

Understanding Emotional Triggers and Healthy Responses.

Lesson Objective:

- Students will learn to identify emotional triggers and how to respond to emotions in healthy ways by practicing self-awareness.
- Students will apply the S.T.A.R. strategy to manage emotions during difficult situations.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Book 5, Chapter 1, *Buzz and Sammy Learn About Emotional Triggers and Healthy Responses*
- Pencils and markers
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Poster
- Activity 1: Emotional Triggers Worksheet
- Activity 2: S.T.A.R. Strategy When Triggered

Worksheet

- Home Connection Letter



Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Greeting Outline:

- Welcome the children and have them sit in a circle (if applicable)
 - Begin with a brief discussion of emotional triggers.



Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script

1. Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:

○ "Today, we're going to talk about something important: our emotions. Have you ever felt upset or frustrated, but weren't sure why? Sometimes, our feelings can affect how we act, even when we don't understand where those feelings come from. We're going to read a story about Buzz and Sammy, and how they learn to manage their emotions healthily."

2. Discussion Starter

- "Why do you think emotions can sometimes be tricky to understand?"
- "How do you feel when you're frustrated or upset?"

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 1 aloud. Pause at key moments to engage students and make sure they are following the story.
- Ask questions during key parts of the story.

Story Time Teacher Script:

Prepare the Students for the Story:

- "We're going to start a new chapter book called ***Buzz and Sammy Spot the Signs*** today. The first chapter is called *Buzz & Sammy Learn About Emotional Triggers and Healthy Responses*. Let's find out what happens."
- (Read the chapter aloud, pausing at key moments to ask questions and engage the children.)

Read the Chapter with Emphasis on Key Moments:

- **While reading**, pause during key moments.
- **Ask Questions:**
 - 1. Why is Buzz feeling frustrated during the soccer game?
 - 2. How do Buzz's emotions affect his ability to play the game?
 - 3. What do Sammy and the others notice about Buzz's mood?
 - 4. What does Grandma explain about emotional triggers?
 - 5. Why did Buzz's argument with his brother affect his mood during the game?
 - 6. How can recognizing emotions help us control how we react?
 - 7. What did Harriet say about her experience with emotions?
 - 8. How does Sammy relate to Buzz's frustration?
 - 9. What is the main lesson Grandma teaches them about emotions?
 - 10. How does Buzz plan to handle his emotions differently next time?

Buzz & Sammy Spot the Signs Chapter 1: Buzz & Sammy Learn About Emotional Triggers and Healthy Responses

Buzz and Sammy were best friends, always buzzing around with excitement and energy. But today, something was off. The group had gathered at the playground for a game of soccer, but Buzz seemed unusually distracted. He kept missing the ball, and Sammy noticed that his friend was getting more and more frustrated.

"Come on, Buzz! What's going on?" Sammy asked, running up to him after another missed pass.

Buzz, clearly irritated, kicked the dirt. "I don't know! I'm just really annoyed, and I don't even know why. I can't focus, and now I'm messing up."

The game came to a stop as Ollie, Harriet, Betty, and Bennie noticed Buzz's frustration. They all gathered around, concerned about their friend.

"I think I know that feeling," Harriet said gently. "Sometimes, when I'm feeling upset, it affects everything I do—even if I don't realize why I'm upset."

"Yeah," Bennie added, "it's like your emotions take over and make it hard to focus on what's happening right now."

Buzz nodded, still feeling agitated. "But why does that happen? Why do I feel this way, and why is it messing everything up?"

Grandma, who had been sitting on a bench nearby reading, saw the group huddled together and decided to join them. "Sounds like you're dealing with an emotional trigger, Buzz," she said kindly.

"Emotional trigger?" Sammy asked, confused. "What's that?"

"An emotional trigger is something that causes a strong emotional reaction inside of you, even if it's not directly related to what's happening right now," Grandma explained. "Sometimes, your brain reacts to things based on past experiences, and those emotions can influence your behavior without you realizing it."

Ollie looked thoughtful. "So, Buzz might be feeling frustrated about something else, but it's showing up in the way he's playing soccer?"

"Exactly," Grandma said. "Your brain is always making predictions based on what it knows. When you feel frustrated or upset about something, your brain might predict that things won't go well, even in situations where nothing is wrong."

Buzz frowned. "But how do I stop that? I don't want my emotions messing up everything else."

"Well," Grandma said, "the first step is to recognize when your emotions are influencing your behavior. That's called self-awareness. You might be feeling frustrated about something, but if you don't stop and figure out why, those feelings can take control."

Sammy nodded, understanding now. "So, Buzz needs to figure out what's really bothering him before it takes over?"

"Exactly," Grandma said. "Let's use Buzz as an example. Buzz, what do you think could be causing your frustration? Is there something that's been bothering you, even if it's not related to soccer?"

Buzz thought for a moment. "Well... this morning, I had a big argument with my brother. He took my favorite toy, and I got really mad. I guess I didn't realize I was still upset about it."

"That makes sense," Grandma said. "Your brain was holding onto that frustration, and it carried over into your soccer game. Now that you've identified the source, you can deal with it and prevent it from affecting the rest of your day."

"But how do I deal with it?" Buzz asked.

"Once you recognize your emotions, you can choose how to respond," Grandma explained.

"Instead of letting your frustration take control, you can stop, take a deep breath, and remind yourself that your argument with your brother is separate from what's happening now. That way, you're more likely to make good decisions based on what's important to you, not based on how you're feeling in the moment."

Harriet smiled. "I do something similar when I feel nervous before a big race. I stop and ask myself, 'Why am I nervous?' Once I figure it out, I can remind myself that the race is a new experience, and I don't need to bring old worries with me."

Sammy jumped in. "I remember once when I got mad because I thought Bennie was ignoring me during a game. But it turned out he was just focused on something else. If I had stopped to ask myself why I was feeling mad, I would have realized I was jumping to conclusions."

"That's a great example," Grandma said. "Sometimes, our emotions are like alarm bells going off. They're trying to tell us something, but if we don't stop and figure out why, they can lead us to act in ways we don't really want to."

Buzz nodded, feeling like he finally understood. "So, if I'm feeling frustrated again, I should stop and ask myself why. And if it's not something that's actually happening right now, I can remind myself not to let it take over."

"Exactly," Grandma said. "And that's how you practice healthy responses to your emotions. By becoming aware of how you're feeling and why, you can make choices that align with what's important to you."

Ollie grinned. "So, the next time you feel upset, Buzz, just stop, figure out what's really going on, and then decide how you want to respond. That way, your emotions won't control your behavior."

"Yeah," Harriet added, "it's okay to feel emotions, but it's important to make sure they don't make us act in ways we don't really want."

Buzz smiled, feeling more in control. "Thanks, guys. I'm going to try that. I don't want my emotions to get in the way of having fun with my friends."

Grandma gave them all a proud smile. "You've all learned something important today. Emotions are powerful, but with self-awareness, you can understand them and make better choices in any situation."

As the group went back to their soccer game, Buzz felt lighter. He knew that the next time he felt frustrated, he could stop, figure out what was bothering him, and make a better choice. He realized that emotions didn't have to control his behavior—and that was a powerful lesson.

From that day on, Buzz and Sammy, along with their friends, practiced identifying their emotions and asking themselves why they were feeling a certain way before reacting. They knew that by

understanding their emotions, they could make better choices in social situations and keep their friendships strong.

Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** “Buzz and Sammy and the gang have figured out that it’s important to understand why you might be feeling the way you do, so that you can make better decisions.”

Post-Chapter Questions

Ask these questions to help students reflect on the chapter and connect it to their own experiences:

- How did Buzz’s frustration with his brother carry over to the soccer game?
- Have you ever felt upset like Buzz but didn’t realize why at first?
- Why is it important to stop and think about why we feel a certain way?
- What is an emotional trigger, and why do they matter?
- How does self-awareness help us make better decisions?
- Why was it helpful for Buzz to talk about his feelings with his friends?
- What are some ways to deal with emotions in a healthy way?
- How did Grandma help Buzz understand his emotions?
- How can asking “Why am I feeling this way?” help you respond better?
How will Buzz’s new understanding help him next time he feels frustrated?

Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- Students will identify their emotional triggers in common situations and apply the S.T.A.R. strategy (Stop, Think, Act, Reflect) to manage their emotional responses in a thoughtful and constructive way.

Please choose from the following 2 activities:

Activity 1: Identifying Emotional Triggers (15 minutes)

Introduce Activity

“Today we’re going to talk about *emotional triggers*—those situations or moments that cause us to have strong feelings like frustration, embarrassment, sadness, or anger. When we understand what triggers these feelings and why, we can better manage how we react. Just like Buzz learned, emotions aren’t random—they’re often based on how we think about what’s happening around us.”

Activity Instructions

Distribute the Trigger Reflection Chart (or use chart paper/whiteboard as a class).

Each chart should have three columns:

- **Situation**
- **Emotion Felt**
- **What Might Be Causing That Feeling? (Trigger/Thought)**

Read each scenario aloud, then **pause after each one** and guide students through filling in the chart:

- What emotion might you feel?
- Why might that emotion come up? (Is it because you feel left out? Embarrassed? Worried you made a mistake? Expecting something else to happen?)

Example Scenarios to Use:

- You raise your hand, but the teacher calls on someone else.
- Your friend laughs while looking at you, and you’re not sure why.

- You worked hard on something, but someone doesn't notice or says something negative.
- You forget your homework and feel nervous about what the teacher will say.
- Someone else is picked first for something you wanted to do.

Optional: Work through the first example together as a class.

"Let's talk about a few of the situations we just explored. Who would like to share what they wrote about how the emotion came up, and what was really underneath it?"

(Prompt deeper thinking with follow-up questions like: "Was it the action, or what you thought it meant, that caused the feeling?")

Activity 2: S.T.A.R. Strategy When Triggered (15 minutes)

Introduce Activity

"Now, we're going to practice using the S.T.A.R. strategy like Buzz did. I'm going to give you a situation, and I want you to walk through the four steps: Stop, Think, Act, Reflect."

- Example Situation:

- You're playing a game with friends, and someone says something that upsets you.

- S.T.A.R. Steps:

1. Stop: Take a deep breath. What do you notice about how you're feeling?

2. Think: What might have triggered your emotions? Is there another way to see what happened?

3. Act: What is a healthy response? Should you ask a question or explain how you feel?

4. Reflect: How did your response change the outcome? How do you feel now?

Reflection:

- "How did using the S.T.A.R. strategy help you manage your feelings?"

Activity Instructions

- Hand out the S.T.A.R. Strategy When Triggered Worksheet
- Students can work independently or in pairs to complete the worksheet
- Have the class compare responses to the scenarios.

Review and Reflection Teacher Script

1. Gather in a Circle for Reflection:

- o “Let’s all come back together in a circle.”

2. Closing



"Let’s hear from a few of you—who would like to share one of the emotional triggers they identified, and how they used the S.T.A.R. strategy to manage that feeling?"

Prompt follow-ups:

- "What made that trigger so powerful for you?"
- "What was your STAR action step?"
- "Did reflecting help you feel differently?"

"As we close our lesson today, let’s go around the circle and each share one small thing that sometimes triggers a strong feeling—and one way you might handle it better next time."

(Teacher may model first: “When I’m in a rush and something goes wrong, I feel overwhelmed. I can stop and take three deep breaths before reacting.”)

Home Connection Letter

1. Sending Information Home:

- o “Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. Remember, emotions aren’t bad—they’re signals. When we take time to notice them, think through what

triggered them, and choose a healthy action, we grow stronger, kinder, and more in control of our choices. And that's something we can be really proud of.

- Hand out the letters as the children prepare to leave.

Parent Letter

Sending Information Home:

- Provide each child with a letter to take home to their parents explaining the lesson.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Today in class, we focused on understanding emotional triggers and learning how to manage our emotions using the S.T.A.R. strategy (Stop, Think, Act, Reflect).



Students identified situations that commonly make them feel frustrated or upset and explored how to handle these feelings in healthy and respectful ways.

This lesson supports our efforts to build self-awareness, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills.

We encourage you to ask your child what their personal triggers are and how they plan to use the S.T.A.R. strategy at home or in other settings.

Best Regards,

S.T.A.R. Strategy



**Stop
Think
Act
Reflect**



©2025 Anna-Lisa Mackey, M.Ed., All rights reserved.

Trigger Reflection Chart

Think about each situation and how it might make you feel. Then write what might be causing that feeling. Is it a thought, expectation, or past experience?

Situation	Emotion Felt	What Might Be Causing That Feeling? (Trigger/Thought)
You raise your hand, but the teacher calls on someone else.		
Your friend laughs while looking at you, and you're not sure why.		
You worked hard on something, but someone doesn't notice or says something negative.		
You forget your homework and feel nervous about what the teacher will say.		
Someone else is picked first for something you wanted to do.		

S.T.A.R. Strategy When Triggered

You're at recess, and one of your friends runs ahead to grab the swing you were heading for. You feel frustrated because you really wanted that swing.

Stop:

Think:

Act:

Reflect:

During art class, you accidentally spill paint on your project that you've been working on all week. You feel upset and disappointed

Stop:

Think:

Act:

Reflect:

You're playing a board game with friends, and someone keeps interrupting and telling you how to play your turn. You feel annoyed and want to tell them to stop.

Stop:

Think:

Act:

Reflect:

Your teacher asks a question, and you raise your hand to answer, but another student is called on. You feel disappointed because you wanted to show you knew the answer.

Stop:

Think:

Act:

Reflect: