

# THE SEL MONTHLY™

*A social and emotional learning (SEL) monthly resource provided by Frameworks of Tampa  
Bay in partnership with Hillsborough County Public Schools*

## Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Building Emotional Vocabulary

When was the last time you said, “I feel luminous today” or heard a colleague say, “my students seem despondent this week”? Probably not recently, as we do not use many words to describe our emotions, on average less than 20 words a day. There are 3,000 words in the English language to describe emotions, so we are barely cracking the surface as adults. This is important because children do not have the words to describe their emotions beyond being happy, sad, or mad. These emotions are happening to our children, and they feel the physical signals that accompany them, but they need to be taught to notice, interpret, and name emotions with accuracy. We are talking about emotional literacy and enhancing our emotional intelligence or “EQ”. When children are able to name their emotions and do it with an expanded vocabulary, they can understand what is happening inside both emotionally and physically. While we are all born with the ability to express feelings and understand them, we do not all use this ability with effectiveness. Children and adults may ignore their feelings, or cling to them, both situations not allowing for proper processing of the emotions we are feeling. Emotional literacy is taught, must be fostered, and nurtured, and developed over time with practice. As a first step, we say at Frameworks “emotions are not good or bad, they are comfortable or uncomfortable”. Emotional literacy starts with this premise, so children understand we all experience emotions, and all emotions are okay. In this issue we will explore building emotional vocabulary, and provide tips, tools, and resources to help to expand children’s emotional literacy, help them understand what they are feeling, and increase their ability to interpret their naturally occurring emotions.

“There’s a connection between the size of our emotion vocabulary and the importance of emotions in our lives...this is of huge importance when dealing with children. Their emotional lives are often a mystery to us precisely because they haven’t yet learned to process and express what they feel. **The more words that children can use, the better able we’ll be to support them.**”

—Marc Brackett, [Permission to Feel](#)

teacherinexile.com

## The Vital Role of SEL in Emotional Literacy

Emotional literacy is often overlooked, but it is essential for enhancing emotional intelligence and developing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills. In this section, we will explore the vital role emotional vocabulary plays in each of the five core competencies of SEL.

**Self-Awareness** is all about understanding ourselves, and we cannot begin to understand ourselves if we do not have the words for our feeling. A diverse emotional vocabulary improves our ability to name and describe the vast and nuanced feelings states we experience every day all day long. When we have more words to describe how we feel we are better able to link our feelings to our thoughts, values, and behaviors, empowering us to be our best selves.

**Self-Management** skills are enhanced by a robust emotional vocabulary because it improves our ability to select the most effective self-management strategies. For example, if we can move from the basic emotion word of “sad” to a more descriptive word like “lonely,” we can select targeted tools for self-management like calling a friend or spending time with loved ones. Having more words for emotions allows us to be more descriptive about our feeling states and gives us more information for managing them.

**Social Awareness** is our ability to understand and empathize with others, but how can we do that if we do not have the right words for how they feel? Just as a diverse emotional vocabulary is necessary to truly understand ourselves, it is necessary to understand others too. Building our emotional vocabulary expands our ability to take the perspective of another person, understand our emotional impact on the people around us, and have genuine empathy for others.

**Relationship Skills** develop through connection to others, which is an inherently emotional act. Relationships elicit powerful emotions in us and we need a powerful emotional vocabulary to fully comprehend and express these emotions. This helps us have healthy relationships where we can communicate, collaborate, and problem-solve effectively. All of us crave connection, and we cannot connect in a meaningful way without understanding and expressing the full range of our emotions.

**Responsible Decision-Making** may seem like a process void of emotions, but that is far from true. Our emotions give us key information for how we feel about any given choice, making it a compelling factor to consider in the decision-making process. Do I feel proud about this decision? Will others be ashamed of my actions? How do I feel about this choice? Having an extensive emotional vocabulary allows us to analyze and reflect on our choices in a mature manner so we can ultimately make the most responsible decision.

## Activities to Increase Emotional Vocabulary

Your emotional vocabulary is your collection of words that you use to express your feelings and reactions to experiences, this process begins in early childhood even before you have learned to talk. Most of us know and use words for strong and familiar emotions we feel like happy, sad, and angry, but we can overlook the extensive emotional vocabulary. This expanded vocabulary helps us to be able to express our emotions and be able to understand the feelings of others. It would be amazing if we were born with the ability to know and understand all emotions, but we are not, we need to experience and be taught how to identify and respond to emotions. Below are some activities to help build your emotional vocabulary, these activities will work for children and adults, so give them a try.



<http://heartloveproject.org/emotion-labeling/>

### **Make a Big List of Feelings**

Grab a really big piece of paper and a marker and sit down with your child to brainstorm all the feelings you can think of. Your list may include emotions your child doesn't recognize, but that's okay. Make the face that goes with the feeling and explain a situation in which that feeling may come up.

### **Play Emotional Charades**

This is a fun game to play with your child. One of you picks an emotion to convey to the other, using either your whole body or just your face. If your child is having trouble making sense of the faces, give them a mirror, ask them to make the same face as you and look in the mirror. They may be able to see the feeling on their face better than on yours.

### **Make a Feelings Collage**

Give your child some paper, scissors, glue, and old magazines. You can either provide a list of feelings that they need to find faces to match or have them make a collage of faces and tell you what the emotions are. When they're done, label the emotions and hang the collage somewhere where it can be easily accessed.

### **Keep a Feelings Journal**

A feelings journal is a good way for your child to keep track of their emotions and the situations in which they feel them.

**SEL Resources**

**Emotional Vocabulary Wheel**

Source:

myframeworks.org



**Super Fun Activities to Help Kids Recognize Big Emotions**

Source:

<https://lemonlimeadventures.com/activities-to-help-kids-recognize-big-emotions/>

Under Parent and Educator Resources

**Hillsborough County Public Schools: SEL in Action**



HCPS EMPLOYEES LEARNING AND REFRESHING THEIR SKILLS WITH RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN COLLABORATION WITH THE OFFICE OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT.



BRANDON & NORTH TAMPA EPIC 3 MOVING "FULL STEAM AHEAD" TO START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR WITH NORTH TAMPA'S COMMUNITY OUTREACH- PROVIDING FOOD, SUPPLIES, HUGS, SMILES, CHEERS AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.



THANK YOU TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM AT SHEEHY ELEMENTARY FOR WELCOMING THE SEL TEAM TO THEIR CAMPUS. THE TEAM IS EXCITED TO SEE WHAT THE 7 MINDSETS FOUNDATIONAL SCHOOLS DO THIS YEAR!

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