

*‘What would you want to talk about if you got the freedom to speak about anything?’*

*‘I will scream... so loud, and no one should stop me!’*

During a story-reading session at a Primary Government School in Uttarakhand, we were reading the bilingual story, *I Wish/Meri Arzoo* about sixteen children sharing their wishes, given the freedom to ask for anything. Building on the story, as a facilitator, I asked my students about their wishes and received the above response from one child.

This wish to scream could have multiple reasons – students want to make noise, create a disturbance or express hidden emotions. It could also be a suppressed desire or an experience of violence and abuse. I did not know then but decided to do

a follow-up session to create a space for a clearer expression of this. It may not always be possible to uncover the reason or solve a problem, but a teacher/facilitator must create a ‘safe space’ in the classroom for children to express their emotions. I designed an ‘expression’ session (Lesson Plan 1) using another story, *Who Stole Bhaiya’s Smile?* written by Sanjana Kapoor, and some elements of visual arts.

### Lesson Plan: Expressing emotions

Objective: To create a space for children to feel free to talk about their imaginations, dreams and choices.

Classes: IV-V (ages 9-10 years)

Time duration: 1 hour

Art form: Storytelling

	Activity	Execution	Outcome
Circle	How are you feeling today? Name the emotion.	Ask the children to sit in a circle; ask the question, and as the facilitator, be the first one to share your emotion. By turns, encourage each one to answer.	Children take time to think about how they are feeling and name the emotion.
Warm-up	Place colours in front of them (crayons, colour pencils, oil pastels, sketch pens – all dry mediums available can be provided). It also depends on what colours are available. The facilitator asks questions picking each of the following emotions: What colour do you associate with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Happiness</li> <li>• Calm</li> <li>• Love</li> <li>• Disgust</li> <li>• Anger</li> </ul>	For every question in the sequence, ask them to pick a colour and write/draw what it makes them feel.	Children learn to associate colours with emotions.

	Activity	Execution	Outcome
Creation	Read the book: <i>Who Stole Bhaiya's Smile?</i> written by Sanjana Kapoor.	At the mention of an emotion and the monster in the book, ask the children to pick and paint using colours that resonate with the emotion; make sure to talk about feelings in a sequence that is from negative to positive. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does your monster look?</li> <li>• How does your anger look?</li> <li>• How does your sadness look?</li> <li>• How do you feel when nobody understands your problem?</li> <li>• How do you feel when somebody tries to cheer you up when you are upset?</li> <li>• How does your peace look?</li> <li>• How does your love look?</li> <li>• How does your happiness look?</li> </ul>	The freedom of choice brings out a sense of individuality and introduces children to respect the private space of each individual in the group.  Focus on their artworks to understand which emotion is complicated for them to express.
Closing	What emotion are you feeling now?	Give them a few minutes to open up and if they do not start, prompt them with an example. All children in the circle answer by turns.	Reflection on their own emotions.

This session helped the children form an association between their emotions and colours and provided them with a space to express their unexpressed emotions. We drew our emotions – monsters, anger, sadness, calmness, care, love, and happiness. Everyone had different ideas and colours for their emotions. This session taught them that each of us is a different individual with different feelings and emotions.

How did this session work with the student who wanted to scream? The child had drawn a scrambled face to express his emotion of anger - that was his monster, he said. His selection of colours to depict it, the space for being aware of his emotion and using colours for venting it out was his first step towards healing. He learned that he had a way out - through colouring and expression.



Figure 1. Children playing with colours during a session at Rang Kaarwaan Learning Centre, Champawat.



Figure 2. Children and the facilitator playing a game to get comfortable with body movements at Government Primary School, Simalta, Champawat.

### You are a teacher, and you can do it!

Expressive art is a therapeutic combination of creative art forms like play, drama, movement, storytelling, music, and visual arts. It is important to talk about emotions in the classroom and provide a space for expression. When children experience a new emotion, they want to share it but are generally not encouraged to do so. Such emotions, if left unexpressed, lead to negative social behaviours, like bullying. Creative art forms are fun to engage in and also create space for building trust.

Teachers/facilitators do not have to be professional artists to conduct sessions using expressive arts. Their role here is to provide children with space to explore their creativity. Teachers/facilitators are required to notice the changes in the students'

expressions while they do the body movements, the artwork and in the roles that they take up while playing a game. These are the details that will help them in designing subsequent sessions.

Expressive arts help build a group relationship and bridge the teacher-student gap as the teacher/facilitator also becomes a part of the circle sharing their own emotions. In the lesson session mentioned, students drew their emotions using different expressions and colours. It helped them realise that each of them is different from the rest. This understanding helps in promoting cooperation rather than competition. They also realised that all of us (including me) experience different emotions at different times, in different ways. This creates a culture of care and empathy in the classroom.



**Mahima Rastogi** is an arts practitioner and facilitator who enjoys working with children, youth, and the community. She uses the visual arts, drama, stories, rhythm, play, and movement to facilitate social inclusion, and to encourage people to explore and express themselves. She likes to spend time reading, travelling, illustrating, designing, and facilitating sessions. She may be contacted at [mahimarastogi80@gmail.com](mailto:mahimarastogi80@gmail.com)