



Student Wellbeing Hub

Expressing feelings

Module 1

Year 9



Teaching resource for
students with autism

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Introduction

This resource is designed to support teachers of students with autism. It aims to help you as a teacher to understand some of the strengths and challenges that this diverse cohort of students brings to the topic. The core audience is teachers who work in mainstream schools rather than special schools.

The resource includes background information, links to resources designed for teacher use and resources that can be used with students.

This module covers the following main areas.

1. Who am I? Questions of identity, temperament and character
2. Asking for help
3. Expressing feelings safely in texts and messaging
4. Expressing feelings safely online

Australian Curriculum

[Achievement standard links:](#)

- By the end of Year 10, students critically analyse contextual factors that influence identities, relationships, decisions and behaviours.
- They analyse the impact attitudes and beliefs about diversity have on community connection and wellbeing.
- They evaluate the outcomes of emotional responses to different situations.
- They apply decision-making and problem-solving skills when taking action to enhance their own and others' health, safety and wellbeing.

Who am I? Questions of identity, temperament and character

The learning intention of this part of the module is for students to gain an understanding of the factors that influence and make up identity. Indicators of success are for students to be able to describe their own and others' identities.

Investigate factors that make up identity

Most teenagers spend a lot of time thinking about their individual identity – what it is and how it fits with their peers. Teenagers with autism may find it harder to work out who they are and what their values are. Part of the reason for this is that they may struggle to recognise and control their emotions, which impacts on capacity to work out how they feel about themselves. They may be noticing that they tend to think differently to their peers and/or interactions with peers may be limited.

Resources

The following video resources may be useful introductions to ideas of identity, personality and temperament.



[Who am I?](#)¹

This video from the School of Life suggests that identity is in large a person's values, inclinations and temperament.



[Growing up Aboriginal: 'I'm proud of who I am and where I come from'](#)²

In this video from [The Drum](#), Natalie Cromb explores what it's like to be a citizen of a country, but to feel different.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oocunV4JX4w>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-OMKb9oBRE>

Teaching activity 1: Identity

This activity consists of a slide presentation. Use the slides to help students to explore the idea of 'identity' and what influences affect identity.



[Download Identity slide presentation](#)³ [PDF, 3.3 MB]

Expressing and responding to feelings

Once students are familiar with the characteristics of their identities and have an awareness of personality and temperament, then you can move on to the next section of this module, which relates to recognising, expressing and responding to feelings in self and others. How students manage these skills is directly influenced by their own personality and temperament.

However, if students **do not** yet have a foundational level of interoceptive awareness that enables them to notice their own emotions as they are developing, then it's recommended they engage in interoception activities.

If this is the case, start every session by following along with the [interoception finger grip activity](#)⁴ and end every session with the [interoception neck muscles guided activity](#)⁵. Over a period of 8–10 weeks this will improve the students' connection to their emotional signals. You can also download the free [Interoception 301 activity guide](#)⁶ from the Department for Education in South Australia.

³ <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/media/10646/mod-1-yr-9-identity-slides.pdf>

⁴ <https://youtu.be/KGFWWZg8JII>

⁵ <https://youtu.be/MJEmgG4wxJk>

⁶ <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/interoception-301-activity-guide.pdf>

Teaching activity 2: Recognising and responding to emotions

Help students extend their understanding of emotions by identifying the emotions being depicted in images and artwork. Ask students to look at each picture and answer the questions.



- What emotions do you think the people in the pictures are experiencing?
- Are they being helpful or supportive of each other or unhelpful or unsupportive? Why do you think this?
- What other actions could the people have taken to improve the possible outcome of the situation?



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- What emotions do you think this person is experiencing?
- What could this person do to improve her situation?

Teaching activity 3: Managing my own emotions

This activity will help students to develop an understanding of the influence of temperament in managing their own emotions. The indicators of success are that students will be able to think of a strategy to manage difficult emotions

Noting that everybody is different – which is what makes us interesting – can help all teenagers become more accepting of themselves. This activity is designed to increase self-knowledge, which in turn can assist students to manage and regulate what is happening to them and how they respond.

Steps for students

Understand yourself

Step 1: Think about your temperament. Using the ‘Wheel of emotions’ diagram (worksheet next page), circle all the words that describe you. Include words that describe you some of the time and most of the time.

Step 2: Extroverts find spending time with other people energising, while introverts find spending time with other people tiring. Are you more extroverted or introverted?

Step 3: People who are emotionally stable experience a full range of emotions but are usually in control of their emotions, whereas people who are emotionally unstable can find that their emotions are in control of them. Are you more emotionally stable or unstable?

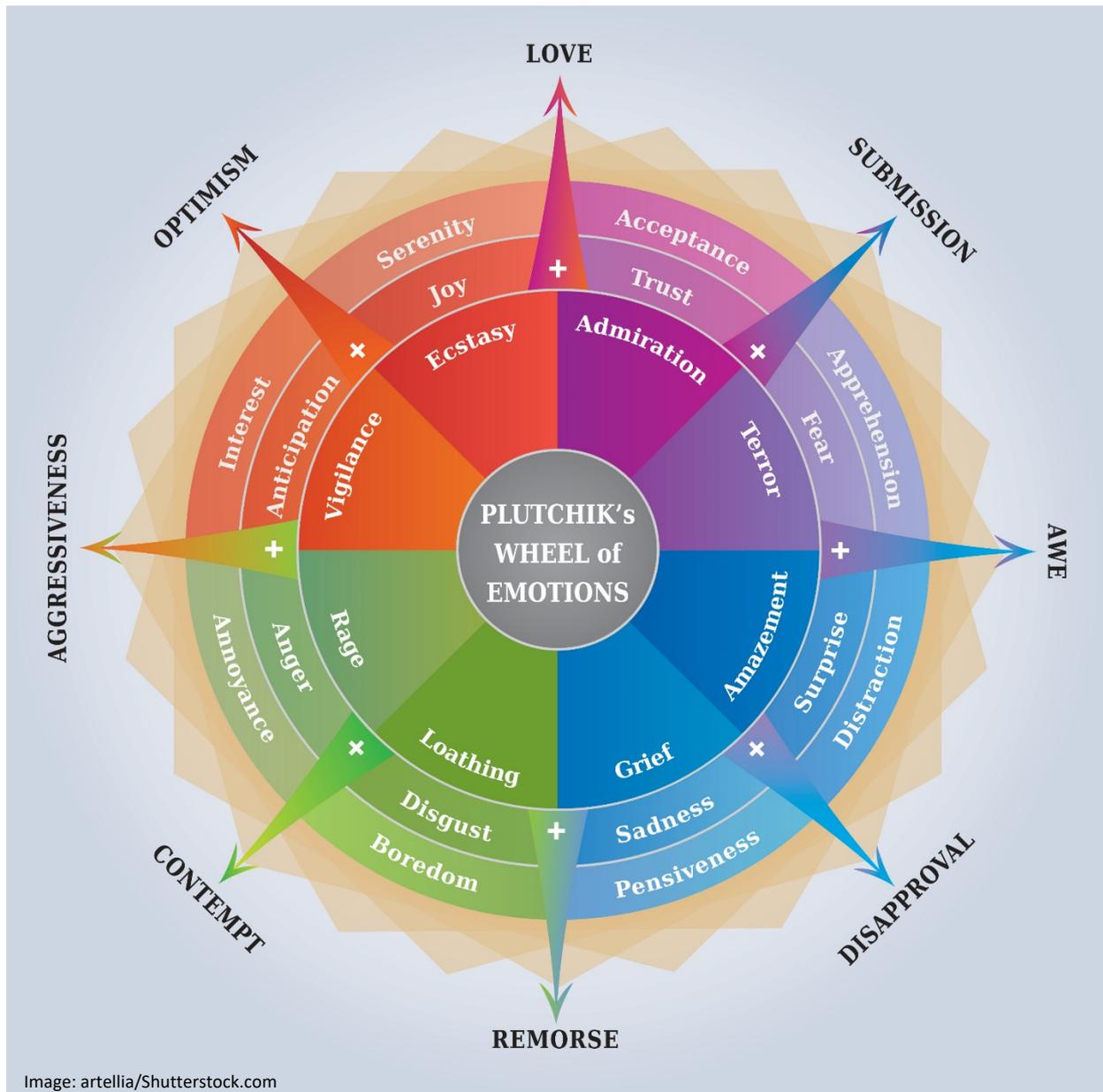
Develop strategies

Coming up with strategies can help you manage your emotions.

Step 4: Think of a strategy to manage when you are starting to feel ‘all peopled out’. Using the example below, make yourself a reminder card to use in these types of situations.

Step 5: Think of a strategy to manage when you are starting to feel overwhelmed by your emotions or a situation that you are in. Using the example below, make yourself a reminder card to use in these types of situations.

Worksheet: Wheel of emotions



Example reminder cards

I am 'all peopled out' at the moment. To help me feel better I need to:



I am emotionally overwhelmed at the moment. To help me feel better I need to:



Asking for help

The learning intention of this part of the module is for students to know when and how to seek help with emotions, practical needs or wants and completing learning tasks. The indicators of success are for students to be able to role-play and share help-seeking strategies, and to be able to seek help using these strategies in a range of situations.

Analyse the need for help

Ask the students to fold a piece of paper into thirds, and then write the following headings:

Things I can always do without help	Things I need help with sometimes	Things I always need help with
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Model two answers for each heading on the whiteboard. Then ask the students to write at least five things for each heading.

Investigate the steps to seek help

Ask the students to pick one of the items from one of the columns with things they need help with.

Discuss:

- How do you decide whether or not to ask for help?
- Who do you ask for help?
- How can you increase the chances of getting the help you need?

Steps to get help

1. Look towards/at the person

2. Ask them if they have time to help you

3. Clearly say what help you need

4. Thank them

- Ask the students to create a script for each of the situations that they always need help with, using this four-step process.
- Discuss what to do if the person says they do not have time to help.
- Roleplay one script from each student.



Note about the instruction to ‘Look towards the other person’

Students with autism may struggle to make eye contact. It doesn't come naturally and has even been reported as 'painful' by people with autism to look at people's eyes. It is included here as an activity because making eye contact is one way of communicating effectively with people – and therefore a skill that is useful, and a skill that can be practised. Consult the learning plans for individual students and use your judgement about whether this step is appropriate for your student/s.

For more about this topic, see [Social skills for teenagers with autism spectrum disorder](#).

Expressing feelings safely in texts and messaging

The learning intention of this part of the module is for students to understand the pros and cons of communicating via texts and messaging apps. The goal is for students to be able to describe ways to minimise risks of miscommunication in texts and messaging.



[Module 1 Year 5-6](#) and [Module 1 Year 7-8](#) have also focused on feelings and emotions. Before undertaking this topic, it may be worth revisiting these concepts and discussing the feelings that students have when they receive text messages or other forms of online communication.

Steps to minimise miscommunication in texts or messaging

Young people with autism are as vulnerable as other teenagers in the ambiguous world of text messaging and in use of apps. Practise applying the following steps to examples of texts/messaging:

- Step 1: Don't assume you know how a person feels.
- Step 2: Check that you are understanding correctly.
- Step 3: Be clear in your texts and messages.
- Step 4: It is OK to use whole words and obvious emoticons.
- Step 5: Ask a trusted friend or adult if you are not sure.

Teaching activity 4: Analysing the issues around texting and messaging

This activity is designed to help students understand how misunderstandings can occur when using texting and messaging.

- Cut out examples of text messaging on the next page and give each student a strip.
- Ask them to interpret the text, focusing on intent and meaning.
- Now ask the students to swap their message examples. Ask them to interpret this new text, focusing on intent and meaning.
- Now ask the students to discuss their interpretations of the two text messages. Did they agree on the meanings? If not, why not?
- As a whole group, discuss why misunderstandings can occur when using texting or messaging.

Now this is a 📖 all about
how my life got 🔄📶📶
now I'd like to take a
🕒 just 📱👉 I'll tell ya how
I became a 🏰 of a
🏠🌳🏠🌳 called 📞👤

Hey, I just 🧑 you
And this is 😱
But here's my 📱
So 📞 me, maybe?

Your 😍 was holdin'
Ripped 🍑,
skin was showin'
🔥 night, wind was 🌪️
Where you think
you're going, 🤔?

Sooo r u actually going to kiss
me 😭👤

No you are not getting me
unangry with you

hey baby i don't think i can
come over tonight. my cramps r
really bad :(

You could have any guy in the
world and yet you chose me.

Bro I said it's fine don't worry
about her

You're the reason my life feels
so perfect.

I have had a crush on you ever
since we met and I think I love
you.

I'm coming over

no not right now i'm a mess

Are you doing what I think
you're doing right now?

wanna come over for
some Netflix and chill?

Oh my, babe ur so sweet 💕 but
that's definitely not true 🤔

Note: The term Netflix and Chill is common slang for sex



Extend the activity

Have the students role-play asking for clarification and/or more information. This can be done verbally or using text messaging if the students have access to mobile phones. If using phones, only pair students up who already have each other's contact details. Alternatively, in pairs, students can use an online 'text message' generator, such as [ifaketext](#).

eSafety

The Australian eSafety website has some useful resources including:



[Banter vs bullying](#)⁷

[Cyberbullying](#)⁸

[Consent and sharing photos](#)⁹

[I'm being pressured to send nudes](#)¹⁰

Additional resources



[STAR toolkit: S is for Safe Sharing](#)¹¹ is a free resource to support teachers of students with special needs and has many excellent teaching ideas. One activity explores the early warning signs that signal that something may be wrong or that a situation is making students feel uncomfortable.

Note that the laws in relation to sexting or image-based abuse may be different in a British context.

⁷ <https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people/banter-vs-bullying>

⁸ <https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people/cyberbullying>

⁹ <https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people/consent-sharing-photos>

¹⁰ <https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people/being-pressured-to-send-nudes>

¹¹ <https://www.childnet.com/resources/star-sen-toolkit/safe-sharing>

Expressing feelings safely online

The learning intention of this part of the module is for students to be aware of cyber-safety issues. Indicators of success are for students to be able to describe ways to minimise cyber-safety risks.

Analyse the issues around cyber safety

Watch the following three short videos from Common Sense Education:



[Teen voices: Sexting, relationships, and risks](#)¹²

[Teen voices: Dealing with digital drama](#)¹³

[Teen voices: Who you're talking to online](#)¹⁴

Discuss some of the issues raised as a whole group. Ask the students what issues they identified in the video. Ask students if they have experienced any of the difficulties talked about in the videos.

- Ask the students what they think cyber bullying is. Write it up on the whiteboard.
- Ask the students what they think cyber stalking is. As you write this on the whiteboard, prompt them to think about very specific details. Be clear that cyber stalking is illegal, as is making threats to someone's safety online or by texting/messaging.

Steps to minimise cyber-safety issues

1. Keep all your passwords secret. You might like to use a password-generating program, which will work across multiple devices with a master password.
2. Don't forget that most people present online somewhat differently from how they are in real life. They might be more or less shy online or a different gender or age. Sometimes these differences are not a big deal, but they can lead to risky situations. So, don't believe everything people say.
3. Don't share too much information about yourself. For example, don't tell people your last name or where you live.

¹² <https://youtu.be/IZwVT6WnPQY>

¹³ <https://youtu.be/RydKEaiKolc>

¹⁴ https://youtu.be/DiI8LjO_TGQ

4. Don't sext unless you want to. Discuss it with a trusted adult first. Never sext with an adult.
5. If someone wants to video chat, make sure you are wearing clothes and there is no personal information on display. If they do not show you their face, they are likely to be catfishing you. Stop all contact with them.
6. If an online friend wants to meet you in real life, take a trusted adult with you. Meet in a public place at a time of day when other people are around.

Practise analysing possible cyber-safety issues

As a group, watch the video [Movistar: Love story](#)¹⁵.

1. Ask the students if they were surprised by the ending.
2. Have the students discuss how they might know if someone is faking their social media profile.
3. Make a group poster on the 'red flags' to look out for on social media profiles. Make sure the students realise that people can even pretend to know them from school or out-of-school activities, but this doesn't mean that this is true.

Practise applying the steps to minimise cyber-safety issues

1. Get each student to make a poster or slide presentation regarding one of the Six steps to minimise cyber-safety issues. Once they have made their poster or presentation, ask them to present this to the group.
2. Once all presentations have been completed, discuss as a group what this means for them practically. Ask the students if there is anything they will do differently online now.
3. Repeat for all six steps.
4. Students can play the [interactive role-playing video game](#) from the Australian e-safety Commissioner. This game is designed to build digital intelligence skills and encourage safe online experiences.



Note: This [resource for educators](#) provides information about the steps teachers need to take to ensure their student's privacy is respected on school social media and other online sites

¹⁵ <https://youtu.be/IT0Wao7fnyo>

Further information

The laws about sexting differ in each state and territory, so be careful to check what is relevant to your jurisdiction.



Youth Law Australia [Sexting](#)¹⁶



Australian e-safety Commissioner [What is technology-facilitated abuse?](#)¹⁷

¹⁶ <https://yla.org.au/vic/topics/internet-phones-and-technology/sexting-laws/>

¹⁷ <https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/domestic-family-violence/technology-facilitated-abuse>



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