

Recognizing Emotions and Making Better Choices

Lesson Objective:

Students will explore the importance of recognizing their emotions and how using the S.T.A.R. (Stop, Think, Act, Reflect) strategy can help them make better decisions. By the end of the lesson, students will understand how emotions can influence choices and will practice using the S.T.A.R. strategy to manage their emotions.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Chapter 21, *Recognizing Emotions and Making Better Choices*
- Pencils and markers
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Poster
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Reflection 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 on recognizing emotions and their impact on our decisions.

Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script

Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:

- “Good morning, class! Today, we are going to talk about something very important, recognizing our emotions and how they can affect the decisions we make. Sometimes, we make choices when we’re feeling upset, excited, or disappointed, and those emotions can lead us to decisions we might not be proud of later

Discussion Starter

- But guess what? There's a way to handle those feelings so we can make better choices, and it's called the S.T.A.R. strategy. Who can remember what S.T.A.R. stands for?"
- (Allow students to respond, and then review the acronym: Stop, Think, Act, Reflect.)

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 21 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:

- "Great! We'll see how Ollie and his friends use this strategy when emotions are running high."
- (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:**
 - Why doesn't Sammy want to play soccer with the group?
 - How does Harriet respond when Sammy says he doesn't feel like playing?
 - What emotion is Sammy feeling after his family's trip was canceled?
 - Why does Buzz suggest they try a different activity?
 - How does Bennie help the group understand Sammy's feelings?
 - What step of the S.T.A.R. strategy does Ollie suggest they use first?
 - How does Sammy feel when the group changes their plans?
 - How does using the S.T.A.R. strategy help the group avoid more conflict?
 - What decision does the group make to support Sammy?
 - How do they reflect on the situation at the end of the day?

Chapter 21: Recognizing Emotions and Making Better Choices

Spring break had finally arrived, and the friends, Ollie, Harriet, Bennie, Sammy, Buzz, and Betty, were excited to have a week off from school. The weather was getting warmer, and they had plenty of fun plans lined up: hiking, biking, and a sleepover at Harriet's house. But as the week kicked off, they soon learned that sometimes emotions can influence the decisions we make, and not always for the better.

It was the first day of spring break, and the group had gathered at the park, excited to spend the day together. Harriet, always bursting with energy, had planned a game of soccer. But not everyone was feeling the same enthusiasm.

"I don't feel like playing soccer today," Sammy said quietly, kicking a rock as they walked to the field.

"But it'll be fun!" Harriet insisted, tossing the soccer ball from one hand to the other. "Come on, Sammy. You always have fun once we get started."

Sammy shrugged, clearly not in the mood. "I'm just not up for it today."

Buzz, always full of ideas, suggested, "How about we play soccer for a little bit, and then we can do something else? Like work on one of our projects afterward?"

Sammy sighed, feeling frustrated. "No, I don't want to play at all." His tone was sharper than usual, and the group paused, sensing that something was off.

Bennie, noticing the tension, spoke up gently. "Hey, Sammy, is something bothering you? You don't seem like yourself."

Sammy frowned and looked away. "It's nothing," he muttered, but it was clear that his mood was affecting the group.

Ollie, always the thoughtful planner, realized that they were heading toward a situation where emotions could lead to poor decisions. If they pushed Sammy to play when he wasn't feeling up for it, he might get more upset, and if Sammy didn't share what was bothering him, it could lead to more misunderstandings later.

"That's okay, Sammy," Ollie said. "We don't have to play if you're not feeling it. Maybe we can use the S.T.A.R. strategy to figure out what's going on."

The group nodded, knowing that the S.T.A.R. strategy, Stop, Think, Act, and Reflect—had helped them in the past when emotions were running high.

S: Stop

The first step was to stop. Harriet, who was always full of energy, set the soccer ball down. "Okay, let's take a break and figure this out," she said, her usual excitement toned down. They all stopped what they were doing, giving Sammy the space to think without any pressure.

T: Think

"Now let's think about what's happening," Ollie said, turning to Sammy. "You don't seem like you want to play soccer, but maybe it's not just about the game. What's going on?"

Sammy, feeling the support of his friends, sighed. "I guess I'm just feeling kind of down. My family was supposed to go on a trip during spring break, but it got canceled. I've been looking forward to it for months, and now it's not happening."

The group nodded, understanding why Sammy was feeling upset. His disappointment about the canceled trip was influencing his mood, and that was making him less excited about playing soccer.

"That makes sense," Bennie said quietly. "It's hard when things don't go the way you expect." Betty, always the problem-solver, added, "And when we're upset, it can affect everything else we do. No wonder you didn't feel like playing soccer."

A: Act

Now that they understood how Sammy was feeling, they moved on to the "Act" step. Instead of pushing Sammy to play soccer, they decided to do something that would make him feel better.

"How about we do something that doesn't remind you of the trip?" Buzz suggested. "Maybe we can go for a walk instead, or hang out by the lake?"

Sammy smiled, feeling relieved that his friends understood. "Yeah, I'd like that. I just need something different today."

The group agreed to change their plans, recognizing that supporting their friend was more important than sticking to the original plan. They decided to take a walk around the park, enjoying the fresh air and each other's company without the pressure of a game.

R: Reflect

As they walked, the group reflected on what had just happened.

"I'm glad we used the S.T.A.R. strategy," Ollie said. "If we had kept pushing Sammy to play, he might've gotten even more upset."

Harriet, always full of energy, nodded. "Yeah, I didn't realize how bummed out you were, Sammy. I'm sorry if I was pushing too hard."

Sammy smiled, feeling grateful for his friends. "It's okay. I didn't even realize how much my mood was affecting everything. But talking about it helped."

Betty, who loved to solve problems, added, "It's a good reminder that sometimes our emotions can make us want to make certain decisions, but those decisions aren't always the best. We have to recognize what we're feeling first."

Bennie, ever the steady voice of reason, smiled. "And the S.T.A.R. strategy helps us do that. We stop and think before we act, so we don't make choices we'll regret later."

Recognizing Emotions and Making Better Choices

As the day went on, the group enjoyed their walk, chatting and laughing as they made new plans for the rest of spring break. They realized that recognizing their emotions, and how those emotions were influencing their decisions—was an important part of growing up.

“Sometimes, when we’re upset, we might make decisions that don’t really help us in the long run,” Buzz said thoughtfully. “Like if I get frustrated with a project, I might want to quit. But if I stop and think about why I’m frustrated, I can make a better choice.”

Harriet grinned. “Yeah, like how I can get super excited and make decisions too quickly. The S.T.A.R. strategy helps me slow down and think things through.”

Sammy nodded, feeling more in control of his emotions. “And for me, when I’m sad or disappointed, it’s easy to just shut down. But now I know it’s okay to talk about how I’m feeling instead of letting it control me.”

Ollie, ever the planner, smiled at his friends. “We’ve learned a lot this year, and we’ve gotten better at handling our emotions. Using the S.T.A.R. strategy helps us make choices we can feel good about.”

As the sun began to set and the friends headed home, they felt closer than ever. Spring break had just begun, and they knew that, no matter what emotions they faced, they had the tools, and each other, to handle them.

And with that, they walked into the warm evening, ready to make the most of their time together, knowing that recognizing their emotions and using the S.T.A.R. strategy would help them make the best decisions for themselves and each other.

Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** “Well, the squad learned that emotions, especially strong emotions, can really impact decision-making, but the S.T.A.R. Strategy can definitely point us in the right direction.”

Post-Chapter Questions

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

- How do you think Sammy's emotions were affecting his decision not to play soccer?
- Have you ever felt like Sammy, where your emotions affected your choices?
- Why was it important for Ollie to suggest using the S.T.A.R. strategy?
- How did stopping help the group understand Sammy's feelings?
- What could have happened if the group didn't use the S.T.A.R. strategy?
- How do you think the group felt after changing their plans for Sammy?
- What emotions did Sammy feel once the group understood how he was feeling?
- How did the group show empathy toward Sammy?
- Can you think of a time when you needed to use the S.T.A.R. strategy to make a better decision?
- Why is it important to recognize our emotions before making decisions?

Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- **Students will** develop emotional awareness and responsible decision-making by reflecting on a past experience where emotions influenced their actions. They will use the S.T.A.R. strategy—Stop, Think, Act, Reflect—to analyze the situation and consider how they might respond differently in the future.

Activity: S.T.A.R. Strategy Reflection Activity (20 minutes)

Introduce Activity

“Today we’re going to practice something really important—**thinking about how our emotions affect our decisions.**”

We all have moments when we feel really strong emotions—like anger, embarrassment, frustration, or excitement. And sometimes, those emotions can lead us to make choices we later wish we had handled differently.

That’s where the **S.T.A.R. strategy** helps. Let’s review it together:

- **Stop:** Notice the emotion you’re feeling.
- **Think:** What’s happening? Why do I feel this way?
- **Act:** Make a respectful, helpful choice.
- **Reflect:** What did I learn? What might I do next time?

I'm going to give you the *S.T.A.R. Reflection Worksheet*. Think about a time when your emotions played a role in a decision you made—maybe at school, at home, or with a friend. You'll walk through each step and write honestly about the experience. Take your time."

Activity Instructions

1. Hand out the S.T.A.R. Strategy Reflection Worksheets.
2. Ask students to think about a time when their emotions influenced a decision they made.
3. Instruct students to fill out the worksheet using the S.T.A.R. steps. Guide them through each part:
 - Stop: What emotion were you feeling?
 - Think: What was the situation? Why were you feeling that way?
 - Act: What did you do? Was it a good choice?
 - Reflect: What could you have done differently? How could the S.T.A.R. strategy help next time?
4. Allow students to share their responses if they feel comfortable.

Wrapping it Up



Wrap Up the Lesson (5 minutes)

- "Now that you've reflected on your experience, would anyone like to share their S.T.A.R. reflection with the class or with a small group?
You can share just one part—maybe the emotion you felt, what you did, or what you would do differently next time.
- Remember, this is a safe space. We listen to each other with care, not judgment."
- "Today, you took time to think deeply about how emotions affect the choices you make—and that's not always easy. It takes self-awareness and maturity.

Using the S.T.A.R. strategy doesn't mean we won't feel strong emotions—it just means we know how to pause, think clearly, and make better choices for ourselves and others."

Review and Reflection Teacher Script

Gather in a Circle for Reflection:

- “Let’s sit together in a circle and reflect on what we learned.
Finish this sentence when it’s your turn:
‘One thing I learned about emotions and decision-making is...’

If you’d rather pass, that’s totally fine. Let’s practice being thoughtful listeners.”

Closing

- “Every time you use S.T.A.R.—whether it’s during a hard moment with a classmate or when you’re feeling overwhelmed—you’re showing responsibility and growth.
You have the power to manage emotions, learn from your experiences, and make decisions you can be proud of.”

Home Connection Letter

Sending Information Home:

- “Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. This week, we used the S.T.A.R. strategy—Stop, Think, Act, Reflect—to reflect on a time when emotions influenced a decision we made. Through guided journaling, we practiced understanding how feelings impact actions and considered how to respond more thoughtfully in the future.
- 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, your child learned about recognizing their emotions and how emotions can influence the decisions we make. We used the S.T.A.R. strategy, which stands for Stop, Think, Act, Reflect.



This strategy helps children pause, consider their feelings, and make thoughtful decisions, especially when emotions are running high.

During the lesson, we discussed how emotions like frustration, sadness, or excitement can lead to choices that might not be the best in the moment. By using the S.T.A.R. strategy, students can slow down and reflect on how to respond to their feelings in a way that's healthy and positive.

We encourage you to talk with your child about what they learned today. Ask them about the S.T.A.R. strategy and how they can use it at home. You might even practice the strategy together the next time emotions come into play during decision-making.

Thank you for your continued support!

Best Regards,

S.T.A.R. Strategy Reflection



Think about a time when your emotions influenced a decision you made. Use the S.T.A.R. strategy to reflect on the situation.

Examples to Help You Get Started

- 😡 When you felt angry or frustrated and yelled or walked away from a friend.
- 😰 When you felt nervous and didn't try something new because you were afraid of making a mistake.
- 😄 When you were so excited you rushed through something and made a mistake.
- 😞 When you felt sad or disappointed and gave up on a task.
- 😳 When you felt embarrassed and didn't speak up even though you had something to say.

S – Stop

What emotion were you feeling?

T – Think

What was the situation? Why were you feeling that way?

A – Act

What did you do? Was it a good choice?

R – Reflect

What could you have done differently? How could the S.T.A.R. strategy help next time?

S.T.A.R. Strategy



**Stop
Think
Act
Reflect**



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