



Tool 2.1

Inner Climate Journalling

CLARITY Competence Area:

Nurturing connection to oneself, others and nature

GreenComp Competence Area:

Embracing Complexity in Sustainability

Why use this tool?

Journaling on our inner climates or on the gratitude we experience helps open up to the emotions we feel, keep track of our health and wellbeing, reflect on relationships to ourselves, others and nature, and enhances our tolerance to experiencing multiple emotions, sometimes simultaneously. Even trying these exercises once can be a valuable experience for learners to connect with their inner worlds. The pupils who go on to establish a habit of journaling focusing on their feelings and emotions can experience emotional release and are gathering material to identify patterns or triggers that cause stress or are activated in times of stress. Gratitude journaling has been proven to reduce stress in times of uncertainty. Students who practice journalling will have an invaluable resource to draw on in times of crisis.

Activity 2.1.1

Journaling on how we are

Overview

Accepting our feelings is linked to better psychological health, improved moods and reduced anxiety. Actively inhibiting negative emotions takes a considerable effort, stressing the body and mind. Confronting emotions can support cognitive integration and further understanding. Identifying and familiarizing ourselves with our feelings and emotions is an important first step towards acceptance. Journaling can help process challenges and build emotional strength and resilience. In the long term it can serve as a resource to draw upon in times of stress. Journaling also contributes to opening an inner conversation and welcoming new perspectives, and as such helps in understanding others' perspectives and emotions deeply.

Curriculum linkage

Language & Literature, Physical Education & Health, and biology.

Competences built

Empathy, presence, self-reflection, and authenticity.

Prep Work

Prepare by having a short brainstorm by yourself and writing down some examples, including prompts and responses about feelings and emotions. You can share some of these examples in the introduction to support learners during the exercise. Also make sure all learners have access to a journal - it could be a



BASIC INFO

Age range:

7+

Duration:

Max 15 minutes a day

Group size:

Individual task

Level of difficulty:

Basic to intermediate

Materials/space required:

Personal journals and pens for each student; or digital space for private journals

Location:

Flexible

Engagement of external stakeholders:

digital journal on a computer, or a regular journal or book. If in class, create a quiet and calm environment without distractions.

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:

Get familiar with the vocabulary of feelings and emotions. It can be valuable to explore the many different emotions we can feel, e.g. pick a letter and look up all the emotions starting with the letter "c". Or check out resources, including the "feeling wheel" at the end of this activity card.

Levels in the activity

1. Try out in class
2. New habits
3. Follow-up



Student writing in their journal while spending time in nature.

Photo by Carmelo Zamora, REAL School Budapest.

Level 1: Try out in class

1. Invite the learners to take two deep breaths and gently shake their shoulders.
2. Introduce the prompt. It could be something very simple and general, e.g. how/what do you feel today? Or it could be a prompt related to a climatic event, e.g. when you heard/saw/experienced the event, how did you feel? It could be a prompt after a discussion or event with climate-related content. It could also be on a subject of their choice, perhaps the day's events or encouraging them to pick something that has been troubling them.
3. Depending on the prompt, you might provide an example first, e.g. about your feelings related to a particular event. Or reading up on a prepared example. Encourage learners to express their feelings, giving them time to name each one. You can provide examples of feelings by showing students the "feelings wheel" that is in the resource section below. Start small. Give them only a few minutes to write (5-10 min). Emphasize that there are no rules, and there is no wrong way of doing this. They should not worry about spelling and punctuation no one is here to judge them. They can be encouraged to write continuously until time is up. Also, clarify that what they write is private.



4. After introducing the prompt, invite the students to write. Some might need some time to quiet their mind, and spend some minutes gathering their thoughts, others might start writing immediately.
5. You might want to close the exercise by asking if anyone wants to share some reflections, read up their prompt or just pick an emotion that they have mentioned in response to the prompt. You might want to write down these emotions on post-its or on a board to engage in a group discussion.

Level 2: New habits

1. Let the learners repeat this exercise several days a week, for a month. If you teach a class where you do this exercise only once a week, we suggest continuing for 2-3 months. During that time, each student's readiness to write about their emotions will grow, and looking back on major challenging feelings of the past might seem minor at present. This can help build confidence and emotional resilience when facing difficulties.
2. Encourage learners to take up journaling as a take-home exercise. In that case, encourage students to pick the time of day that suits them best to write in the journal. Setting a regular time is helpful to foster regularity.

Level 2: Follow-up

1. Discuss with learners how they experience the exercise, whether they consider continuing their new habit of journaling.
2. Encourage the creation of emotional learning pairs within the class, for the learners who are interested. Members of those pairs could start sharing their journal prompts from time to time and discuss their prompts and/or feelings in a private setting.



Dos and don'ts

Do:

Regarding Step 4 in level 1, sometimes students might be stuck with writing, or at times, they may feel upset as they write, and that's ok. In those cases, you might find it appropriate to invite them to write about writing. It will help them learn more about themselves

Adaptations:

We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent



learners, please note it is not about treating others how *you* want to be treated, but how *they* want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.

Resources

- On this page you will find vocabulary to talk about emotions:
<https://www.centervention.com/list-of-emotions-135-words-that-express-feelings/>
- Here is also a “**feelings wheel**” adapted to different age groups that can be helpful: <https://media.centervention.com/pdf/Feelings-Wheel.pdf>

References

- Find out more at the Greater Good in Education, a free resource hub for educators from UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center:
<https://ggie.berkeley.edu/practice/student-self-check-in-journal/>
- More information on journaling (and other tools) can be found on the Transformation Hosts International (THI) homepage, which is a community of practice for Transformative Learning and for hosting the socio-ecological transition: <https://hostingtransformation.eu/method/guided-journaling/>
- More on the science behind journaling:
 - Blake, T. (2005). Journaling; An active learning technique. International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.2202/1548-923X.1116>
 - Lohner, M. S. & Aprea, C. (2021). The Resilience Journal: Exploring the Potential of Journal Interventions to Promote Resilience in University Students. Frontiers in Psychology, 12.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.702683>
- More about the connection between journaling and wellbeing:
<https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-of-journaling/>



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Activity 2.1.2

Gratitude journal

Overview

Gratitude journalling both regulates the sympathetic nervous system that activates our anxiety responses at the neurobiological level, and conditions the brain towards more positive thoughts at the psychological level. Therefore, exploring positive emotions such as gratitude can contribute to your personal resilience as it serves as a resource in times of stress. Journaling also contributes to opening up an inner conversation regarding new ways of living that would feel more fulfilling. Lastly, expressing feelings of gratitude supports human cooperation.

Curriculum linkage

Language & Literature and Physical Education & Health.

Competences built

Empathy, presence, self-reflection, compassion and authenticity.

Prep Work

Prepare by having a short brainstorm by yourself and writing down some examples of what you are grateful for. You can share some of these examples in the introduction so as to support learners during the exercise. Also make sure all learners have access to a journal – it could be a digital journal on a computer, or a regular journal or book.



BASIC INFO

Age range:

Any

Duration:

Max 10 minutes a day

Group size:

Individual task

Level of difficulty:

Basic to intermediate

Materials/space required:

Personal journals and pens for each student; or digital space for private journals

Location:

Flexible

Engagement of external stakeholders:

None



Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:

None.

Levels in the activity

1. Try out in class
2. New habits
3. Follow-up

Level 1: Try out in class

1. Invite the learners to take two deep breaths and gently shake their shoulders.
2. Invite the learners to have a small brainstorm by themselves to consider the big or small things they are grateful for. A possibility is to list some of their responses on a black/white board for other learners to see.
3. Then, in their journal, have them list some little moments, meaningful gestures, small wins, and beautiful objects in their life that they are genuinely grateful for. Nothing is too small or too big to be included. For example: the warmth of a cup in their hand, the person who greeted them when getting to school today, the tree outside their window...You may need to remind learners to show gratitude for themselves as well.



Student writing in their journal while spending time in nature.

Photo by Carmelo Zamora, REAL School Budapest.

Level 2: New habits

Let the learners repeat this exercise several days a week, for a month. If you teach a class where you do this exercise only once a week, we suggest continuing for 2-3 months.

As they build this new habit, each learner's list will grow. Looking back at how much one has been grateful for is an important experience in itself.

Level 3: Follow-up

Have a discussion on how learners experienced the exercise and whether they would consider continuing this journalling exercise moving forward.

You can also encourage them to write a note to someone to express their gratitude.





Dos and don'ts

Do:

Regarding Step 2 of the first level, sometimes learners might come up with NOTHING! If so, you might find it appropriate to invite them to brainstorm in groups or to start the exercise with the whole group openly brainstorming together. This is also a way to adapt the exercise for younger learners: having an open brainstorm and writing down their ideas on the board or on a large sheet of paper can help younger learners choose their own topics and start journaling.

Don't:

- Don't pressure participants to share what they've written down about what they're grateful for.
- Don't judge their responses.

Adaptations:

Feel free to adapt the activity by inviting your learners to draw instead of write, if that suits them better. To support neurodivergent learners or those who may not be used to expressing their feelings – or find it difficult to recognize them – you can also use pictures, symbols, or emojis to help them engage more comfortably. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how *you* want to be treated, but how *they* want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.

This activity can also be undertaken at home together with parents to create a space for sharing, common understanding and gratitude for everyday life.

References

Gratitude journaling exists in many forms and has been widely practiced in different settings. This version of the activity was designed by Legacy17 for the CLARITY project, drawing on a rich tradition of approaches already in use. We acknowledge and appreciate the many variations available and do not claim to have invented the practice.

For additional references and resources, please explore these links:

- Find out more about the gratitude journal at the Greater Good in Education, a free resource hub for educators from UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center: <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/student-well-being/gratitude-for-students/>
- More on using gratitude journaling with parents:



- Toprak, B., & Sari, T. (2023). The effects of a 2-week gratitude journaling intervention to reduce parental stress and enhance well-being: a pilot study among preschool parents. *Discover Psychology*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44202-023-00099-x>
- The cognitive benefits and support from that journaling activity contributes to a more positive cognitive style that can be a way to reduce stress:
 - Fekete, E. M., & Deichert, N. T. (2022). A brief gratitude writing intervention decreased stress and negative affect during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 23(6), 2427–2448. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-022-00505-6>

For print if needed

An example of a Gratitude Journal list.

I am grateful for...	I am grateful to...



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