3.1.2. Emotional Path (outdoor)

Brief description, and rules of the implementation of the learning activity

In this outdoor game, children walk along a path marked with stations, each representing a different emotion. At each station, they act out the emotion using facial expressions, body language, and verbal expressions.
This activity is designed specifically for outdoor use. Choose a safe, open space like a school yard, garden, or playground path where 5–6 emotion stations can be clearly spaced apart.
This physical movement activity links spatial experience to emotional awareness. As children move through a symbolic "emotional path" (marked with stations or prompts), they pause to reflect on personal emotional experiences.

Skill focus

- **Primary Skill Focus**
  - Emotional awareness, regulation and communication
- **Complementary/Secondary Skill Focus**
  - Empathy
  - Resilience

Age group	Student number	Duration
6-10 years old	8 to 25 children	30 minutes

Proposed step by step implementation of the learning activity

1. **Preparation:** The teacher selects a safe outdoor area and sets up 5–6 clearly marked stations along a path or circuit. Each station corresponds to a specific emotion (e.g., *happiness*, *anger*, *fear*, *surprise*, *pride*, *sadness*). Each spot can be marked with signs, coloured mats, emotion cards, or simple props that evoke the feeling.
2. **Introduction:** Before starting, the teacher gathers the group and explains that at each station, children will explore an emotion through naming it, expressing it with their bodies and faces, and—if they want—sharing a personal experience.
3. **Walking the Path – Alone or in Pairs:** Children begin walking the path, one at a time or in pairs. At each station, they:
   - Read or hear the name of the emotion.
   - Say the name of the emotion aloud.
   - Show what that emotion looks like using facial expressions and body posture.
   - (Optional) Share a moment when they felt that emotion, either aloud to their partner or silently in their minds.
4. **Peer Observation:** If done in pairs, one child performs while the other observes. They can take turns at each station. The observing partner is invited to give positive feedback: "Your face really looked surprised!" or "That looked like real sadness."

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Tempus Public Foundation.
Neither the European Union nor Tempus Public Foundation can be held responsible for them.

5. **Teacher Role:** The teacher moves along the path or stands at key points, encouraging expression, supporting shy participants, and asking prompting questions like: “Can you remember a time when you felt like that?” or “How does your body feel when you're angry?”
6. **Closure and Calm Down:** After the path, the group regathers to take a few calming breaths and reflect on which emotions were easiest or hardest to express, and how it felt to observe and be observed.

Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes

Outdoor only: This activity is designed specifically for outdoor use. Choose a safe, open space like a school yard, garden, or playground path where 5–6 emotion stations can be clearly spaced apart. Use cones, chalk, or laminated cards to mark each station. Stations should be arranged in a visible loop or line, allowing easy supervision. Ensure a quiet environment to encourage reflection and sharing.

How does this learning activity develop this particular skill?

This physical movement activity links spatial experience to emotional awareness. As children move through a symbolic “emotional path” (marked with stations or prompts), they pause to reflect on personal emotional experiences.

Each station might ask:

- “When did you last feel proud?”
- “How do you act when you're angry?”
- This embodied learning method helps students:
- Access emotions through memory and movement,
- Develop reflective language skills,
- Share experiences in a structured, supportive format.

The physical component also makes abstract emotions more concrete and approachable.

What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

As a result of this activity, students will:

- be able to recognize and name basic emotions
- be able to connect emotions to personal experiences
- be aware of how emotions feel physically
- be encouraged to express natural emotions in a safe space

Suggested use, and practical subject-related examples

- At the "Fear" station, a child might hug themselves tightly and say, "I feel fear when there’s a loud noise at night."
- At the "Pride" station, a child might stand tall with hands on their hips and say, "I felt proud when I helped my friend."
- At the "Surprise" station, a child might widen their eyes and open their mouth, saying, "I was surprised when my grandparents came to visit without telling me."

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Tempus Public Foundation.
Neither the European Union nor Tempus Public Foundation can be held responsible for them.

- At the "Sadness" station, a child might lower their shoulders and look down, softly saying, "I felt sad when my pet was sick."

Materials and tools needed for implementation

- Cones or markers to create the path
- Emotion signs or cards at each station
- Optional: mirrors for children to see their own expressions

Guiding questions

- Which emotions were easiest to show? Which were hardest?
- Did you learn anything new about how your body feels different emotions?
- How did it feel to share a personal experience with someone else?
- Do all emotions feel the same to everyone? Why or why not?

Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

- **Challenge**: Some children might feel embarrassed or shy acting out emotions, especially sadness or fear.
  Tip: The teacher should model the activity first, showing that all emotions are normal.
- **Challenge**: The children exaggerate (turning fear into cartoonish horror).
  Tip: The teacher can gently guide them to explore how they *really* feel fear, focusing on physical sensations (heartbeat, posture).
- **Challenge:** Some children cannot name a personal example.
  Tip: the teacher can offer simple prompts like, "Do you ever feel proud when you learn something new?"

Difficulty level tailoring

- **Beginner learners (6-7 years old)**: the focus should be on naming emotions and acting them out with exaggerated body language, which helps them link words to feelings. They may need examples for personal experiences.
- **Advanced learners (8-9 years old):** encourage more nuanced explanations, asking them to describe not only the situation but also what changed inside them when they felt the emotion.
- **Expert learners (9–10 years old):** you can introduce paired discussions at each station, where they describe times, they felt the emotion and what they did to manage it.

Debriefing and Reflection questions

- Which emotion did you find the easiest to act out? And the most difficult?
- Did acting out emotion help you understand it better?
- What did you learn from hearing your classmates' experiences?
- Did you notice how your body changed with each emotion?
- Why is it important to recognize how we feel and share it with others?

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Tempus Public Foundation.
Neither the European Union nor Tempus Public Foundation can be held responsible for them.