

# ***Creating the Emotional Awareness Journal***

Lesson Objective:

The students will develop emotional awareness by exploring how emotions influence decision-making, understanding Lisa Feldman Barrett's theory of constructed emotion, reflecting on emotional patterns through journaling, and beginning the practice of using a personal emotional awareness journal.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Chapter 16, *Creating the Emotional Awareness Journal*
- Pencils and markers
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Poster
- Emotional Awareness 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 awareness.

## **Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script**

### **Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:**

- "Good morning, everyone! I hope you all had a wonderful winter break. Today, we're going to start a new project that will help us understand ourselves and each other even better—it's called an Emotional Awareness Journal."
- "An emotional awareness journal is like a diary, but instead of just writing about what happened in your day, you write about how you felt during different situations. It helps you understand your emotions better so that you can learn from them and use that knowledge to make better decisions."

## Discussion Starter

- "Have you ever kept a diary or journal before? What kinds of things did you write about?"
- "How do you think writing down your feelings might help you?"

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 16 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:

- "Today we'll read chapter 16, called Creating the Emotional Awareness Journal".
- (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:**
  - What does Ms. Sanchez say about emotional awareness?
  - How does Harriet feel about using her journal after soccer practice?
  - What creative idea does Buzz have for his emotional awareness journal?
  - Why does Sammy want to learn how other people's emotions affect him?
  - What patterns is Bennie looking for in his journal?
  - How does Ollie plan to organize his journal?
  - What does Harriet notice about her emotions during soccer games?
  - How does Buzz use colors to represent his emotions?
  - Why is it important for Sammy to understand how others' emotions affect him?
  - How do the friends use their journals to understand the Constructed Theory of Emotions?

## Chapter 16: *Creating the Emotional Awareness Journal*

The winter break had come and gone, and as January settled in, Ollie, Harriet, Bennie, Sammy, Buzz, and Betty were back at school. The holidays had been filled with fun, but now it was time to focus again on their learning and friendships. As the group gathered in the classroom on the first day back, they noticed something new on the board.

“Welcome Back! This month we’re focusing on Emotional Awareness!” it read.

Ms. Sanchez stood at the front of the class, smiling warmly at her students. “Good morning, everyone! I hope you all had a wonderful break. Today, we’re going to talk about something that will help you understand yourselves and each other better—an emotional awareness journal.”

The group exchanged curious glances. “What’s an emotional awareness journal?” Harriet asked, bouncing in her seat.

Ms. Sanchez nodded. “Great question, Harriet! An emotional awareness journal is a tool that helps you keep track of your emotions—what you’re feeling, why you might be feeling that way, and how those emotions affect your actions. By writing things down, you can better understand your emotions, and that understanding can help you make good choices.”

Betty, ever the problem-solver, raised her hand. “So, it’s kind of like a diary, but for our feelings?”

“Exactly,” Ms. Sanchez said. “It’s a way to reflect on your emotions and learn from them. The more you understand how you feel and why you feel that way, the more control you have over your reactions.”

Ollie, always the planner, leaned forward, intrigued. “That sounds like it could really help us make better decisions, especially when we’re feeling overwhelmed.”

Ms. Sanchez nodded. “That’s the idea. And you can also use it to recognize patterns—like if you tend to feel frustrated during certain activities or get excited about others. By noticing these patterns, you can learn more about how to handle different situations.”

The idea of the journal excited the group, but each friend had their own way of approaching it.

Ms. Sanchez gave them each a blank notebook to get started.

### Using Their Strengths

As they sat together at lunch, the group began talking about how they would use their emotional awareness journals.

“I’m going to fill mine up with all my feelings after soccer practice,” Harriet said with a grin. “I always feel a mix of things—like I’m super excited but sometimes frustrated if I don’t do well.”

Buzz, his creativity buzzing in his mind, leaned in. “I think I’ll make mine colorful. I’ll draw pictures that show how I’m feeling, like using different colors for different emotions.”

“That’s cool!” said Betty, nodding. “I’m going to write down what happened before I felt a certain way so I can figure out what triggers my emotions. That way, I can solve problems faster.”

Sammy, who was always thoughtful and empathetic, smiled softly. “I think I’ll use mine to figure out how other people’s emotions affect me. Like, if someone’s upset, it sometimes makes me feel upset too. I want to understand that better.”

Bennie, always calm and steady, added, “I’m going to use my journal to keep track of the days when I feel balanced and the days when I don’t. It might help me see what keeps me calm and what makes me feel out of sorts.”

Ollie, who was the most organized of the group, had already started writing in his journal. “I think I’ll make sections—one for each major feeling, like happiness, frustration, excitement, and sadness. That way, I can go back and look at how often I’ve felt each one and what caused it.”

The group felt excited to dive into their new emotional awareness journals, knowing that their unique strengths would help them get the most out of the process.

### Lisa Feldman Barrett's Constructed Emotion Theory

As they worked on their journals over the next few weeks, they began to see how Lisa Feldman Barrett’s theory of constructed emotion played a role in their experiences. They realized that their emotions were shaped by their past experiences, predictions, and concepts. Writing down their feelings helped them understand how their brains were constructing those emotions.

One afternoon after school, they gathered at Ollie’s house to compare notes.

“I’ve been writing down my feelings after each soccer game,” Harriet said, flipping through her journal. “I noticed that I get frustrated when I don’t score, but I also get excited when I’m part of a good play, even if I don’t score. It’s like my brain predicts I’ll feel frustrated if I don’t do well, but when I look back, I realize there’s more to it.”

Buzz held up his journal, which was filled with colorful drawings. “I used blue for calm and red for excitement. I thought I’d be red all the time, but I realized I have a lot of blue moments too, like when I’m drawing or building something. It’s cool to see that.”

Sammy shared his thoughts next. “I’ve been writing about how other people’s emotions affect me. When I see someone sad, it makes me feel sad too. But I realized it’s okay to feel that way—it helps me understand what they’re going through.”

Betty flipped to a specific page in her journal. “I found out that I get frustrated when I don’t understand something right away, like in math. But when I take a break and come back, I can usually solve the problem. So I’ve been working on not letting that initial frustration take over.”

Bennie smiled, holding his journal steady. “I’ve been tracking when I feel balanced and calm. I noticed that on days when I get enough sleep and eat a good breakfast, I feel more centered. So I’m going to try to make that part of my routine.”

Ollie, always thoughtful, looked over his sections. “I’ve been writing down how I feel when I’m planning things. I realized I feel happiest when I have a good plan in place, but I also noticed that when things don’t go according to plan, I get anxious. Writing it down helps me figure out how to stay calm even when things change.”

## Why the Emotional Awareness Journal Helps

The group realized that their emotional awareness journals were more than just a place to write down their feelings—they were tools that helped them understand their emotions in a deeper way. By recognizing their emotions, they could respond to situations with more awareness and control.

Grandma, who had been listening from the kitchen, came over and smiled at them. “You’ve all done a wonderful job using your journals to better understand yourselves. By reflecting on your emotions, you’re learning to handle them in a healthier way.”

Betty nodded. “It’s like we’re training our brains to recognize what we’re feeling and why we’re feeling that way.”

“And when we understand our emotions,” Ollie added, “we can make better choices. We don’t just react—we think things through.”

The friends smiled at each other, proud of the work they had done. They knew that their emotional awareness journals would continue to help them as they navigated the ups and downs of fourth grade.

And as they headed back to school the next day, they felt more confident, knowing that they had the tools—and their own unique strengths—to handle whatever emotions came their way.

## Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** “Well, Ollie and his friends really seemed to find the Emotional Awareness Journal helpful. Maybe we’d find it helpful too.”

## Post-Chapter Questions

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

- How do emotions influence the way we make decisions?
- Why do you think Harriet gets frustrated during soccer? What could she do to handle her frustration better?
- How can using colors to represent feelings, like Buzz does, help with emotional awareness?
- Why is it helpful to notice patterns in your emotions, like Bennie does?
- How could writing in an emotional awareness journal help you calm down when you’re upset?
- What are some emotions that you think you might write about in your own journal?
- How does writing about emotions help Ollie stay calm when things don’t go as planned?

- How could using an emotional awareness journal help you better understand your friends?
- How can understanding your emotions help you make better decisions?
- Do you think you would enjoy keeping a journal like Ollie and his friends? Why or why not?

Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- **Students will** explore their emotional experiences by journaling about a recent situation, identifying emotional triggers and responses, and sharing reflections to build empathy, self-awareness, and emotional understanding.

### Activity: Emotional Awareness Journal (20 minutes)

#### Introduce Activity

“Today, we’re going to begin using our **Emotional Awareness Journals**. These help us understand the feelings we have and what might cause them.

We all feel things like happiness, frustration, excitement, sadness, or worry, and journaling gives us a chance to slow down and think about *why* we feel that way.

I’m handing out the *Emotional Awareness Journal Worksheet*, which has four simple questions to help guide your writing. You’ll choose one emotion you felt during winter break or recently at school, and then answer:

- **What happened?**
- **How did I feel?**
- **Why did I feel this way?**
- **What could I do next time?**

You’ll have time to write quietly and reflect honestly, this is your space to explore your own experience.”

## Activity Instructions

Hand out the Emotional Awareness Journal Worksheet.

Have students write about one emotion they experienced during winter break or recently in school, following the four sections of the journal worksheet.

- "What happened?"
- "How did I feel?"
- "Why did I feel this way?"
- "What could I do next time?"

Allow students to share what they wrote with a partner or small group. This can help reinforce how sharing emotions can help them understand each other.

## Wrapping it Up



### Wrap Up the Lesson (5 minutes)

#### 1. Review and Reflection Overview:

- “Now that you’ve written about an emotional experience, we’re going to spend a few minutes sharing it with a partner or small group.  
Sharing our emotions helps us understand that we’re not alone in how we feel. You don’t have to read your whole entry—just a part of it, or what emotion you chose, and what helped you deal with it.

Remember: We listen with kindness, and we don’t judge anyone’s experience.”

- *Circulate and encourage respectful listening and positive connection.*
- “Today, you practiced something many adults still find difficult—looking at your emotions and thinking about where they come from.  
When we name our emotions and reflect on them, we grow in our ability to stay calm, make good decisions, and support others.

Journaling is a great tool to help us understand ourselves, and the more we use it, the more emotionally aware we become.”

## Review and Reflection Teacher Script



### Gather in a Circle for Reflection:

- “Let’s come together in a circle to reflect on what we learned today. I’d like you to finish this sentence when it’s your turn:  
**‘One thing I noticed about my emotions today was...’**
- It could be something you wrote, something a partner shared, or something you realized while listening. If you’d prefer to pass, that’s always okay.”

### Closing

- “Emotions are part of being human. By writing, sharing, and reflecting today, you’ve taken a big step toward being more aware of what you feel—and what you can do with those feelings.  
Keep practicing, and remember: You have the power to understand and manage your emotions in ways that help you and those around you.”

## Home Connection Letter

### Sending Information Home:

- “Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. It lets our families know that today we began using an Emotional Awareness Journal to reflect on a recent emotional experience and explore why we felt that way. We answered questions like: What happened? How did I feel? Why did I feel this way? What could I do next time?”
- 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, your child began a new project: creating an emotional awareness journal. This journal helps them reflect on their emotions, understand why they feel a certain way, and recognize patterns that can help them manage their feelings.

By writing down their emotions, students are learning to identify triggers, explore different ways to respond, and make thoughtful decisions based on how they feel. This is part of a larger lesson on emotional intelligence, which will help them better navigate friendships, schoolwork, and challenges they face.

We encourage you to ask your child about their journal and engage with them in conversations about their feelings. This is a wonderful way to support their emotional growth and strengthen their understanding of how emotions influence decisions.

Thank you for your continued support!

Best Regards,

# **Emotional Awareness Journal**

What happened?

How did I feel?

Why did I feel this way?

What could I do next time?