

3.1 EMOTIONAL AWARENESS, REGULATION AND COMMUNICATION

3.1.1 Emotional Hopscotch

Brief description, and rules of the game

In this adapted version of hopscotch, the traditional numbered squares are replaced with emotions such as “joy,” “anger,” “fear,” or “curiosity.”

Skill focus

- **Primary Skill Focus**
 - Emotional awareness, regulation and communication
- **Complementary/Secondary Skill Focus**
 - Empathy
 - Curiosity, sense of wonder and openness
 - Connectedness

Age group	Student number	Duration
6-10 years old	2 to 10 children (pairs or small groups)	20-30 minutes

How to play - brief game rules

1. Draw a traditional hopscotch grid on the ground using chalk or tape. Instead of numbers, label each square with a different emotion (e.g., joy, sadness, anger, surprise, pride, fear).
2. Children take turns standing behind the starting line and tossing a small object (like a beanbag or stone) onto one of the squares.
3. The player hops through the grid on one foot, skipping the square where the object landed, as in classic hopscotch.
4. When they reach the end, they turn around and hop back toward the start.
5. Upon finishing their turn, the child picks up the object and pauses to interact with the emotion written in that square by doing one of the following:
 - Share a personal story or memory related to that emotion
 - Act out the emotion using facial expression and body language
 - Describe a strategy they use to regulate or manage that emotion
6. The teacher may suggest which of the three tasks to perform or let the child choose.
7. The game continues until all children have had at least one turn.

Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes

Outdoor: Ideally played in a courtyard or schoolyard where the hopscotch grid can be drawn with chalk on a flat surface. Ensure enough space around the grid so children can move freely and observe each other's turns without crowding.

Indoor: The grid can be created using colourful tape on the classroom floor. Emotion labels can be attached inside the squares or placed on small removable cards. Ensure that there is enough space for hopping safely and that the activity doesn't disturb other classroom materials.

How does this game develop the primary skill?

This game supports the development of emotional awareness by encouraging children to recognize, express, and reflect on a wide range of emotions in a playful context. As they move through the hopscotch grid, they are prompted to connect the named emotion with their own lived experiences, body signals, or regulation strategies. Through repetition and peer listening, children build a richer emotional vocabulary and become more confident in expressing feelings.

Some variations also involve imagining how others might feel in certain situations, gently introducing elements of empathy and perspective-taking. This game encourages expressing emotions using both verbal language and body cues, which strengthens emotional literacy and helps children better understand the connection between body and feelings. Children also begin to develop empathy, especially when variations of the game include imagining how others might feel in different scenarios.

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

After playing this game, students will:

- Become more confident in recognizing and naming a wide range of emotions, going beyond basic labels like “happy” or “sad” to include more nuanced feelings such as “proud,” “nervous,” or “frustrated.”
- Be able to associate emotions with real-life experiences, practicing how to describe what made them feel a certain way and how they responded in those situations.
- Be able to use some basic techniques to regulate their emotions, such as pausing, breathing, or reframing their thoughts
- Strengthen self-awareness by reflecting on their own emotional experiences and sharing them with peers in a safe and supportive environment. Children will be able to recognise and talk about the emotions involved in school and non-school situations.
- Be able to listen more attentively and respectfully to others' emotional experiences and understand that others may have similar emotions to his or her own, contributing to a more emotionally supportive classroom climate.

Suggested use, and practical examples

A typical round might involve a child tossing the stone onto the “fear” square. They might then share a time they felt scared, such as during a thunderstorm, and explain how they calmed down. Another child landing on “joy” might act out their feeling by jumping with excitement and recalling a happy moment like a birthday party.

Materials and tools needed for implementation

- Chalk (for drawing the hopscotch grid on the ground) or tape (for indoor play)
- A small stone or beanbag to toss onto the grid
- Emotion labels (either written directly on the ground or placed on small cards)

Guiding questions

- What does this emotion look like on your face or in your body?
- Can you remember a time when you saw someone else feeling this way?

Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

- **Challenge:** Some children may struggle to talk about personal experiences related to certain emotions, especially more difficult ones like sadness or anger.
Tip: The teacher should create a supportive environment where sharing is encouraged but not forced. If a child feels uncomfortable, they can be given alternative ways to participate, such as acting out the emotion or describing a situation in a story format rather than a personal one.
- **Challenge:** Other children may exaggerate their reactions when acting out emotions, turning them into caricatures.
Tip: The teacher can guide them toward more natural expressions by asking questions like, "Have you ever really felt this way? What did it look like?"
- **Challenge:** It is also possible that some children will find it difficult to describe strategies for regulating emotions.
Tip: In this case, the teacher can introduce a brief discussion after each turn, where the group suggests different ways to manage emotions like frustration or fear. This collaborative approach fosters shared learning and helps children discover new coping strategies.
- **Challenge:** In another variation, a child who lands on "sadness" might struggle to find words to describe their experience.
Tip: Instead of pushing them to share something personal, the teacher could gently guide them by asking, "Have you ever seen someone else feel sad? What helped them feel better?"

Difficulty level tailoring

Beginners (6-7 years old): It is helpful to include visual cues by drawing simple emoticons inside each square. Instead of discussing emotions deeply, they can simply mimic the emotion they land on or use a sentence starter like "I feel happy when..."

Advanced learners (8-9 years old): The game can be expanded by adding real-life scenarios. If a child lands on "anger," for example, the teacher might ask, "Imagine your friend took your toy without asking—how would you feel, and what could you do?" This introduces problem-solving and emotional regulation skills.

Experts (9-10 years old): The game can take a more introspective turn. They can be asked to describe how different emotions feel in their bodies (e.g., "When I'm nervous, my stomach feels tight"), helping them develop a deeper emotional vocabulary and greater self-awareness. A more advanced scenario could involve a child landing on "frustration" and being asked to demonstrate how frustration feels in their body. They might clench their fists or sigh loudly. The teacher could then ask, "What could you do to calm down in a frustrating situation?" This encourages self-regulation strategies and peer learning.

Debriefing and reflection questions

- Was it easy or difficult to express some emotions? Why?
- Did you recognize an emotion that you hadn't thought about much before?
- Which emotions do you think are the hardest to talk about?
- How do you usually express emotions like anger or sadness? Do you think that's helpful?
- How can we better recognize emotions in others and support them when they feel that way?
- How did you feel hearing your classmates talk about these emotions?
- Which emotions are easiest or hardest for you to talk about?
- What can we do to help someone who is feeling this emotion?