Exploring People’s Emotions

Our thoughts and emotions often influence our behavior. Helping students see the connection between what they think, what they feel, and what they do leads to a better understanding of the role of emotions in their lives.

Before you start:

Get your class to start thinking about the connection between thoughts, emotions (feelings), and actions (behavior).

**SAY:** Class I want you to behave yourself. (Repeat your statement if necessary and let them react).

**ASK:** Now that I’ve got your attention, what does it mean when I say, “behave yourself?”

Students will probably reply that it means they’re supposed to stop fooling around – to act “good”. Tell them, they were acting fine, you just wanted to get them to think about the word “behave” or “behavior.”

**ASK:** What is our behavior? Is it our actions? What causes our behavior?

Guide the discussion so that students realize that it’s what goes on inside, “in our heads,” that often leads to our actions. That the way we act is often a response to our thoughts and our emotions (or feelings).

**ASK:** How do you think our thoughts and feelings affect our actions?

Explore how thoughts, emotions, and actions are connected

Display Connecting Projectable 2.3.1 showing the connection between thoughts, emotions, and actions. Review the triangle and have the students understand that when something happens, they have thoughts and emotions which often lead to an action. Discuss the following questions:

- How are thoughts, emotions, and actions related?
- How can our behavior, our actions, also affect our thoughts and feelings?
**ASK:** Are you free to think what you want? Are you free to feel what you want? Are you free to do what you want?

We can all think what we want, we can all feel what we want, it is only our actions that we are held accountable for. So it’s important to understand the role our thoughts and feelings play in our behavior, so that we can learn to respond more positively even when negative things happen to us. We can choose to respond more in line with our values.

**SAY:** Let’s use the triangle to explore how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected. Can someone share an example, not too dramatic, of something that happened to you recently that caused you to respond. It does not have to be a negative response.

Select an appropriate example. Remember to try to keep the situations low-key as you walk through – what happened, what they thought, what they felt, and how they acted. If necessary use only positive instances. (You may also explore how their response made them feel).

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**PRACTICING**

**Connecting thoughts, emotions, and actions**

Using a creative grouping strategy divide the students into small groups. Distribute **Student Handout: Practicing** and read through the instructions. The goal of the activity is to help students see that their thoughts often guide their emotions and actions. If they choose to use more positive or at least neutral thoughts in response to negative events they will act more responsibly and more in line with their values.

You can complete the activity in one of two ways:

1. Have the groups complete both responses before you have a discussion about the different thoughts they can use to respond more responsibly.
2. Have the groups complete and share their initial response, then as a class discuss alternative responses they can use to act more responsibly.

**Reflecting**

Display **Reflecting Project 2.3.2**. Students use their class notebooks to reflect individually and as a class on what they learned in this lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What?</th>
<th>How do thoughts and emotions often lead to actions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So What?</td>
<td>How can you use this knowledge to better understand your own and others’ emotions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now What?</td>
<td>How can you use your values to think about events differently and act more responsibly?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Have the students use the model from the Practicing Handout to record their thoughts, emotions, and actions in response to 3 events over the coming week. If the students responded negatively have them come up with alternative thoughts that they may have used to respond more responsibly.

**ASSESSING**

**PRACTICING (INFORMAL FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT)** Note the students’ responses during the discussion of the Practicing Activity to help determine their understanding of how thoughts, emotions, and actions are connected.

**APPLYING (FORMAL FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT)** Review the students’ response to the reflecting activity to assess how well students better understand their own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors and how their thoughts and behaviors are associated with their emotions.