



How can gratitude help emotional wellbeing?

LESSON

Introduction

Sometimes we feel overwhelmed and stressed. This lesson plan will introduce students to the concept of emotional exhaustion. It will also show them a simple tool to assess it. Along with the reading activity, the lesson will provide a good way to overcome emotional exhaustion.

Learning Objectives

After the lesson, the students should be able to:

- Define emotional exhaustion and differentiate it from stress.
- Use scale-based questionnaires.
- Explain how gratitude can lower emotional exhaustion.
- Assess gratitude's effectiveness.

Key Terms

- emotional exhaustion
- happiness
- stress
- gratitude

Time Requirement

2-3 class periods (with at least one in a different week)

Grade Level

Grades 5-9

Teaching Standards

Aligns with several states' SEL (social-emotional learning) goals

Materials

- Printed copies of Handout 1: "Emotional Wellbeing Questionnaire"
- Printed copies of Handout 2: "Emotional Wellbeing Scoring"

- Printed article and question handout **How can gratitude help healthcare workers?** from *Science Journal for Kids* (if reading in class)
- A container (such as a box or a hat)
- Whiteboard (optional)

Lesson Plan

1 GETTING STARTED

- **What is emotional exhaustion? (~6 min)**

Show the students a video that introduces emotional exhaustion – what it is, what its signs are, and what some of the causes are. One example is **6 Signs You Are Emotionally and Mentally Exhausted** by Psych2go.

- **Assessment discussion (~5 min)**

Are the students exhausted? Ask the students how they can assess happiness and emotional exhaustion. Explain that questionnaires are a very simple but effective tool. They help people gather information about themselves and/or others.

Duration: 10-15 min, depending on grade level

2 HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

- **Fill out the questionnaire (~10-15 min)**

Give each of the students a copy of Handout 1: “Emotional Wellbeing Questionnaire.” Let them fill out the emotional exhaustion, personal achievements, and happiness scales.

- **Scoring activity (~5-10 min)**

Now give each student a copy of Handout 2: “Emotional Wellbeing Scoring.”

Explain that the scores aren’t like for their math tests; instead, these give a **relative** idea (i.e. not a diagnosis) of emotional exhaustion, sense of personal achievement, and happiness. Ask them to also answer the questions at the bottom of Handout 2, regarding their reactions to the scores. Make it clear that the students should keep Handout 1 for themselves, but fill out Handout 2 anonymously and then put them into the container provided (for example, a box or hat).

- **Scores discussion (15-20 min)**

You or a group of students should divide the “Emotional Wellbeing Scoring” handouts into three piles according to the emotional exhaustion scores: (1) low degree; (2) moderate degree; (3) high degree. Discuss which pile is the largest. Why do they think that is?

Take a closer look at the “high degree” pile and address some questions. Were the students surprised by their answers? Do they want to change something about it? Are happiness levels low there?

Take a closer look at the “low degree” pile – are happiness levels higher there?

- **Brainstorming (5-10 min)**

Ask students to come up with some ideas (and consider making note of them on a whiteboard). What do they think might be able to help someone become less emotionally exhausted? What could help someone become generally happier, not just in the moment? (Note: this could be done as a warm-up prior to the reading assignment if done in a second class period.)

Duration 35-55 min

3 READING ASSIGNMENT

- Individually or in groups, have the students read the article **How can gratitude help healthcare workers?** published in *Science Journal for Kids*.
- Answer the assessment questions at the end of the article, including the last one – writing a gratitude letter
- Discuss as a class: why is gratitude so powerful? Have any of them ever kept a gratitude journal? Do students think reflecting on what they're grateful for could help them feel better in the future?

Duration 30-45 min, depending on reading level

4 FOLLOW-UP HANDS-ON ACTIVITY (A WEEK LATER)

- **Follow-up questionnaire and scoring (10-15 min)**

Again give each of the students a copy of Handout 1 and Handout 2. Let them fill out the questionnaire again and ask them to write down their scores. (Consider asking the students to bring their original copies of Handout 1 back to class so they can see how their own scores changed over time.)

- **Second score discussion (20-25 min)**

Divide the answers from Handout 2 into three piles according to the emotional exhaustion scores. Are there any differences from the week before? Which is the largest pile? Are happiness levels higher? Did gratitude have any impact?

Duration 30-40 min

5 EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- **Gratitude journals**

Ask students to write three things they are grateful for 3-4 times a week for one month. No repetitions! Encourage them to write at least one thing that was particular to the day each day.

- **School gratitude mail**

Guide students in designing a school-wide gratitude mail campaign. They can make "Gratitude Mailboxes" for their teachers and other staff members using empty tissue or shoeboxes. They can make posters to advertise the campaign around the school or write a skit to perform on the morning announcements. They could encourage students to write letters to teachers or staff members, or teachers could serve as "mail deliverers" so students could write letters to other students as well.

Duration 30-45 min

Online Learning

TeensHealth: Gratitude – a Worksheet

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/gratitude-worksheet.html>

Additional Resource

The "Look for the Good" project offers resources like gratitude journals and starter kits for appreciation campaigns at a price, but sponsorships are available for schools without sufficient funds.

<https://www.lookforthegoodproject.org/schools>

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING QUESTIONNAIRE

Are you exhausted? Do you feel fulfilled and happy? Please answer the questions below by circling a number. How frequently do the following statements apply to you?

0 = never

1 = at least a few times a year

2 = at least once a month

3 = several times a month

4 = once a week

5 = several times a week

6 = every day

	Statement	Frequency
1	I think I study too much.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
2	I feel tired when I come home from school.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
3	I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day at school.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
4	Studying or attending class is stressful.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
5	I feel burned out from my studies.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
6	My schoolwork annoys/frustrates me.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
7	It's stressful to study with my classmates.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
8	I feel exhausted because of activities outside of school.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
9	I feel stuck/lost/at my wit's end	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
10	I can easily understand the actions of my classmates and teachers.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
11	I think I'm good at solving problems in my studies.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
12	I feel I make contributions in my classes.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
13	I think I am a good student.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
14	I am learning many interesting things.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
15	I feel interested when I study with my classmates.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
16	I feel relaxed at school.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
17	I make good use of my time outside of school.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6

18	In general, I consider myself:						
1 Not a very happy person	2	3	4	5	6	7 A very happy person	

19	Compared to most of my classmates, I consider myself:						
1 Much less happy	2	3	4	5	6	7 Much happier	

20	Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?						
1 Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 A great deal	

21	Some people are generally not very happy. Although they may not be depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?						
7 Not at all	6	5	4	3	2	1 A great deal	

Fill out your scores after you calculate your results using the **Scoring** handout.

Scale	Score	Interpretation
Emotional exhaustion		
Personal achievements		
Happiness		

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING SCORING

This handout is anonymous, so please do not write your name on it. Refer back to the handout from last class, the **Emotional Wellbeing Questionnaire**. Circle the number that you arrive at for each part of the survey. Then copy them onto the bottom of the handout from last class so that you have your own scores. When you have finished, please put this handout wherever your teacher is collecting them.

1. Score for emotional exhaustion: add together the answers to questions 1 to 9.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
	51	52	53	54						

Emotional exhaustion	Score < 17	Score 18-29	Score > 30
	Low	Moderate	High

2. Score for personal achievements: add together the answers to questions 10 to 17.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
	51	52	53	54						

Personal achievements	Score > 40	Score 34-39	Score < 33
	High	Moderate	Low



3. Happiness score: add together the answers to questions 18-21

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		

Then divide by 4 (sum/4)

Happiness	Score > 5	Score 4-5	Score <4
	Generally happy	Moderately happy	Not very happy

4. How much did your scores surprise you?

1 Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 A great deal
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5. Based on your scores, how interested are you in making some changes?

7 Not at all	6	5	4	3	2	1 A great deal
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