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REGULATING EMOTION	S

Preschool Children Learn About Regulating Emotions

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Elisa Aviles Camacho

A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Science

Introduction

Preschool children have not yet developed the skills to regulate their emotions as they are still learning to express and manage their emotions. There is a need for social emotional skills because it is important for children to have the capability of regulating and expressing their emotions in a positive way. Preschool children need help with their social-emotional skills, which include regulating emotions and understanding the emotions they feel.. Having social emotional skills at preschool age could lead to having positive relationships with peers and caregivers. These positive relationships could play an important role in the social development of a preschool child as it helps for their school readiness (Arslan et al., 2011). Some research has suggested that children who have the capability of social-emotional skills also have the lead in being children who are school-ready and have a better probability of performing better in their academics (Harrington et al., 2020). It is important for the preschool children who attend the Family Resource Center in Castroville, California to be able to obtain self-regulating skills. To address the preschool children's self-regulating skills in Castroville's Family Resource Center (FRC), I created three 15-30 lessons to teach preschool children who range from 3-5 years of age and who were Spanish and English speakers with Mexican-American background about emotion recognition and strategies on how they could self-regulate if they feel a strong emotion. Each lesson focused on understanding emotions and strategies to self-regulate.

Needs Statement

Preschool children are in need of learning emotional regulation skills as it will help them obtain the skills that will be beneficial to their development. (Molina et al., 2014). When preschool children lack emotional regulation and understanding of emotion according to Rahim et al. (2023), they tend to have behavioral problems that could cause challenges throughout their childhood, expanding to their adulthood.

Self-regulation refers to the ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and way of behaving in order to perform better and adapt to changing situations (Molina et al. 2014). According to Cole et al. (2004) "it is a complex process that involves a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills" including attentional control, inhibitory control, working memory, and emotional regulation. The ability to handle negative emotions is influenced by genetics, natural temperament, environment, and external factors like fatigue or hunger (Thummler et al., 2022). These skills are critical for the accomplishment and achievements in school and in life, as they enable children to focus their attention, resist distractions, control their impulses, and regulate their emotions in order to accomplish their goals (Molina et al. 2014). Some research has shown that self-regulation is a great source for academic achievement, social competence, and mental health outcomes in children (Carter et al., 2004). Children who are able to regulate their behavior and emotions are more likely to succeed in school, form positive relationships with peers and adults, and experience lower levels of stress and anxiety. However, in contrast, children who struggle with self-regulation show more characteristics of having a range of negative outcomes, including difficulties in their academics, as well as some behavioral problems, and mental health disorders (Housman, 2017). Because of the importance of self-regulation in children's development, there has been growing interest in this particular subject which is helping children through developing interventions and prevention strategies that target these critical skills in particular. The interventions include teaching children some self-regulation strategies, such as mindfulness which is teaching children deep breathing skills, exercises that could help them calm down or stay calm (Cole et al., 2004). According to Cole et al., (2004) teaching preschool children the skills to soothe themselves is a positive objective as it will help these children with real-life situations.

Children need those who take care of them to be able to soothe them when they feel distressed, when a caregiver is attentive towards a young child's needs this sets a foundation for emotional regulation (Ahn, 2005). Calming down when upset and utilizing language to communicate feelings and handle problems need a lot of effort, it also necessitates a lot of adult assistance (In-Albon et al., 2013). When adults offer support and explanations, children learn what they can do to manage their emotions (In-Albon et al., 2013). A great example of this is preschool children who have secure, trusting relationships with their caregivers have shown to have better emotion regulation skills, like previously mentioned this is due to caregivers being consistent and showing comfort when a child is in need of help (Ahn, 2005). According to Cartel et a., (2004), "preschool children who have strong, caring, and encouraging interactions with adults are better able to comprehend both their own and other people's feelings"

Young children have the ability to express themselves with a wide range of different emotions that are not just happiness or sadness, however some children who don't have the necessary skills to self-regulate through these more complex emotions, are left at times feeling powerless (Housman, 2017). Learning to manage, or control emotions as well as respond to them in an appropriate way is an essential part in a human's behavior as well as their well-being (Housman 2017). A negative effect of being in need of emotional self-regulation could mean that a child will probably have negative long-term health and social outcomes that could include

damaging relationships, socially inappropriate behavior choices, as well as self-destructive behaviors (Graziano et al., 2007). According to Dettore (2012) a child's emotional and social growth is crucial, as children need to be able to feel a sense of worth in this world; some things that come with with a positive outcome of emotional regulation skills is that children will be able to feel empathy, have self-assurance, and have the capacity to form deep and enduring friendships and partnerships are all influenced through their development.

Emotional recognition is defined as being able to recognize, distinguish, and express emotions in a way that is beneficial to the success regulating one's own emotions (Yoo et al., 2006). According to Dennis et al., (2009) when a child has the ability to recognize their own and others emotions through either identification or labeling of emotion these children are able to gain a deeper and more understanding of how they could self-regulate. Having the ability to identify emotion has been a key part to children being responsible for their own actions when emotions are involved (Dennis et al., 2009). When children are responsible for their emotions and if they are aware of this, this could lead to a positive outcome of them feeling empowered that they were able to do what they did (Eisenberg et al., 2010). Emotion regulation plays a big role in children understanding the world around them as they need to be able to communicate effectively with others which then could lead to them telling others what he or she needs when feeling upset (Eisenberg et al., 2010). Children being able to emotionally regulate themselves have shown to have better outcomes in their later years as this skill helps them to navigate in society (Eisenberg et al., 2010).

Emotional self-regulation is the ability to manage one's emotions in a healthy and appropriate manner. It is a crucial skill that children learn these skills as it helps them to navigate through life and all the challenges that come with it they could also learn to build healthy

relationships with others. According to Lieberman et al. (2007) children who struggle with emotional dysregulation may experience difficulty in controlling their emotions, which could lead to outbursts, tantrums, and other disruptive behaviors. These children may require additional support and guidance from their caregivers to develop the necessary skills to regulate their emotions effectively (Liebermann et al., 2007). One effective way to teach emotional self-regulation to children is to engage them in activities (Singer & Golinkoff, 2006). According to Singer & Golinkoff (2006), children who identify and express their emotions in a safe and creative way have better outcomes in their future. For example, when a child creates a feelings chart or a mood journal this could help with recognizing and labeling emotions (Rydell et al., 2003). Breathing exercises are another effective method to teach emotional self-regulation to children (Wyman et al., 2010). Deep breathing exercises can help children calm down and regulate their emotions when they feel overwhelmed or anxious (Wolff & Stapp, 2019). By teaching children how to recognize, control, and express their emotions in appropriate ways, caregivers can help children build healthy relationships and navigate through life's challenges with confidence and resilience.

According to Wolff & Stapp (2009), incorporating yoga and meditation into school's curriculum could really give students the experience of practicing mindfulness that helps them with self-regulating skills that are beneficial to their development. Preschool children are at a critical stage of development, where they are learning to navigate their emotions and develop self-regulation skills (Wolff & Stapp, 2019). These activities not only help a child with mindfulness, which helps to lead to improved self-regulating skills but helps with their mental health (Sun et at., 2021). Anxiety and stress is another thing in which mindfulness practices like yoga and meditation help children as it will help them with keeping calm (Wolff & Stapp, 2009).

When children are engaged in yoga they learn to focus their attention, which helps them to regulate their emotions as they learn to soothe themselves through every life situation (Bazzano et al., 2023).

Preschool children must possess emotional regulation skills, which are crucial for their overall development. To enhance their comprehension of emotional regulation, it is essential for them to be able to identify different emotions and understand the most effective ways to calm themselves. The ability to recognize emotions not only contributes to their readiness for school, but also fosters positive relationships with peers and caregivers. Moreover, it plays a significant role in addressing behavioral issues that may persist into adulthood. Therefore, emotional regulation skills are a vital component of preschool children's social and emotional development.

Theory

Erik Erikson's theory of Psychosocial Development central point is the development of one's accomplishment, from infant to adulthood. According to Orenstein & Lewis (2023), Erikson theory is categorized in eight stages that describes one's individual development that is affected by one's "biological, psychological and social factors" that happens throughout one's life. Initiative vs. Guilt is the third stage in Erikson's Psychosocial Development which talks about children and their early childhood development and through this stage children go through several life lessons in which they assert themselves through play and other ways of being socially interactive with others (*Erikson's Stage 3: Initiative Vs. Guilt*, 2023). Erikson's theory suggests that the successful resolution of crises during each stage of development could play a crucial role in promoting healthy social-emotional development (Marshall, n.d.).

During the period from 3 to about 5 years old, children in Erikson's "Initiative versus Guilt" stage acquire the skills to engage in independent play and interact with others (Marshall,

n.d.). In this development if things like crises are not resolved or are poorly resolved, emotional problems may persist and even worsen (Marshall, n.d.). When a child doesn't learn about self-regulation in their early childhood this could cause negative effects that could lead to the child feeling of guilt or shame (Marshall, n.d.).

Consideration of Diversity

My project was conducted in the Family Resource Center (FRC) preschool that is located in Castroville, CA. This preschool is operated under North Monterey County Unified School District. The FRC provides various sources of information, services and referrals for the families in the community. Some of the information and referrals vary from health services to migrant information. The majority of the families that come to the FRC are families who are of Mexican descent and are of low or middle class income and are in need of the services that the site provides. FRC's goal is to improve the quality of life of both children and their families through a safe and healthy community. According to the teacher all students from both classrooms are Mexican-American children who are all bilingual in English and Spanish.

My focus for my project was a classroom that has 14 children but only 12 out of the 14 children did attend school the days that I was in the classroom. The project was designed and or modified for preschoolers whose lessons were given in English and Spanish. My activities all had pictures so the children could have a visual of what I was saying. The activities that I planned were based on their current skills and understanding of emotions for their age. I made sure that my materials that I presented were in both English and Spanish, either by explaining the activity or putting the Spanish term on an individual whiteboard so the participants could see the translation.

Learning Outcomes

I provided 15-30 minute lessons that focus on recognizing and understanding emotion as well as activities that help with learning about self-calming strategies that could help preschool children in their social emotional skills. For three days out of the week to preschool children at Family Resource Center in Castroville. By the end of the lessons, participants will be able to:

- 1. Preschool children will be able to identify five emotions as well defined and express the emotions verbally.
- 2. Preschool children will be able to cope with negative emotions such as sadness, or anger by learning about self-regulating strategies using the "I feel I need" chart.
- Preschool children will be able to cope with emotions such as excitement, or anger by practicing yoga and meditation.

Method

Location and Participants

I conducted the emotion regulation lessons at the Family Resource Center morning slot preschool in Castroville, CA. This preschool provides services for children ages 3-5. The number of participants per lesson varied from 4 children to 12 children, it also varied from having 2 girls and 2 boys to 5 girls and 7 boys. The first 2 days were days which focused on emotion recognition and emotional regulation. I had the 4 participants that were previously mentioned. While on the third day I focused on using emotional regulation using yoga and meditation I had 12 participants. All children were Mexican-American, 9 children were Spanish speakers learning English while the rest of the 3 children were fluent in both English and Spanish.

Procedures and Materials

On the first day the teacher introduced me to the children as Teacher Elisa, a teacher who would be in the classroom for some days of the week. The teacher then explained that 4 children

were going to join me at a table and do an activity. The 4 children that were my participants were 2 boys and 2 girls ranging from 3 -5 years old. Once the participants and I were sitting at a table together I introduced myself to them in both English and Spanish and explained that we would be talking about emotions. I continued the lesson by asking the participants again in English and Spanish if any of them knew what emotions were. One girl answered in English with "I don't know." I then took out the "emotion flashcards" (see Appendix A), five flashcards that showed the facial expression one might do when feeling emotions such as happiness, anger, sadness, excitement, and tiredness. Once the participants were shown one by one the "emotions flashcards". I defined and explained with relatable examples what each emotion was. Before showing any "emotion flashcard" I made sure to write the name of the emotion in Spanish on an individual white board. Once all the flashcards were shown and defined I asked the children if they have ever felt these emotions. My assessment for the 4 participants was for them to recognize the emotions in any form that was relatable to them, this could be by a participant explaining the emotion with stories in which they felt that a particular emotion that I defined and explained, or it could be with a participant defining the emotion in their own words. Once I was finished with my lesson activity, I assessed the participants by asking them if they now knew what any of the 5 emotions that I presented to them were, and concluded with 4 of 4 participants responding with their own definition of each emotion defining it with their personal stories.

On the second day of my project I gathered the same participants as the previous lesson and I asked them in English and Spanish if they remember any of the things we discussed in the previous day. They talked about the flashcards that I introduced to them, and how they felt some of the emotions that were discussed. The 4 participants while discussing the previous lesson did so by talking in both English and Spanish. Once they were done talking and discussing the

emotions for 5 minutes I took the "emotion flashcards" (Appendix A) out and focused on the "anger and sadness. I asked them in English if they ever felt those emotions. The girls answered with a "yes" while the boys just looked at me and the girls. Taking that as a cue to continue I took out the "I feel I need" (Appendix B) chart. I explained to them what the "I feel I need" chart is as well as explaining the strategies flashcards (Appendix C). I defined and explained the strategies with examples that were relatable to the participants in English and Spanish. Once done with defining the strategies, I took out the "strategies flashcards" (Appendix C) and explained that what we have just discussed are the same as the strategies that are seen in the flashcards that I was presenting to them. Once the participants had an opportunity to see all the strategies that could been used I took the chance and explained the activity that we were going to do. In English and Spanish I told them that they could choose between the emotions of anger or the sadness flashcards and put it in the "I feel" category and once that was done they could choose as little as one strategy to 5 strategies they intend to do if one day they find themselves feeling anger or sadness.

The third day of my 3 day lesson plan was started by the teacher asking me if today all the children could be in my lesson of the day. This was because the children were too excited and were running, screaming, yelling, and jumping inside the classroom. The teacher explained that today the children were told that they were going to be home the next 2 days, as it was Friday. She also added that being Pajama Day for them wasn't helping as they were happy that they got to wear their pajamas to school. The teacher gathered all the students in their circle area and directed them to listen to me and do as I say. In English and Spanish I explained to all 12 participants that we were going to do some stretching but we needed to talk about the emotions of excitement and anger first. I took my "emotion flashcards' out and I explained what the

emotions of excitement and anger were by defining and giving examples. I explained both emotions by using vocabulary that is appropriate for children of their age as well as using examples that could be relatable to them. I asked when they felt excited and about 5 children answered. Next I told them that when they feel excited they could do yoga and I explained to them what it was. I did about 10 yoga movements with the children (see Appendix B).

Results

Learning Outcome 1

According to Learning Outcome 1, preschool children will be able to identify five emotions as well as define and express them verbally. On day 1 of my 3 day lesson plan I planned to assess the 4 participants by asking them what the five emotions that I shared with "emotions flashcards" (Appendix A) were and if they have ever felt that emotion. These emotions were; happy, mad, sad, excited, and tired. Once I was done with introducing and defining the emotions I asked the participants to define the emotions in their own words. Four out of the 4 (100%) children were able to define the five emotions with personal stories. A great example of the participants identifying and expressing emotions verbally is one boy who participated in my group in Spanish answered with feeling "triste" (sad) because he missed his parents. The other boy answered as well as being "triste" because he missed his parents as well. The girls in the group answered in English saying that they don't get sad because they are always happy. My learning outcome was fully met.

Learning Outcome 2

According to Learning Outcome 2, preschool children will be able to cope with negative emotions such as sadness, or anger by learning, using and showing me self-regulating strategies that will help them using the "I feel I need" chart and the "strategies flashcards". On day 2 of my

3 day lesson plan I reviewed the participants by introducing a chart that allowed them to show me what strategies they will do if they are feeling mad or sad. The participants used the "emotions flashcards" with "strategies flashcards" to demonstrate their self-regulating strategies that they feel comfortable using. I analyzed the results by the children showing me what strategies they have used to self-regulate as well as what strategies they will do in the future doing the "I feel I need" chart. Out of the 4 participants 1/4 (25%) did the activity but seemed a bit distracted as she was a new student and wanted to engage in play with the children that left the activity. The other three children left my group to go play with a new playdough that their teacher made. The girl that stayed showed understanding of self-soothing strategies as she was able to show me with the "I feel I need chart" (Appendix B), and "strategies flashcards" (Appendix C) and the sadness and anger emotion flashcard (Appendix A) what she could do to feel better (Figure 2). Although she stayed she was distracted and was more entertained by the other children, due to this reason I consider my learning outcome not met.

Learning Outcome 3

According to Learning Outcome 3, preschool children will be able to cope with emotions such as excitement, or anger by practicing yoga and meditation. On day 3 of my 3 day lesson plan I assessed the children by asking the children afterwards if they felt calmer after practicing yoga and meditation. I introduced the "calming my body flashcards" (see Appendix D) with the reintroduction of the "emotions flashcards". The children (12/12, 100%) were able to successfully tell me that they felt calmer, not only were they able to verbally tell me they felt calmer but I saw through the children's actions that they were calm. What I mean by this is that the children the last two days that I was in the classroom showed a lot of excitement by yelling and running outside but on this day the children walked and quietly went outside. Although my

lesson plan of the day got changed from 4 participants to 12 participants, due to the preschool teacher asking if the number of the participants could be the whole class, my learning outcome was fully met. See Figure 1 for detail. My learning outcome was fully met.

Discussion

After this project was completed Learning Outcome 1 and 3 were satisfactory as the children were able to recognize emotions and show calmness after practicing yoga and mediation. What I mean by this is that the children showed understanding of emotions, as they were able to define and explain all the emotions that were introduced during the lesson days. Through the use of the "I feel I need" chart, yoga, and meditation children also demonstrated an awareness of self-regulation strategies. These children are still learning about emotions and strategies to self-regulate as they are still developing their social emotional skills. My learning outcome is children being able to identify emotions and express their feelings verbally.

For my limitations on the project, there were many distractions within the classroom. On day 2 of my 3 day lesson plan, the children's teacher introduced a new play-dough activity which three out of the 4 participants found more interesting. Another challenge for me occurred on day 3 of my 3 day lesson plan as the teacher informed me that she wished for me to conduct my lesson of the day with the whole class of 12 preschoolers. This was because the children were energetic and loud as it was Pajama Day and it was Friday. Lastly a challenge as well as limitation was just trying to fit a curriculum in three days.

For future directions with this project, I would like to conduct this project in a more diverse setting. I say this because on my first day with the children they all defined the emotions with similar stories. What I mean by this is I want to introduce my lesson plan to not just

Mexican-American participants but other participants of different ethnicities and races. Another change that I will do is conducting the project with at least 6 more children for better analysis of emotional regulation as well as emotion recognition. I will also like to conduct the project in a less distracting setting as this setting was distracting in my second day of my 3 day lesson plan. I would also make my activities more entertaining for the children. Because my day 3 of my 3 day lesson plan was successfully met, I believe that preschool teachers should be encouraged to teach self-regulation strategies to their preschool students as it will help the children to be able to respond to their emotions in a more positive, and calmly way.

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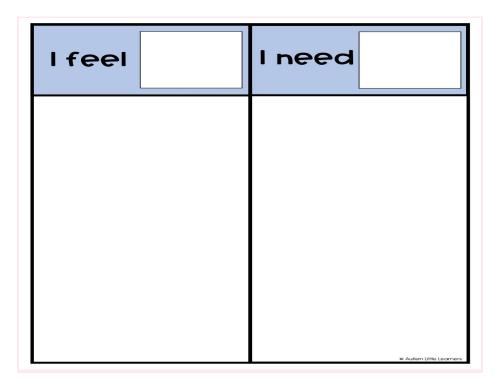
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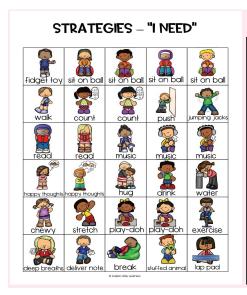
Appendix A < Needs a title



Appendix B

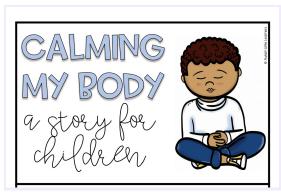


Appendix C





Appendix D







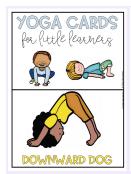








Figure 1



Figure 2



Preschool Children Learn About Regulating Emotions

Elisa Aviles Camacho Human Development and Family Sciences

Introduction

- This Capstone project was focused on teaching preschool children strategies in how they could regulate their emotions.
 - Recognizing emotion
 - o Knowing self-soothing strategies
- I have been working with preschool children for 7 years, through observation I
 noticed that these children lack methods in how they could regulate their
 emotions.

Need Statement

Problem:

 When preschool children lack emotional regulation and understanding of emotion they tend to have behavioral problems.

Need:

• There is a need for social emotional skills because it is important for children to have the capability of regulating and expressing their emotions in a positive way.



Theory

Erik Erikson Psychosocial Development Erikson's theory of psychosocial believed that people's egos and personalities require development through a series of eight stages wherein they experience crises and, if successful, gain core values.

Theory

Stage 3: Initiative vs. Guilt

The third stage of psychosocial development takes place during the preschool years. At this point in psychosocial development, children begin to assert their power and control over the world through directing play and other social interactions.

Learning Outcomes

I provided 15-30 minute lessons for three days out the week to preschool children at Family Resource Center in Castroville.

- Preschool children will be able to identify five emotions and express them feelings verbally.
- Preschool children will be able to cope with negative emotions such as sadness, or anger by learning about self-regulating strategies using the "I feel I need" chart.
- 3. Preschool children will be able to cope with emotions such as excitement, or anger by practicing yoga and meditation.



Method

Location: Family Resource Center Castroville, CA

I chose this site because I it was close distance to me, and because my nephew attends the school.

- Participants
 - Age 3-5 years old
 - Lower & Middle class
 - All the children were Mexican-American descent
 - Children were bilingual in both English and Spanish

Method



- LO 1: First- showed children emotion flashcards. Second- discuss emotions Materials: emotion flashcards
- **LO 2:** First- reintroduced emotion flashcards. Second- presented the strategies flashcards with the "I feel I need" chart. Third- Children used "I feel I need" chart to explain emotion and regulating strategy
 - Material: Emotion flashcards, "I feel I need" chart, strategies flashcards
- LO 3: First- reintroduced emotion flashcards (excited, anger). Secondintroduce "calming my body" flashcards. Third- ask children if they feel calmer
 - Material: emotion flashcards, "calming my body" flashcards

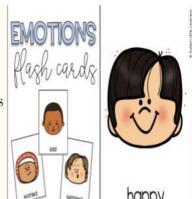




Assessment Results

LO 1: Identify 3 emotions correctly using emotion flashcards

- Assessment Process
 - Recognizing emotion
 - Demonstrate understanding of emotion
- Materials:
 - o Emotion Flashcards
- Results:
 - 4/4 (100%) participants recognized emotion and demonstrated understanding of emotion



Assessment Results

LO 2: Use "I feel I need" chart and demonstrate self-regulating strategie:

- **Assessment Process:**
 - Reintroduce the emotion flashcards
 - Demonstrated how the "I feel I need" chart works
 - Children used the "I feel I need chart to demonstrate the self-regulation strategies they will use.
- Materials
 - Emotion flashcards
 - Strategies- "I need" flashcards
 - "I feel I need" chart 0
- Results
 - ¹/₄ (25%) participants demonstrated self-regulating strategies using "I feel I need" chart.





Assessment Results



LO 3: Demonstrate the self-regulating strategies of yoga and meditation.

- Assessment Process:
 - o Reintroduce emotion flashcards
 - Demonstrate yoga and meditation as calming body strategies using "Calming My Body flashcards".
 - Direct children to mimic yoga positions and meditation strategies
 - o Ask about how they feel.
- Materials:
 - o Emotion flashcards
 - o Calming My Body flashcards
- Results:
 - o 12/12 (100%) participants demonstrated feeling calmer.





Successes

Focus: To teach preschool children emotional regulation strategies

LO 1: Fully Met

Children already had knowledge of emotions.

LO 2: Not Met

Children knew about some calming strategies

LO 3: Fully Met

Children were engaged and entertained.

Discussion

Limitations and Challenges

- Lesson 2 the children were distracted by other children.
- Lesson 3 took place in Pajama Day and a Friday. The children were more
 excited than usual, so the teachers recommended the lesson to be for the full
 class.

Discussion

Making It Better

- Conduct the project in a more diverse setting.
 - o Children's response and assessment were about the same.
- Make my activities more entertaining and interesting.

Future Directions

 Preschool teachers should be be encouraged to implement lessons about emotional regulation throughout the school year to see where a child stands with their emotion, and self-regulating them.

Life doesn't make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for us all.