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# In the Office

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## WHAT IS SEL?

SEL stands for social-emotional learning. Over the past decade SEL has been a term thrown around but maybe not truly understood by all. I like to break it down into two categories. The first category is social learning.

Social learning involves understanding how relationships work, people behave, and the skills required to maintain social relationships. We all work, live, and interact with other humans so it is critical to do so in a respectful, healthy, and understanding way. Through learning about psychology and people skills we are setting up our students and children to self-manage, become socially aware, and handle conflict.

The other component is emotional learning. Emotional learning involves understanding both our feelings and our thoughts. These are the internal phenomena that we as humans have to understand so that we can gain agency over our mind instead of feeling trapped or controlled by it. Since we all have feelings and thoughts every moment of the day it is crucial to learn how to welcome them, understand them, organize them, and choose what to do with them. Through understanding our emotional world we meet the components of responsible decision-making, mindset, and self-awareness.

Understanding the brain, behaviors, and the world we walk through is intriguing, complex, and vast. Social-emotional learning never stops which makes it so important to understand the language and skills so we can all become life-long learners. At OVS I will be following the CASEL social-emotional learning standards. I have them linked here so our community is aware of the objectives and goals. Anytime we discuss social-emotional learning I challenge the students to discuss it with the people they surround themselves with. Through sharing what they are learning they can hear your perspective, understanding, and values surrounding the various SEL topics. I may be providing the language and resources but it is up to the students to form their own values and interpretations of what it means for their experiences, families, and world. The beauty of being complex individuals is getting to share our perspective and take on it with respect and curiosity.

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## Newsletter Highlights

What is SEL?

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The Purpose of  
Emotions

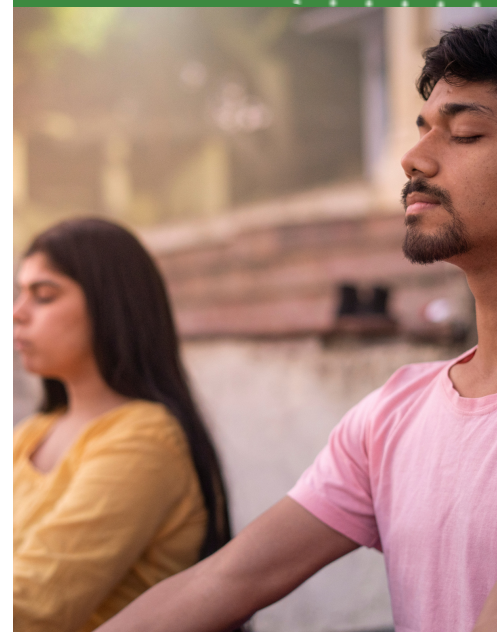
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Pressure

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Recommended  
Resources

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# PURPOSE OF EMOTIONS:

Hey, how are you?

What emotion did you label? Would you consider it a big feeling or a little feeling? Would you have honestly told me if it was an unpleasant feeling? Can you tell me more about why you are feeling that particular emotion?

Emotions are always there but we may not truly understand them. Some of us even have been told to ignore them or to let them go. What many of us have not been told or educated on is why they are there! Simply put, emotions are messages to yourself trying to guide us and reveal something about our internal and external worlds. Emotions and feelings, often seen as abstract, can be broken down into two components. The first component is the energy of the emotion while the second component is the pleasantness of the emotion. Look at the image of the mood meter to get a visual of this way of organizing emotions.

Emotions and feelings have much more of an impact than we may know. Marc Brackett, in his book *Permission to Feel*, reveals that our emotional state influences our memory, decision making, social relationships, our health, creativity, and performance. Strong and unprocessed feelings tend to reduce our peripheral vision on life, leaving us vulnerable to pitfalls and missteps in the areas previously mentioned.

When we understand the purpose of the emotions we can gain some more autonomy back because and understand what our body is communicating. Avoid judging our emotions and remain curious to what they are doing for us, even if it feels like nothing valuable.

The following is a new way to think about and process your emotions:

- Happy emotions = performance zone: we are ready to be productive and go after the things we want.
- Calm emotions = recovery zone: we have utilized a lot of time and energy and need to recharge so we can continue with our passions. We may also be done with our tasks and our body is enjoying its break from expectations.
- Angry Emotions = survival zone: we are fighting for what is right and that extra energy is being created so I can overcome the challenge being presented.
- Sad Emotions = burnout zone: we have needs that are not being met, most likely due to having depleted resources so it is a time to add some pressure free pleasure to the routine.

Understanding what zone your body is in will allow you to implement routines and actions that can bring you back to a state that you deem desirable. In order to do so we must take a pause and have a conversation with ourselves without judgment. Sit with the emotions, explore the physical sensations, listen to your brain's thoughts as it interprets the experience, and analyze your body budget and realistically game plan what you can do in the moment. You may only have the time and energy to label the emotion to help your body regulate its nervous system, but you also may have time to hangout with loved ones, cook that favorite meal, practice self-care, have a much needed conversation, get that unmet need met, or even let someone in to your emotional world so you don't feel alone.

If I could give one suggestion in your journey to becoming a family of emotional scientists, I would tell you to spend time talking about all your feelings. Oftentimes my students understand how to process and communicate happiness or feeling tired but can't communicate their unpleasant feelings. If children don't see the adults around them labeling, discussing, and strategizing about unpleasant feelings they will not know how to do it either; additionally, they will think they are alone in their unpleasant feelings because no one has ever talked about them. I am a firm believer in that the things we don't talk about become taboo so let's talk about our frustration, devastation, hurt, remorse, resentfulness, jealousy, embarrassment, and isolation just as much as our joyfulness and confidence.

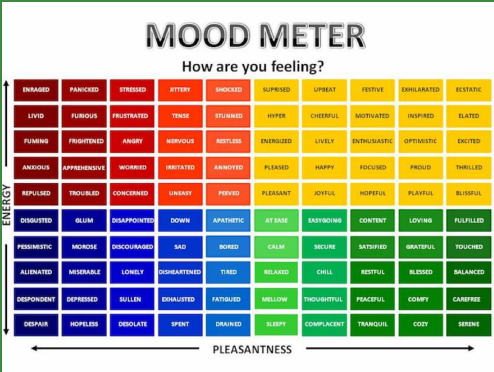
## The Mood Meter:

The mood meter allows us to track and view emotions based on their components consisting of energy and pleasantness. If we begin to understand the composition of the emotion than we can tailor strategies to shift our quadrant if we want.

I utilize the mood meter to build emotional granularity, understand the purpose of emotions, create strategies for the zones, and practice perspective taking for each quadrant.

The next time you have time plot how you are feeling and reflect. Then decide if you want to stay there or move. Say I am in the green and want to be in the yellow... then i need to do an energizer activity yo build up my energy to move into that zone

THERE IS A MOOD METER APP!





## PRESSURE IS ON ... TO TURN THE PRESSURE DOWN

A major challenge faced by the youth today is the pressure to be perfect, achieve unimaginable goals, and make life look effortless. Social media, schools, and adults around children often push them to be great and challenge them to do big and better things, but how is this interpreted by the students?

My experiences with students reveal that this pressure feels explosive. It feels lonely. It feels overwhelming. It feels inadequate. It feels numb. I recall the story of Sisyphus being punished by an impossible task of rolling a boulder up a hill for the rest of eternity.

It is often hard to remember what it is like to be in the shoes of a student, considering we can only compare it to our experiences. Our experiences are not their experiences so why do we often use that as a guide? We must let the child take the lead in communicating their experiences, needs, and goals. In the office, it has become apparent that the pressure is becoming unbearable.

When I discuss this idea of achievement pressure I reflect on the real goals of education. Yes, we hope they learn all the academic skills, but realistically it is a time for them to explore their interests, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and begin to understand themselves and individuals. I want to begin to reflect and shift our mindset/performance to a growth and intentions based model utilizing the following ideas:

- **Emphasize progress over product:** No one just learned a new skill overnight. “You don’t just wake up and become the butterfly, growth is a process”. It is those who find joy in the process that continue to learn, understand the content deeper, and end up making it to the end and feeling good about the work and growth achieved. We can’t skip steps so why do we expect immediate skill acquisition or outcomes that only come with time.
- **Intentions over Expectations:** Just because we want something for yourself or others doesn't mean it will occur. Expectations are often hopes and wishes that we assume will happen, but hurt when they go unmet. Best practices suggest setting intentions. Intentions are action based and allow us to understand how to achieve our goal. I wouldn’t expect to get a good grade. I would have the intention to study or the intention to ask questions when I don’t understand concepts.
- **Own your strengths and weaknesses:** If you have weaknesses, you are human. It is not a weakness to not be good at something. It reveals a layer of who you are. If we are aware and vulnerable with our weaknesses we can get the support and understanding from those around us. I will be the first to admit that grammar and spelling are a weakness of mine. Due to this I write these newsletters on google docs and try to have two friends look it over. I could hide that, but that is a lot of energy because it would be authentic. I am the school counselor who has horrible grammar and I own it! Now don’t forget to celebrate your strengths. Oftentimes our strengths can help us persevere through the challenges and weaknesses we have. Owning your weaknesses takes the pressure off, reveals to others that you are relatable, and allows you to use less energy trying to cover that aspect of your life up.
- **Practice and encourage failure:** The biggest fear discussed in the office is the fear of failure. Failure means .... I won't have friends, my family will be disappointed, I will be unsuccessful. It sounds big, but failure is learning. It is a skill and something we need to practice. Try something new and remember what that learning curve is like, fail at an activity and reflect on its impact, or make a mistake and realize you can come back from it. Failure is not an end, it is a chapter in the story... and often a very important turning point. “It is hard to beat a person who never gives up” - Babe Ruth

As school begins and everything starts to pick up, I want to challenge us all to turn the pressure off. Find the joy in self-discovery, enjoy learning with curiosity and not performance expectations, ask each other about our experiences with a true desire to understand, and adjust our goals of being perfect to being our best selves that have both strengths we share with the world but weaknesses that we own and are aware of. Yes, we want to perform and succeed in life but we also want to psychologically safe with our family, friends, and colleagues... so lets listen to each other, accept each other for their authentic self, and lets show people that they matter now and not just when they accomplish something. The pressure is off to perfect, and the challenge is to be you.

“There is no competition when you are manifesting your own lane.”



## SOME REFLECTION SONGS

MUSIC CAN HELP US COMMUNICATE  
AND INITIATE REFLECTION IN A FUN  
WAY!

**“Mountain”** by Sam Ryder: “Remember how  
you’ve come so far? An unstoppable force of  
nature yeah, that’s what you are”. You have  
already done so much, remember you have it  
within you.



**“Celebrate”** by Jonas Brothers: “Celebrate with  
me tonight” Don’t forget to enjoy your  
celebrations big and small.



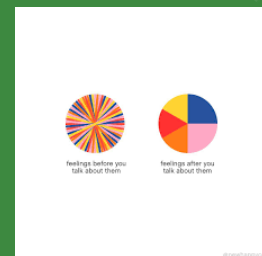
**“Behind the Scenes”** by Kiera Loveless: “Look  
at her, she got everything... You’ll never know  
that my beds not made”. What we see is only  
part of the picture. We all have stuff going on  
behind the scenes.

## Good Media

### The Present Psychologist | Instagram



### On the Other Side of the Couch | Instagram



### The New Happy | Website/Email