teacher respond?	
Does their response acknowledge or allow its expression (validating)?	
Does the teacher anticipate children's emotional reactions to classroom activities or events (e.g., possible disappointments)?	
Does the teacher join children in their playfulness (e.g., using silly voices/faces, dances, pretend play, telling jokes)?	

# **Apply:** Practice and reflect on your responding in the classroom

Now it's time to reflect on your own responding practices. To do this, try recording a short video of yourself teaching. Choose an activity where you'll be relatively stationary for about 10 minutes (circle time, book reading, or a mealtime).

Later, review the responding items on the EMOTERS-based Guided Observation tool and then watch your recording. After watching yourself in action, complete the following questions:

Focus on your strengths. What responding practices did you employ?  What responding practices came naturally?
Write your answer here
2. Reflect on what was coming up for you when you were teaching. What were you feeling or thinking? How do you think that showed up in your responding?
Write your answer here
3. Strive for slow, sustainable growth. What are one or two achievable goals for improving your responding practice over the next couple weeks (e.g., seek to address the emotions underlying behavior?)
Write your answer here

# Learn: Beliefs about emotions



Watch the video online. You can refer to the content in written form here.

We all have our own personal <u>beliefs about emotions</u>, whether we recognize them or not. For example, some people believe that negative emotions are harmful while others believe they are an important part of life. Our beliefs about emotions are *socialized*, meaning, our families, friends, and experiences teach us which emotions are valued and which expressions of emotions are appropriate or inappropriate in our cultures and communities.

Different cultural and ethnic groups hold different beliefs about emotions and express emotions differently. For example, in Western cultures, like those in the United States, it is common for families to express their love for one another with physical affection and by using of affectionate language. In Eastern cultures, like those in China, families may express their love for one another primarily through acts of service. While Chinese and American parents love their children just as much, their expressions of love might *look* different.

Families may also have different norms for expressing the emotions: Some may express their anger loudly to members of their family, while others may keep it to themselves. Emotion beliefs also may be shaped by parents' responses to children's emotions. If parents react harshly to their child's crying, it's understandable that the child may learn that crying is inappropriate and comes with consequences.

Certain groups also may have unique experiences with certain emotions that influence what they teach children about emotions. For example, Black families in the United States may intentionally teach children *not* to display anger in some situations. Given the history of violence against Black people, parents are justifiably afraid that their children may be mistreated or even harmed for expressing anger.

How you respond to children's emotions in the classroom is likely related to your emotion beliefs, shaped by your family, culture, and experiences, and biases of which you may not even be aware. For example, have you ever heard another teacher say, "Big boys don't cry"? In the United States, teachers tend to use negative emotion language more with boys than girls and minimize boys' feelings more. Similarly, preservice teachers have also been seen to perceive Black children's faces to be angry more often than they do for white children, a phenomenon called <u>racialized anger bias.</u>

When children in our classrooms experience big feelings, we want to help them, but it's important to consider what emotion beliefs may be underneath your responses. For example, if children are excitedly yelling out while their peer is speaking during morning meeting, a teacher who wants to ensure her students are prepared for kindergarten might simply remind them of the classroom rule be quiet while others are talking. But, over time, this response might teach them that being excited during morning meeting is not okay, even though encouraging excitement for learning is also very important for their success. One approach might be to acknowledge how happy you are that they're excited, but that it's important to respect their peers and teachers by waiting their turn.

Your motivation and passion to work with young children is also the result of your experiences and will help you to play an important role in their social and emotional development. As you continue to develop your own classroom practices, reflect on what beliefs and experiences are driving you to respond positively to some emotions but not others, or encourage some children to cry and others to calm down. Becoming aware of what beliefs may be driving our responses is the first step to becoming intentional and purposeful in how we interact with children and their emotions.

# Reflect: Early emotional experiences and how they shape responding

On your own or with a partner, reflect on the following questions about your emotion socialization experiences and how they may impact your perception of children's emotions in your classroom:

did adults in your life react when you expressed big emotions as a young child?
Write your answer here
2. In classroom settings, which emotions are most challenging for you to respond to? Why?
Write your answer here
3. In what ways do your early life experiences influence how you support children's emotions in the classroom?
Write your answer here

# **Apply:** Responding to children's big emotions

### Consider the following scenario and questions.

During centers time, Tommy eagerly went to the block corner where Leon, Eduardo, and Keith were continuing the city they started constructing yesterday. Tommy tried to help by adding a block but the other boys kept ignoring Tommy and moving the block he placed. Fed up, Tommy grabbed a block and flung it across the room before throwing himself into a nearby bean bag chair crying.

1. Write a script for your self. What would you say to Tommy? What would

you say to the other children?
Write your answer here
2. Did your response to Tommy focus on his behaviors, his feelings, or both? What about the other boys?
Write your answer here
3. In what ways did your beliefs about emotions influence your responses, if at all?
Write your answer here

# Instructing About Emotions

### **Reflect: Resources in hand**

Answer the following questions to take stock of the SEL resources you have access to at your school.

	off any of the following classroom resources that you have access to and promoting children's SEL?
	High-quality universal SEL curriculum
	Story books about emotions and social situations
	Puppets for role playing
	Feelings Chart or other visuals
	Regular professional development on SEL
	Formative assessments of children's SEL
2. How o	ften do you utilize these resources? Which do you wish you greater ge of?
Write yo	ur answer here
	would you use the following common classroom objects when promoting s emotion skills: 1) carpet squares 2) a mirror and, 3) building blocks?
Write yo	ur answer here

### Learn: Instructing about emotions



Watch the video online. You can refer to the content in written form here.

Instructing describes the ways teachers provide children with information about the nature of emotions. While this certainly happens during social-emotional learning lessons or other emotion-focused activities, instructing can also occur as children's (and teachers') emotions emerge throughout the day.

A planned instance of instructing may include reading a book about a specific emotion and having children practice making that expression in handheld mirrors. Impromptu, spontaneous instructing might occur when teachers respond to normal events in the classroom. For example, a teacher might help children anticipate how they may feel if the rain cancels their upcoming field trip and help them make a plan for how to handle that feeling.

When teachers provide guidance to children in their emotion regulation strategies, children are directly learning new information and skills for handling their own emotions. For example, teachers might help a child find a new activity and use deep breaths while waiting to use a coveted classroom resource. Instructing also entails helping children make connections between actions and feelings. A teacher might point out to one child that they made their friend angry by taking the toy they were playing with. In this way, the teacher also provides new vocabulary to describe their emotions. Teachers may also point out verbal and nonverbal emotion cues to help children recognize and respond to others' emotions. For example, the teacher might say, "He's clenching his fists, frowning, and telling you 'No.' That's how we know he's angry. What could we do to help our friend calm down?"

As we discussed previously, emotion teaching can happen throughout the day and teachers can both plan ahead to engage in instructing practices and take advantage of naturally occurring situations to give children more information about emotions. For example, teachers can use morning meeting routines to reinforce emotion vocabulary by helping children "check-in" on a feeling chart or share their feelings through song. Free time or centers might present more opportunities to label children's naturally occurring emotions while helping to resolve a conflict. During book readings, the teacher could engage children in discussion about predicting how a character in a book may feel on the next page.

As with the other domains of emotion-focused teaching, we can think of instructing practices along a ruler: On one end of the ruler, some teaching practices only give children a small amount of information about emotions, and then there are other practices that we expect will give children a lot of information and that better supports their development of new emotion skills.

Let's look at two scenarios and think about what children are learning from these interactions.

Every morning during circle time, Ms. Suarez asks children to show how they are feeling that day by pointing to a picture on a feelings chart. In this situation, Ms. Suarez is giving children an opportunity to share about their feelings and learn to connect emotion labels to specific expressions.

Ms. Thomas replicates Ms. Suarez's emotion-focused instruction but extends the lesson by asking children to explain why they are feeling that way. When children point out a negative emotion, such as sadness or worry, she also asks what they or the class could do to help them feel better.

We can see that this second scenario is giving children additional information about the nature of emotions by connecting feelings to events and providing children with opportunities to brainstorm ways to help manage their own and others' emotions.

Infusing information about emotions into interactions with children throughout the day is a fantastic way to boost children's social and emotional competence. Providing a lot of information about emotions during everyday interactions might feel awkward at first. With practice and intentionality, it will start to feel more natural.

### **Observe: See instructing in action**

On the next page, look at the "EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool" and read the Instructing items. Then, complete the following questions.

1. Which practices do you think would be the easiest?	Why	y?
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Write your answer here		

2. Which practices do you think would be more difficult? Why?

Write your answer here			



Watch two videos of instructing online, and use the EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool to observe the teacher's emotion-focused instructing.

# **EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool: Instructing**

Key Questions	Observations
Does the teacher provide a <b>Social-Emotional</b> learning lesson or activity?	
Does the teacher create an opportunity for children to share about their emotions (e.g., "Mark on the feelings chart how you are feeling today")?	
Does the teacher prompt children to think about how someone else feels or thinks (including peers and book characters)?	
Does the teacher <b>reference their own feelings/emotions</b> when giving the children information about emotions (e.g., "I sometimes need to go be by myself to calm down.")?	
Does the teacher help <b>children respond to others' emotions</b> ("If your friend is upset, ask if they want a hug," or "What could you do to help him feel better?")?	
Did the teacher provide a label or demonstrate the emotion, or describe what it feels like to experience it?	
Does the teacher <b>ask questions</b> about emotions, or have children <b>practice</b> any emotion skills?	
Does the teacher help children understand that emotions are related to prior, current, or future experiences (e.g., another child's behavior, imagined from a book, or an anticipated event)?	
Does the teacher explain, discuss, or demonstrate when, where, why, or <b>how to regulate emotions</b> (not in response to current emotions)?	

# **EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool: Instructing**

Key Questions	Observations
Does the teacher provide a <b>Social-Emotional</b> learning lesson or activity?	
Does the teacher create an opportunity for children to share about their emotions (e.g., "Mark on the feelings chart how you are feeling today")?	
Does the teacher prompt children to think about how someone else feels or thinks (including peers and book characters)?	
Does the teacher <b>reference their own feelings/emotions</b> when giving the children information about emotions (e.g., "I sometimes need to go be by myself to calm down.")?	
Does the teacher help <b>children respond to others' emotions</b> ("If your friend is upset, ask if they want a hug," or "What could you do to help him feel better?")?	
Did the teacher provide a label or demonstrate the emotion, or describe what it feels like to experience it?	
Does the teacher <b>ask questions</b> about emotions, or have children <b>practice</b> any emotion skills?	
Does the teacher help children understand that emotions are related to prior, current, or future experiences (e.g., another child's behavior, imagined from a book, or an anticipated event)?	
Does the teacher explain, discuss, or demonstrate when, where, why, or <b>how to regulate emotions</b> (not in response to current emotions)?	

# **Apply:** Practice and reflect on your instructing in the classroom

Now it's time to reflect on your own instructing practices. To do this, try recording a short video of yourself teaching. Choose an activity where you'll be relatively stationary for about 10 minutes (circle time, book reading, or a mealtime).

Later, review the responding items on the EMOTERS-based Guided Observation tool and then watch your recording. After watching yourself in action, complete the following questions:

1. Focus on your strengths. What instructing practices did you employ? What instructing practices came naturally?
Write your answer here
2. Reflect on what was coming up for you when you were teaching. What were you feeling or thinking? How do you think that showed up in your instructing?
Write your answer here
3. Strive for slow, sustainable growth. What are one or two achievable goals for improving your instructing practice over the next couple weeks (e.g., labeling children's emotions)?
Write your answer here

# **Apply:** Infuse Instructing into STEM activities

Your preschoolers are exploring which classroom items float and sink. Below are three scenarios that are likely to occur. For each scenario, brainstorm ways you could incorporate the Instructing practice into your planned STEM activity.

Scenario	Your Plan	Instructing Practice
Someone's shoes get wet	Write your answer here	Teach an emotion regulation skill
Two children are having a hard time taking turns	Write your answer here	Teach an emotion label
At clean up time, children do not want to stop	Write your answer here	Help children understand the physical sensation of an emotion

# Learn: Using Instructing practices in book readings



Watch the video online. You can refer to the content in written form here.

A common practice in early childhood is shared book readings. Teachers routinely read to children as a way to share about a topic, a way to have a discussion with children, or a way to calm down/transition to a new activity. Teachers can incorporate aspects of emotions into nearly any book reading, even if there aren't any words. Characters often express emotions (either in words or in pictures). With that, this presents opportunities for teachers to discuss emotions.

Book reading presents opportunities to talk about what emotions the characters are feeling. A teacher might say, "The fox is chasing the mouse! What do you think she is feeling when she's being chased? Her face tells me that she's having fun, and think it's exciting! But what about that little bunny? How do you think she feels? Her face tells me that she's scared, and maybe a little confused about what's going on."

Teachers can also discuss why the characters are feeling those emotions. She might ask the class, "Why do you think the bunny feels scared? Maybe she thinks foxes are scary and is concerned about the mouse!"

Teachers also have opportunities to discuss emotion regulation in book reading. A teacher might ask the class, "What do you think the character could do to feel differently? The bunny looks pretty scared, what do you think she can do to feel less scared? Maybe she could ask one of her friends for a hug, or for help finding the mouse who got chased away by the fox!"

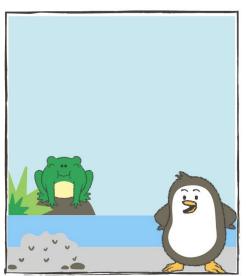
A teacher can also teach about prosocial ways for children to respond to others' emotions. A teacher might ask, "How do you think one of the bunny's friends could help her feel better?"

Book reading also provides an opportunity for children to talk about their own emotions. Teachers might prompt discussion by asking the children how the book made them feel, or if they had felt scared before, like the bunny did.

Importantly, an emotion-focused book doesn't always lead to emotion-focused teaching. Research shows that the content of the book doesn't influence how much emotion-focused teaching happens. Instead, teachers must be intentional in incorporating emotions into book reading.

# **Apply:** Infusing emotion-focused teaching into book reading

Imagine you are sharing a book with your class. This book doesn't have any words so it is up to you to help the children understand what is happening in the story. Practice using your new emotion-focused teaching skills as you "read" the following 3 pages from this story.







Write your answer here..

Write your answer here..

Write your answer here..

# Becoming an Emotion-Focused Teacher

### **Apply: Putting the pieces together**

Now that you've learned about the different components of emotion-focused teaching, it's time to start thinking about how to put the pieces together. Read the vignette below.

At the end of their morning meeting, Ms. Dominique reads Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen to her preschool class. She smiles at their excitement when they join in, saying, "Oh no! A River! A Great Big River!" Then Ms. Dominique asks, "Do you think they're scared?" She then feigns disappointment and smiles as they all say, "We've gotta go through it." At the end of the story, when they find the bear in a cold dark cave, she makes a scared face before pantomiming running back out of the cave, through the woods, and across the river before slamming the door and diving under the bed covers. "Phew!" she says, looking relieved as she and the kids wipe their brows with mock relief. As the story ends, Jackson shouts, "Again! Again!" but the teacher explains that it's time for them to get ready to go outside. Jackson picks up a nearby book and hurls it on the floor, yelling, "I want to read it again!" Ms. Dominique says, "I see you're disappointed and frustrated, but we're going outside now. Please get on your jacket." After a moment of pouting, Jackson gets on his jacket, and the class goes outside. (excerpt from Zinsser, Curby, Gordon & Moberg, 2023)

### On your own or with a small group, discuss the following:

1. How is Jackson feeling and why?

Write your answer here		

2. What did the children learn about the emotions from the book reading?
Write your answer here
3. What did Jackson and the other children learn from Ms. Dominque's reaction to his outburst?
Write your answer here
4. What emotion-focused teaching practices (modeling, responding, instructing) did Ms. Dominique use?
Write your answer here

## Learn: How emotion-focused teaching skills can build on each other



Watch the video online. You can refer to the content in written form here.

Although it is helpful to think of emotion-focused teaching as having three components (Modeling, Responding, and Instructing), all three domains work together and build upon one another.

From observing hundreds of hours of classroom videos, we learned that Modeling practices tend to be the most common and easiest for teachers to engage in. Teachers regularly express more positive emotions than negative emotions and their negative emotions tend to be regulated. Responding can be a little harder. Teachers sometimes struggle to react to children's emotions in validating ways. Because it necessitates a greater amount of intentionality, Instructing is the most difficult practice and teachers are observed to engage in it less frequently. By stacking these practices, we can think of emotion-focused teaching as a continuum or ruler with Modeling at the foundation and Instructing at the top. Teachers working to improve their support of children's emotional development can strive to integrate more higher-level practices from Responding and Instructing.

It is important to remember that these practices do not happen in isolation. Thus far, we have discussed the components of emotion-focused teaching as separate practices. You may have noticed in some of our videos, however, that teachers often Model and mirror children's emotions while Responding to them with validation. Likewise, it is common to see teachers Instructing children about emotions or emotion regulation while they are Responding to big feelings by providing labels or suggesting strategies.

When we use emotion-focused practices from each of the three domains, especially in combination, children learn the most about emotions. In your pre-reflection on the prior page, you saw how Ms. Dominique responded to Jackson's outburst of disappointment and anger by saying, "I see you're disappointed and frustrated, but we're going outside now. Please get on your jacket." In this example, Ms. Dominque responds in a validating way by acknowledging and labeling his emotions.

Now consider a different ending to that story where Ms. Dominque combines multiple emotion-focused strategies. What if Ms. Dominique said, "Jackson, I know you're disappointed that we only read it one time today, but I don't like it when you yell at me like that because you're frustrated. It makes me feel sad. I think it also made some of your friends feel scared, can you see their faces?" Her face shows a slightly sad face and points to the other children who have moved away from Jackson on the carpet. She asks the class, "Who remembers our song about calming down? Can we all sing it together while putting our coats on?"

One big difference in this story is that Ms. Dominique used more emotion-focused teaching practices when she responded to Jackson. In addition to responding in a validating way and labeling his emotion, she explains *why* he is feeling that way (Instructing), verbally and nonverbally expresses and labels her own emotions (Modeling), helps Jackson understand how his emotional expression affected others (Instructing), and provides guidance about how to regulate his feelings (Instructing).

Importantly, both responses will help Jackson learn more about emotions, but the second response will give him even more information and opportunities to develop his own emotional skills. As you become familiar and comfortable with the practices under each component of emotion-focused teaching, you can experiment with combining them and being more intentional. When you continually reflect on your teaching, observe others teaching through an emotion-focused lens, and seek feedback on your own teaching, research shows that emotion-focused teaching will improve.

# **Observe:** All the emotion-focused teaching practices in action at once

Download the "EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool" online and use all the items to observe the teacher in the video. You might recognize it as the first video in this workbook! Then, answer the following questions:

1. What do you think was the most impactful emotion-focused teaching moment in this video?
Write your answer here
2. What practices did the teacher blend to create this moment?
Write your answer here
3. How could this teacher have used even more emotion-focused teaching?
Write your answer here

# **Apply:** Practice and reflect on your emotion-focused teaching in the classroom

Now it's time to reflect on your own emotion-focused teaching practices as a whole. To do this, try recording a short video of yourself teaching. Choose an activity where you'll be relatively stationary for about 10 minutes (circle time, book reading, or a mealtime).

Later, review all the items on the EMOTERS-based Guided Observation tool and then watch your recording. After watching yourself in action, complete the following questions:

Writ	te your answer here
were y	Elect on what was coming up for you when you were teaching. What you feeling or thinking? How do you think that showed up in your on-focused teaching?
Write	e your answer here
for imp	ve for slow, sustainable growth. What are one or two achievable goals proving your emotion-focused teaching practice over the next couple (e.g., using more instructing when responding)?
Write	e your answer here

### Learn: Striving for consistency



Watch the video online. You can refer to the content in written form here.

Anyone working in early childhood education knows how important routines are to keep their classroom running smoothly. Children thrive on predictability and find comfort in knowing what to expect.

It should be no surprise then that this is true for emotion-focused teaching too! When children can rely on their teachers to be consistent in modeling how they feel, validating children's own emotions, and helping them to understand the emotional world around them, children feel secure and will show it in their behavior.

At the same time, being consistent is really challenging. In our research, we've seen that teachers' emotion-focused teaching varies widely across a typical day and from activity to activity. Teachers naturally engage in more emotion-focused teaching when they're working one-on-one or in small groups with children but do almost none during routine times like lunch and snack. But as you've seen in this workbook, emotions are around us all the time, and emotion-focused teaching can happen throughout the school day.

As we discussed in Module 2, your ability to engage in intentional emotionfocused teaching can also depend on how you feel, so taking care of your own emotions is important too. When teachers are modeling, and supportive teaching practices are inconsistent, children feel anxious. This anxiousness can sometimes display as aggression.

Another area of consistency to consider is how you vary your teaching and interactions between children. Are there some children whose emotions you find easier to comfort or validate? Are there some children in your class who see your smile and laughter more than others? A challenge facing teachers is how to both individualize and tailor instruction to meet children's unique needs, while also not unintentionally treating children differently.

For example, emerging research suggests that teachers tend to engage in less modeling and responding with Black children than white children. We can imagine that a teacher may intentionally respond to one child's emotions differently from others, such as knowing that one child really needs someone to sit with them while they're taking deep breaths, and another does better if he's given some space. But if those choices are grounded in stereotypical beliefs about children based on their race or ethnicity, then it is no longer individualization.

Improving these skills requires effort and reflection. Throughout this training, you have already begun to build the habit of reflecting on your practices. Continue to wonder about how and why your own beliefs about emotions shape your interactions with children. Continue to be aware of your own feelings in and outside of the classroom. Remember that your emotional health is an important part of your teaching too. Reflect on the resources and supports you have access to, including supportive colleagues. Becoming a more emotion-focused teacher is an ongoing process and won't happen overnight. Making mistakes isn't just part of the process, reflecting on them with curiosity and compassion is the key to growth. Just as we strive to be consistent and supportive of our children, we also must be consistent and supportive of our own development.

# Observe: Providing feedback on emotion-focused teaching



Watch the video (you might recognize it from Module 1!) and use the form on the next page to observe the teacher using all domains. Then, answer the following questions:

questions:
1. What did this teacher do well?
Write your answer here
2. How do you think this teacher was feeling during this lesson? How did it impact her emotion-focused teaching?
Write your answer here
3. What might be one or two achievable goals for this teacher to improve her emotion-focused teaching practices?
Write your answer here

# **EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool: Modeling**

Key Questions	Observations
Does the teacher display <b>positive</b> emotions, verbally or nonverbally (e.g., laughs or smiles)? Do they <b>label</b> any of these positive feelings?	
Does the teacher verbally express positive feelings about the child(ren) (e.g., "I missed you," or "You make me feel so good," or uses terms of endearment)?	
Does the teacher give <b>physical affection</b> to a child?	
Does the teacher display <b>negative</b> emotions, verbally or nonverbally (e.g., groans or frowns)? Do they <b>label</b> any of these negative feelings?	
Does the teacher verbally express negative feelings about child(ren) or refer to them using a hurtful name (e.g., "You're such a troublemaker!" or "You are so frustrating!")?	
Does the teacher have a <b>negative</b> emotional <b>outburst</b> (e.g., loud or startling expression of anger)?	
What is the teacher's <b>mood</b> like? Is it consistent? Does it shift?	
Does the teacher model any emotion regulation strategies (e.g., deep breath, talks to self, takes a break)?	

# **EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool: Responding**

Key Questions	Observations
When a child expresses a negative emotion, how does the teacher respond?	
Does their response acknowledge or allow its expression (validating)?	
When a teacher perceives any <b>behavior</b> as problematic, does the teacher address a possible underlying emotion (e.g., "Are you throwing things because you're frustrated?")?	
Does the teacher help a child <b>regulate</b> an emotion with comfort, distractions, or guidance (e.g., "Let's take 3 deep breaths")?	
When a child expresses a <b>positive</b> emotion, how does the teacher respond?	
Does their response acknowledge or allow its expression (validating)?	
Does the teacher anticipate children's emotional reactions to classroom activities or events (e.g., possible disappointments)?	
Does the teacher join children in their playfulness (e.g., using silly voices/faces, dances, pretend play, telling jokes)?	

# **EMOTERS-based Guided Observation Tool: Instructing**

Key Questions	Observations
Does the teacher provide a Social-Emotional learning lesson or activity?	
Does the teacher create an opportunity for children to share about their emotions (e.g., "Mark on the feelings chart how you are feeling today")?	
Does the teacher prompt children to think about how someone else feels or thinks (including peers and book characters)?	
Does the teacher <b>reference their own feelings/emotions</b> when giving the children information about emotions (e.g., "I sometimes need to go be by myself to calm down.")?	
Does the teacher help <b>children respond to others' emotions</b> ("If your friend is upset, ask if they want a hug," or "What could you do to help him feel better?")?	
Did the teacher provide a label or demonstrate the emotion, or describe what it feels like to experience it?	
Does the teacher <b>ask questions</b> about emotions, or have children <b>practice</b> any emotion skills?	
Does the teacher help children understand that emotions are related to prior, current, or future experiences (e.g., another child's behavior, imagined from a book, or an anticipated event)?	
Does the teacher explain, discuss, or demonstrate when, where, why, or <b>how to regulate emotions</b> (not in response to current emotions)?	

# Reflect: Emotion-focused teaching throughout the day

As we've discussed, emotion-focused teaching happens throughout the school day, whether we planned it or not. But with some reflection, we can be more mindful and intentional about what children learn about their emotions and others' emotions. Use the classroom schedule below to brainstorm some ways you could increase your engagement in Modeling, Responding, or Instructing during some common classroom activities.

	How do the kids typically feel? How do you know?	How do you typically feel? Do the kids know?	What EFT practices do you typically engage in?
Drop off time			
Morning meeting/Circle time			
Book reading			
Centers			
Lunch			
Transitioning to go outside			

### Looking over the classroom schedule, reflect on the following questions:

1. What times of day are easiest for you to infuse more emotion-focused teaching? Which are hardest?
Write your answer here
2. How consistent do you think you are from day to day in these practices?
Write your answer here
3. What are some supports you need to be more consistent?
Write your answer here

### Additional resources

### **EMOTERS Reliability Training (https://www.emoters.org/contact)**

This online training is intended to prepare research teams to reliably use the EMOTERS tool for research purposes. The training introduces emotional competence and emotion-focused teaching, the three domains of emotion-focused teaching, and provides technical guidance for how to recognize and code emotion-focused teaching practices in classroom settings. Visit <a href="www.emoters.org/contact">www.emoters.org/contact</a> and fill out the form to receive the information needed to access the training, as well as the instrument description and technical manual.

### The ECE Resource Hub (https://eceresourcehub.org/)

The Hub is collection of resources from trusted sources in the field that highlight developmental skills, diversity and inclusion, connecting with families, and book collections.

### <u>CASEL's Preschool Program Guide (https://pg.casel.org/)</u>

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) offers this searchable database of evidence-based social-emotional learning curriculum. Use the filters to select targeted age groups and review the program characteristics and training opportunities.

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Content used in this workbook was drawn from the following sources:

### The ECE Resource Hub (https://eceresourcehub.org/)

Many of the videos that were included to showcase emotion-focused teaching practices in action were courtesy of the University of Virginia's ECE Resource Hub.

### MonkeyPen (https://monkeypen.com/pages/free-childrens-books)

MonkeyPen provides free PDFs of children's books. One of these PDFs were used in the Book Reading lecture.

### Pexels (https://www.pexels.com/)