



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



Tip #847: Creative Movement for Emotional Expression

Overview

Creative movement gives students another way to explore and express their thoughts and feelings. Students might create movement sequences inspired by music or images, use movement to represent different emotions, or explore how feelings can be shown through actions such as strong, light, fast, slow, tense or relaxed movements. These activities help students recognise and describe their emotions in different ways and can be especially helpful for students who find it difficult to express their feelings with words.

Key Teaching Ideas

Creating a safe and supportive environment is essential when using creative movement to explore emotions. Teachers can use music, images or simple prompts such as, "Show me what tired feels like in your body," to encourage students to express ideas in their own way rather than copying a set movement. After the activity, invite students to share what they were trying to show and explain the movements they chose. These conversations help students build confidence expressing themselves while expanding the language they use to talk about emotions.

Practical Application

- **Emotion-Driven Movement Sequences:** Give students an emotion card and ask them to create a short movement sequence that captures the physical quality of that emotion, focusing on use of space, speed, and body shape rather than narrative.
- **Music-Inspired Expression:** Play two contrasting pieces of music and ask students to move in a way that captures the mood of each, then discuss how their movement choices connected to the musical qualities they heard.
- **Tension and Release Sequences:** Guide students through a movement sequence where they alternate between making their body small and tight, then stretching into wide, open shapes. Afterwards, ask students to describe how each type of movement felt and what emotions or ideas the different movements reminded them of.



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- **Emotion Mirroring:** Pairs face each other and one student leads a slow movement sequence that represents an emotion while the other mirrors it, then they swap roles and discuss what they noticed about each other's movement choices.
- **Collaborative Emotional Landscapes:** Small groups create a movement sequence that shows a change in feeling or mood, such as moving from feeling nervous to feeling calm, or frustrated to excited. Students use changes in speed, level, shape and direction to show how the emotion changes throughout the sequence.

Next Steps

The [Active Education Australia website](https://activeeducationaustralia.edu.au) has resources on expressive movement and emotional wellbeing in teaching and learning. [Anywhere PD](#) covers creative movement sequences, emotion-based prompts, and wellbeing-focused lesson design.

References and Research

1. Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (Version 9.0) – Encourages students to develop self-awareness, emotional understanding and movement skills that support personal wellbeing, self-expression and healthy relationships.
2. Whitehead, M. (2010). *Physical Literacy: Throughout the Lifecourse* – Explains how meaningful movement experiences develop confidence, motivation, self-awareness and understanding through embodied learning.
3. Australian Sports Commission. (2019). *Australian Physical Literacy Framework* – Describes how physical, psychological, cognitive and social capabilities develop through purposeful movement experiences that build emotional awareness, confidence, self-expression and interpersonal skills.