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# Social and emotional learning in classroom management

## Webinar handout

by Anna Hasper

### Introduction

Language learning and teaching are social practices and as a result the social and emotional skills of those in the classroom affect what happens in the classroom. Communicative language teaching aims to make meaningful learning happen through social interactions. However, when people lack the ability to recognise and manage their emotions in classroom interactions, learning opportunities are negatively impacted. It is important that the classroom provides a positive learning environment where learners feel safe because for learning to happen learners need to be willing to experiment and take risk with the new language.

Establishing a positive, socially and emotionally managed learning environment requires that learners and teachers can recognise and manage their emotions in communicating and working together. Purposefully integrating a focus on strengthening social and emotional competences will not only enhance learners' academic performance, but it will also facilitate your classroom management. Below are some ways to get started:

1. **Self-awareness** is key for learners and teachers and includes recognising and understanding their emotions, thoughts and behaviours. There are many ways to integrate this into your classroom management routines:

#### Mindful check-ins:

- Ask learners in your opening routine to write or show a sentence, adjective, colour, action, or animal that describes how they are feeling. If they are ok to share, ask *why*.
- Invite learners to think for a moment before describing to their peer(s) what the weather is like in their head, e.g. it's *sunny because I am happy*. Ask learners to share their *why* if they want. Younger learners could draw their weather.

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- 2. Management of self** relates to the ability to regulate our emotions, thoughts and behaviours including our brain's automatic 'fight-flight or freeze' mode and enable us to respond more appropriately.

### **Creating a resourceful state for learning**

- Learners in pairs discuss or write about something positive e.g. their favourite hobby, a memorable holiday, something that made them happy this week etc.
- Breathing exercises can reduce stress and calm down any age group: breathe in for 4, hold for 4, breathe out for 4, hold for 4 and repeat. Younger learners can count tracing a shape or item.
- Young learners can create a mini booklet with different strategies they can use independently to calm down. They can use their booklet whenever they feel the need.

- 3. Considering others and their community** includes 1) skilful communication: being able to express ideas and thoughts appropriately and compassionately and build and maintain relationships, and 2) social responsibility: critically considering decisions to be made and their possible impact on the community and wider contexts.

### **Exploring positive concepts:**

- Learners explore essential concepts for collaborative efforts, such as kindness, friendship, patience, empathy etc. Select one. Learners write complete a table with their definition of the concept, what it looks like, feels like, the word in their home language and what actions they can take to show and grow their skills in this area before comparing ideas. Decide on a class definition for "Our community Wall".
- The power of 3 helps young learners see that every learner as a community member contributes to the success of the classroom. It enables a pro-active discussion and expectation setting about responsibilities. Elicit 3-4 ideas for how we can *take care of ourselves*, (e.g. be kind to yourself), *take care of others*, (e.g. we use kind words) and *take care of the classroom* (we treat things well). Use positive (*should*) and inclusive language (*we*). Display the chart and refer to it when needed during lessons.

### **Further reading**

- Collaborative for academic, social, and emotional learning. (CASEL)  
<https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>
- Hasper, A. & Pentón Herrera L.J. (2024). Activities for Social-emotional learning; Developing social emotional competences in the ELT classroom. DELTA Publishing.

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A recording of Anna's webinar can be watched here: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/helping-our-learners-develop-mini-event>