



**Esplanade
Presents**

**Feed Your
Imagination**



The Feelings Farm

Directed by Edith Podesta, written by
Amanda Chong and music by Julian Wong

22 – 25 Oct 2024
Singtel Waterfront Theatre
at Esplanade

Post-show Educator's Guide

Recommended Level: Primary

About the Show

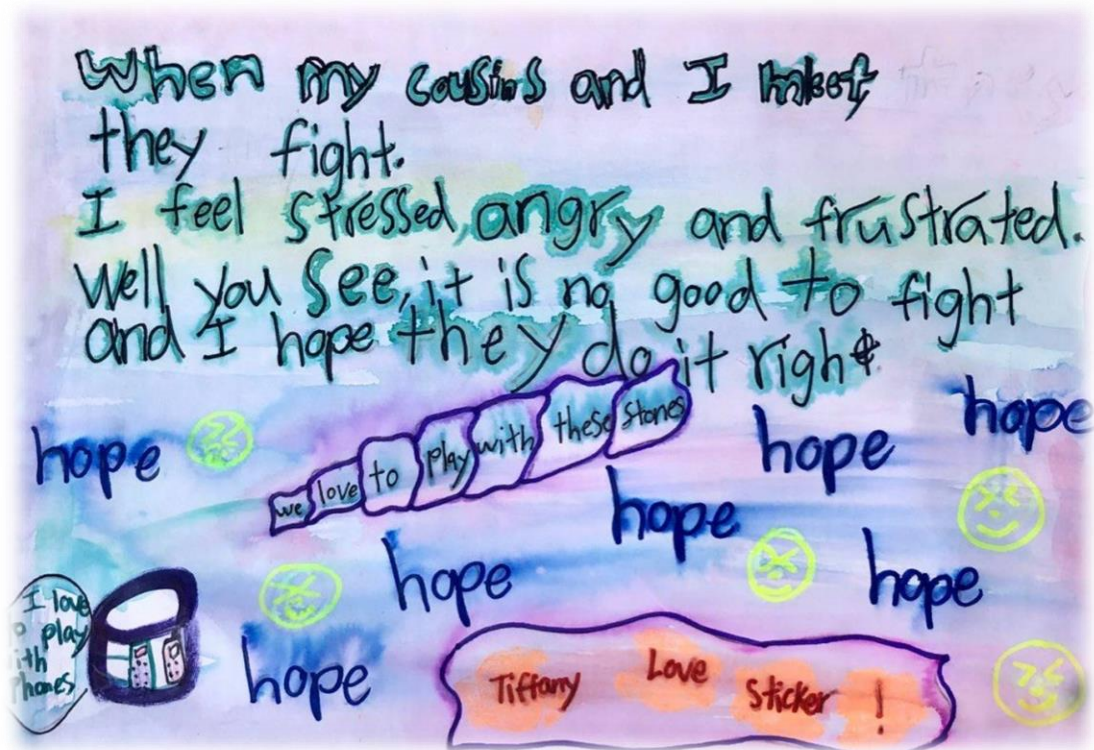
Welcome to the Feelings Farm
where feelings bloom and grow.
Pay attention to their whispers,
they might show you where to go...

On a trip to Kranji, three children find themselves lost on The Feelings Farm where emotions are shifting landscapes they must learn to journey through, both together and alone. Guided by the mysterious Cloud, they tumble through the Jungle of Joy, brave the Field of Fear, sail across the Swamp of Sadness, and explore other familiar feelings. Come along for a magical adventure that will surprise and move you.

The Feelings Farm uses music, movement, poetry, and multimedia to help children name and understand emotions with compassion. The play draws from real experiences of children in Singapore and hopes to give children and adults alike the language to have honest conversations about our feelings.

Objectives

- Support children to identify and articulate the different feelings they experience
- Guide children to discover ways to find calm and balance through self-compassion practices



Artwork by Julia

Support children in identifying and articulating the different feelings and emotions they experience

Feelings and emotions are fundamental aspects of the human experience. They arise from our life encounters, providing insight into the significance of these experiences. Emotions help us understand and organise our life events, giving meaning to our existence. Extensively studied across various disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, and neuroscience, human emotions have been a subject of interest for decades.

In the 1970s, psychologist Paul Ekman identified six universal emotions experienced across cultures: happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, surprise, and anger. *The Feelings Farm* explores many of these basic emotions, guiding children through theatre, to understand how these emotions illuminate their life experiences.

The post-show reflection and activities aim to help children engage deeply with their emotions, enhancing their emotional awareness and understanding. Our emotions play a crucial role in the connection between the brain and heart. They communicate intricate messages between our nervous systems, often beyond our conscious awareness.

All of us experience and express our emotions differently. This difference is even more pronounced between adults and children. As adults, we have the benefit of language and prior experiences to help us understand and verbalise our emotional shifts. Children do not have that advantage yet. Emotions emerge in children in ways that can sometimes be overwhelming to them.

Emotions encompass not only words but also thoughts, images, physiological sensations, behaviour, and movements in the heart. If they are experiencing an emotion for the first time, the foreign quality of this experience can sometimes create confusion and distress within them.

Therefore, these post-show activities have the potential to strengthen a child's mind-body connection and emotional well-being. Modalities such as free exploratory art, movement, play, and reflection complement each other to support children in exploring their emotions. The suggested class activities in this guide are centred around these modalities.

Guide children to discover ways to find calm and balance through self-compassion practices.

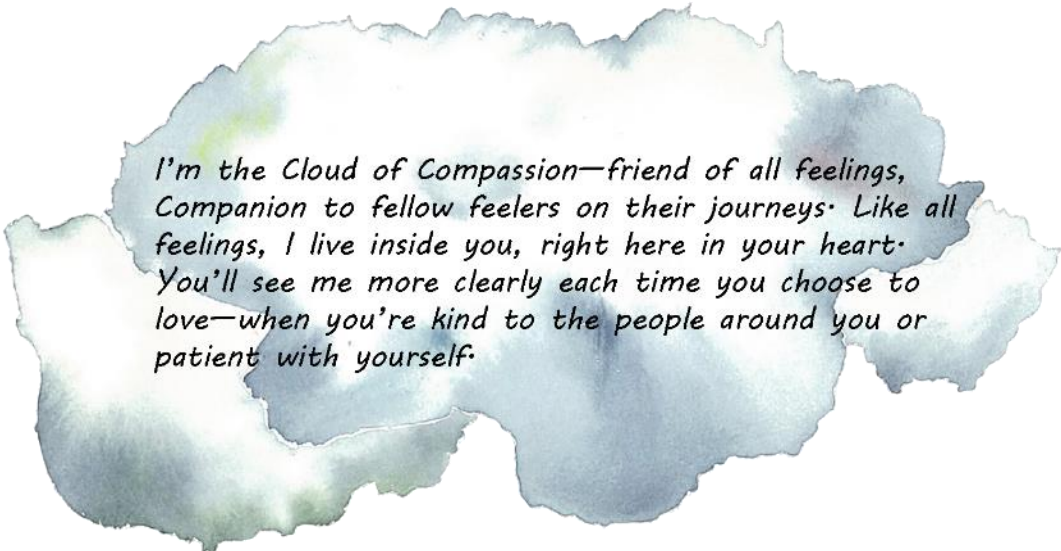
The Cloud of Compassion in *The Feelings Farm* is an anchor of support whenever the characters could not comprehend their emotions. In her work of integrating research and data on emotions, Brene Brown offered the definition of compassion as **“the daily practice of recognising and accepting our shared humanity so that we treat ourselves and others with loving-kindness, and we take action in the face of suffering.”**

Compassion is driven by recognising our shared humanity, acknowledging that it's human to have strengths and struggles. Empathy, as described by Brene Brown, entails being fully and willingly present to someone's pain; it is a potent tool for compassion.

Self-compassion involves recognising our own humanity when we make mistakes or face challenges in life. It means being fully present for ourselves, acknowledging our pain and offering ourselves kindness. According to Kristin Neff, who leads the Center for Mindful Self-Compassion, self-compassion comprises three key elements: self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness. **It is crucial for both children and adults to embrace their humanity and navigate difficult emotions with kindness, gentleness and awareness, despite the discomfort they may bring.** This approach helps prevent us from being overwhelmed by negative reactions to our emotions and life experiences.

We do not want to be swept away by our emotions, neither do we want to suppress and sweep them under the carpet. **We want to allow each emotion to be seen, heard, and understood, without judgement or criticism.** When an emotion is deemed as bad, undesirable or negative, the child may not learn to manage this emotion in a healthy manner—this can be detrimental to their emotional and mental health in the long term.

The journey of an emotion mirrors the rhythmic cycles found in nature, like day and night, ocean tides, and the phases of the moon. The crucial step is recognising how to return to a calm and balanced state after experiencing a wave of emotion. **By practicing self-compassion, we become adept at restoring equilibrium when faced with intense or challenging feelings.**



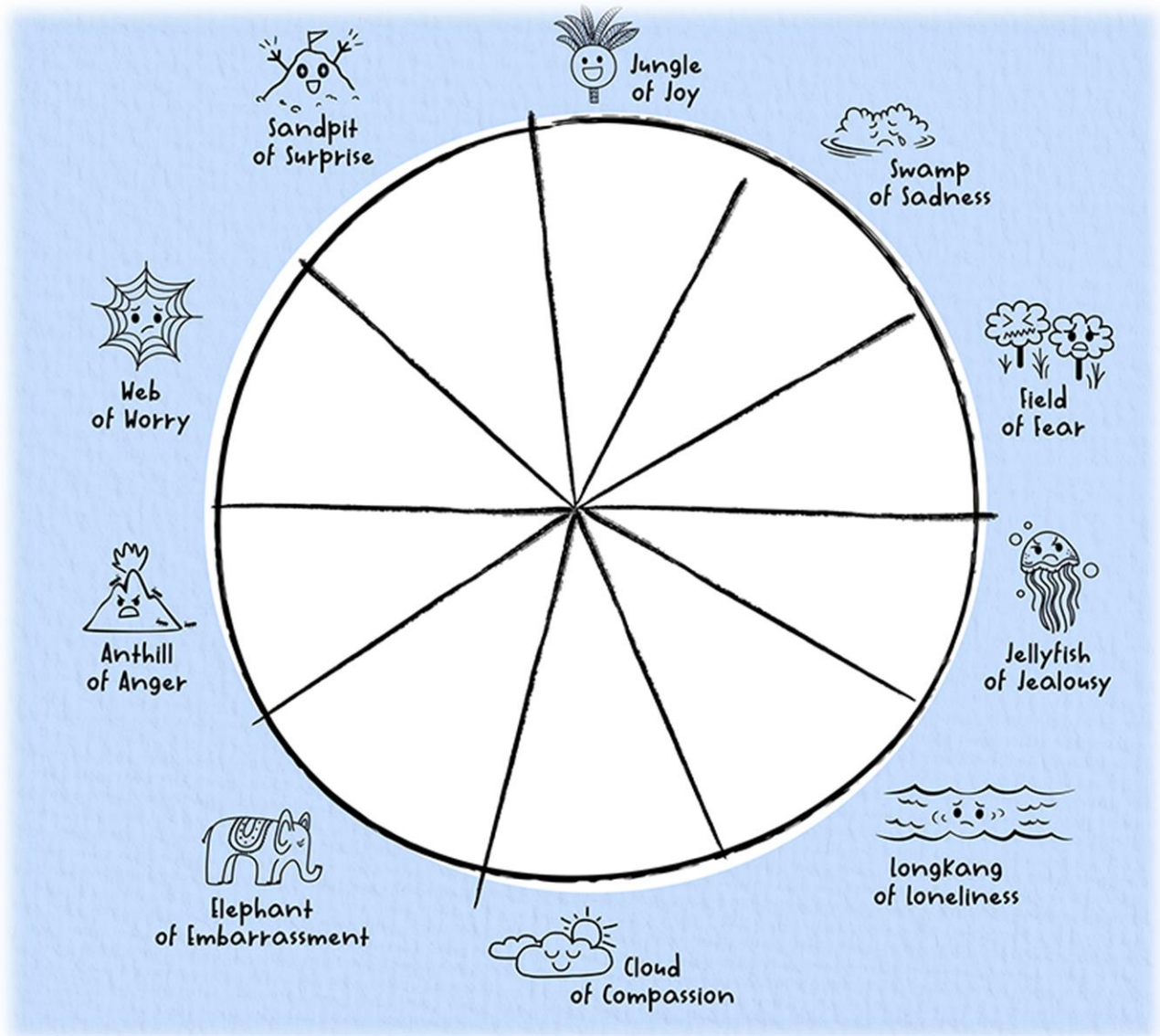
*I'm the Cloud of Compassion—friend of all feelings,
Companion to fellow feelers on their journeys. Like all
feelings, I live inside you, right here in your heart.
You'll see me more clearly each time you choose to
love—when you're kind to the people around you or
patient with yourself.*

Introducing activities in the student guide in your classes

FEELINGS WHEEL (Page 4 of the student's guide)

The feelings wheel provides a comprehensive and visual overview of all the feelings and emotions covered in The Feelings Farm. All the basic emotions are found within the feelings wheel.

Invite children to choose a colour for each emotions to help them personalise the emotion. They can also add drawings of fictional characters, animals, plants, nature landscapes that represent that feeling. The feelings wheel can be used as a check-in tool for the children to identify their feeling(s) of the day, the week or at the beginning or end of classes.



Our body giving us clues to these emotions (Page 6 to 8 of the student guide)

Our body gives us the first clues when a feeling or emotion shows up. If we listen carefully, our body will send signals about what our emotion wants to say. Get the children to brainstorm on common sensations, thoughts, and bodily reactions when emotions in The Feelings Farm emerge.

Invite them to draw or note down, in the separate gingerbread man outlines, the relevant thoughts, hints from the heart, and other body sensations when they experience other emotions.

Below are common sensations you can use as prompts to support them.

Thoughts may appear in our mind
Can you guess the feelings behind these thoughts?

- "This is unbelievable!"
- "My thoughts are like a train getting faster and faster!"
- "Mummy is bringing me out to play!"
- "My younger sister tore my favourite sticker book!"
- "I cannot get too close to my friends because of COVID-19 social distancing."
- "I remember the sound of people laughing and my face turning red."

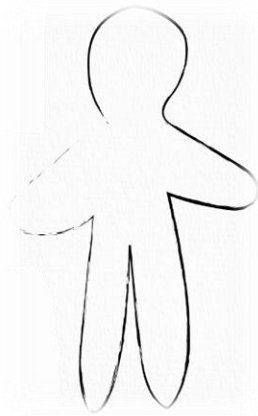
Our heart may drop hints about the feelings inside us
What do you think your heart is hinting at when it feels like it...

- is thumping like a drum?
- is soaring up in the sky?
- is so tight you cannot breathe anymore?
- wants to hide in a corner?
- is so heavy it is sinking?
- is warm and expanding softly?

We may notice sensations in other parts of our body
Can you guess the feelings behind these bodily sensations?

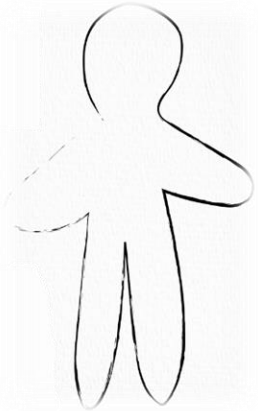
- Your chest and head feel hot and itchy
- Your belly feels like there are butterflies inside
- Your stomach feels like it is in a tight knot
- Your palms get really sweaty and wet
- You cry and your shoulders shake
- Your hair on your arms stand
- Your footsteps become light

Anthill of Anger



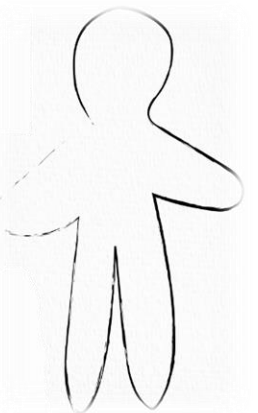
- Warmth or heat in the upper part of the body e.g. heart area, neck, face
- Eyebrows furrowing, eyes widen, jaws tighten, tears in the eyes or crying
- Heartbeat increases, shallow breaths, urges to shout
- Urges to move the hands and legs in forceful ways e.g. slapping, hitting, kicking motion
- Thoughts of saying things that can hurt others

Web of Worry



- Funny sensations in the stomach e.g. butterflies, knots, sinking feeling
- Eyes darting in different directions
- Restlessness in the body e.g. pacing around, shaking the legs, biting fingernails
- Heartbeat increases, shallow breaths
- Multiple different thoughts that may run in loops, thinking about things that have not yet happened

Jungle of Joy



- Warmth in the upper body, usually around the heart area that may spread to the entire body
- Energy that brings the desire to move the whole body e.g. jumping, dancing, twirling
- Smile in the face, eyes widen
- Thoughts relating to enjoyment e.g. enjoying this moment, love being with this person or this group of people
- Connecting with others through sharing, singing, laughing etc

What were some of the key emotions that the characters in The Feelings Farm experienced? (Page 9 to 11 of the student guide)

FEAR

Some reflection prompts around fear can include:

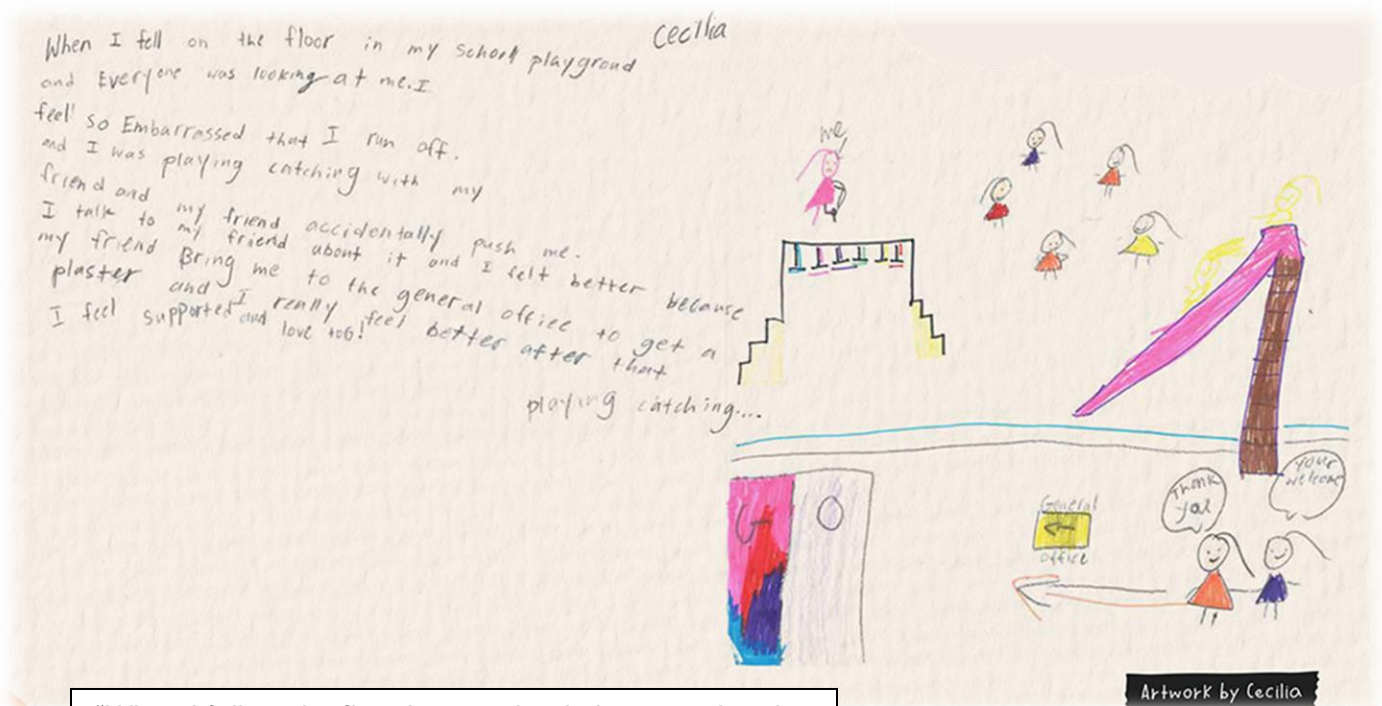
- Identify some of the things that made Kai feel afraid. E.g. being called on in class.
- Invite children to reflect on their experiences of fear, how they became aware of the emotion of fear, and what can help them feel safe when fear shows up.
- Educator's notes on **fear**:
 - Fear arises when we are pushed out of our comfort and familiar zone. It is a signal from our body that we are facing something that we are not familiar with, uncertain about, and there may be a sensation of threat or danger. It can be a threat to our physical or psychological safety, something we possess, or our relationship.
 - Children may often experience fear when something threatens to destabilise their friendships and/or relationships with parents and caregivers. Fear may also show up when something they want to keep private may be revealed to others. For many children, fear may be associated with embarrassment.



EMBARASSMENT

Some reflection prompts around embarrassment can include:

- What makes embarrassment so hard to admit? Could it be because embarrassment makes us feel as if we are missing or lacking something, or perhaps a part of us feels exposed?
- Invite children to wonder about other feelings that may be hard to admit?
- Who are the people they can share their feelings of embarrassment with that will help to take embarrassment's power away?
- Educator's notes on **embarrassment**:
 - Embarrassment is a form of discomfort when we become self-conscious in front of others. It may also happen when we catch other people witness something that we are doing, something that happened to us, or an aspect of ourselves that we do not want others to know about. It can be connected to committing a social mistake, being the center of attention or caught in an awkward social situation.
 - Children who are approaching puberty (starting around 9-10 for girls and 11- 12 for boys) or teens, may feel intense embarrassment over minor incidents as they become self-conscious. The discomfort can be very strong. It's important not to gloss over, minimise or dismiss this emotion when they share it with adults.

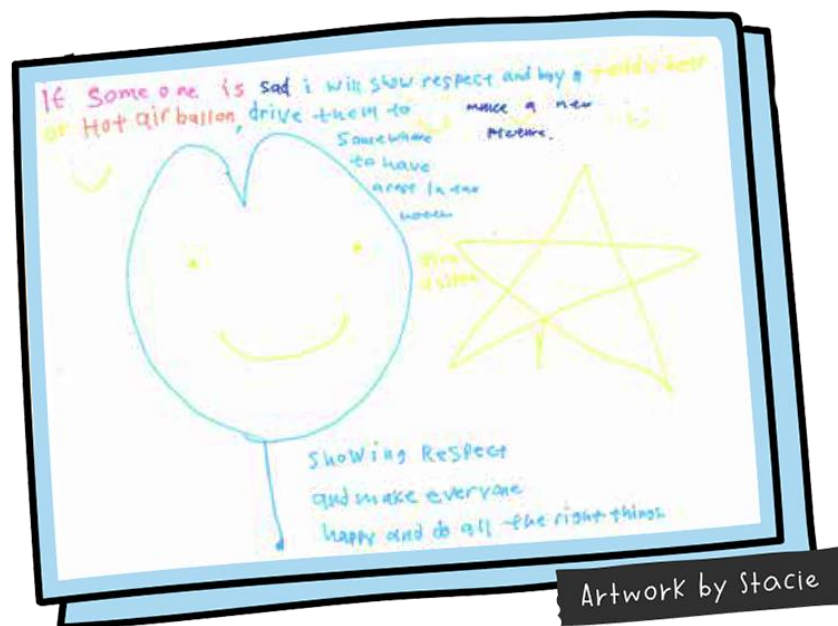


"When I fell on the floor in my school playground and everyone was looking at me, I feel so embarrassed that I ran off. I was playing catching with my friend and my friend accidentally push me. I talk to my friend about it and I felt better because my friend bring me to the general office to get a plaster and I really feel better after that. I feel supported and loved too!" - Cecilia

SADNESS

Some reflection prompts around sadness can include:

- Sadness teaches us about things or people we have lost and how important they were in our lives. Do you think Kai lost something that was important to him? What might that be?
- Invite children to reflect on their life experiences that brought the emotion of sadness.
- Sadness can be a heavy emotion. Sometimes it becomes so heavy that, without us realising, we get stuck in sadness much like getting stuck in the swamp. Some of us cannot get out of bed, some of us start to withdraw from others. It takes friends and family to help us get unstuck from the Swamp of Sadness. Get children to brainstorm what they can do when they notice their friends stuck in the Swamp of Sadness.
- Educator's notes on **sadness**:
 - Sadness is important and we need this emotion. It is a human response to any form of losses and defeat, real and perceived. Sadness can invite us to re-evaluate the circumstances of our lives and reach out to others for support. When we experience sadness, we want to be held and supported by others who know the ache of what we are experiencing.
 - It is critical that as adults, we do not dismiss or overlook the emotion of sadness when we notice it in children, whether they are showing it with words, facial expressions, or behaviour. Dismissing this emotion communicates to them that we cannot tolerate their sadness. They may then learn to suppress their sadness or withdraw from connecting to others when this emotion comes up for them in future, which can be detrimental for their mental health in the long term.



"If someone is sad, I will show respect and buy a teddy bear or hot air balloon, drive them to somewhere to have a rest in the hotel. Showing respect and make everyone happy and do all the right things. - Stacie"

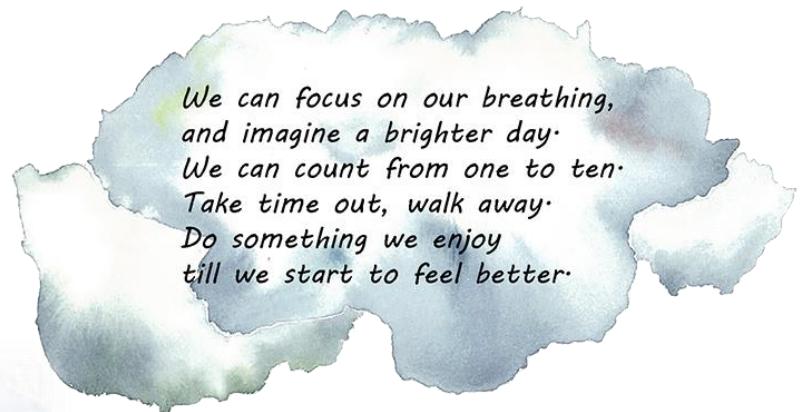
What do I do when feelings become too big (Page 13 to 16 of the student guide)

- **Activity 1:** My breathing star
- **Activity 2:** Share my feelings with someone I trust and feel safe with
- **Activity 3:** My self-compassion practice

These activities support children to move through intense emotions and feelings by attending to them from different layers. First, we want to soothe our body with breathing practices. Intense emotions can sometimes feel overwhelming, and that can activate the sympathetic stress response in our nervous system that brings a fight or flight response — a sense that we should fight our feelings, avoid, or suppress them. When we turn our attention to our breaths, inviting awareness of inhalation and exhalation, it gradually activates our parasympathetic nervous system, a system of rest and digest, which signals that we are safe and can be with the feeling or emotion.

Activity 1: My breathing star

Activating our parasympathetic nervous system when we are overwhelmed takes self-awareness, which requires time and practice. You are welcome to invite your students to practice activity 1 even during times when they are not experiencing intense emotions. It can become a routine check-in or check-out in your classes for e.g. at the beginning of your class, or at the end of your class. As children become more familiar with this activity, their nervous systems will be wired to turn to their breaths to move through intense emotions when the latter arises.



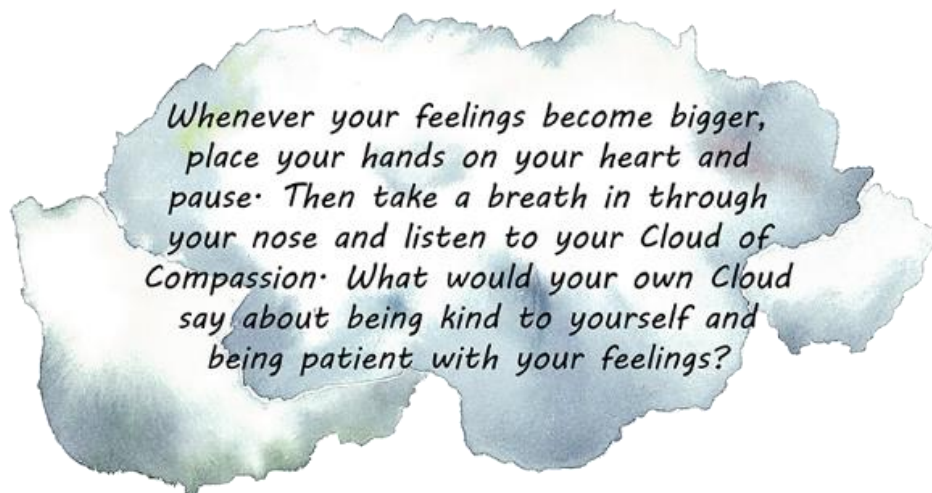
Activity 2: Share my feelings with someone I trust and feel safe with

As the nervous system returns back to a more balanced state, activity 2 encourages children to allow their emotions, and the meaning behind the emotions, to be heard and seen by others. It is an opportunity for them to make sense of their emotions and integrate this experience into their lives.

Activity 3: My self-compassion practice

Lastly, activity 3 serves as a reminder that we are humans. As humans, we make mistakes, we do not like to be hurt by others, and we yearn for connection. Self-compassion practices support children to see their emotions as a human experience; there is no need to reject, dismiss or suppress them. When the different emotions and life experiences come together, they shape us into who we are.

Get students to draw the shape of their Cloud of Compassion. Draw as many as they like because the shape of our Cloud of Compassion changes every day, just like the clouds in the sky!



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