

3

Exploring feelings through movement

Perhaps the most central lesson in affective education is learning to come into harmony with our feelings. Learning to feel, learning how to tell one feeling from another, and learning how to express feelings clearly are all examples of the types of learning that can have very powerful consequences in school and later in life.

Consistent with the whole-person approach to learning emphasized in this book, the experiments in this chapter are examples of the ways that movement can be used to explore feelings.

FLUFFING

TO THE LEADER Daily stress can flatten our bodies and our capacity for feeling fully alive. Fluffing is designed to reacquaint us with our internal feeling of lightness.

Exploring feelings through movement

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE GROUP Wherever you are in the room right now, standing or sitting, take a few moments to close your eyes.

Imagine that your breath is a soft, swirling cloud of relaxation. Each time you breathe in, send the cloud to a different part of your body to fluff it. As you breathe out let that part gently float through the space around you. First fluff up under your shoulders . . . fluff up as you would fluff a pillow . . . under your shoulder blades . . . between your ribs . . . in your belly . . . behind your knees. Now breathe the cloud into your whole body at the same time, fluffing everywhere. Breathe out, enjoying the lightness.

A FEELING KALEIDOSCOPE

TO THE LEADER Everyone has feelings, all kinds of feelings. The body is a feeling machine, containing joy, anger, fear, sadness, and dozens of other emotional experiences. If we are not acquainted with our feelings, they can run us. If we are willing to experience feelings and be at home with them, we can feel a deep sense of mastery over ourselves.

This activity is like the game we used to play called "Chinese Firedrill"; when our car came to a halt at a stoplight, everyone would jump out, run around the car, and then jump back in, changing seats. In this experiment, feeling changes are introduced as rapidly as that.

Music is particularly useful for this activity. Some suggestions to convey various moods follow (for others, consult the list in the *References*).

Exploring feelings through movement

- *Joy*: Holst, *The Planets*, "Mars"; Reich, *Music for 18 Musicians*; Rampal and Bolling, *Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano*
- *Anger*: Olatunji, *Drums of Passion*; Orff, *Carmina Burana*; Eno and Byrne, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*
- *Sadness*: Rodrigo, *Concierto de Aranjuez*, "Adagio"; Messiaen, *Quartet for the End of Time*; Hadjidakis, *Lilacs Out of the Dead Land*
- *Fear*: Wolff and Hennings, *Tibetan Bells I and II*; Deuter, *Haleakala*, "Haleakala Mystery."

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE GROUP Choose a place in the room. Each time I play music, let your arms and legs paint a feeling in the air around you. When the music stops, become very still and open inside. We will switch from one feeling to another quite rapidly.

Rest for a moment in your place . . . let your body become very still.

(Begin sad music.)

Let your toes and feet move sadly through the room, shuffling along . . . sighing feet, sad feet. Let sadness creep up through you until all of you is sad. Let your arms move in a sad way.

(Continue for 1–2 minutes.)

Now come to rest.

(Begin angry music.)

Exploring feelings through movement

Let your fingers and hands move angrily . . . grumbling, irritated, mad hands. Now let the rest of you be mad, too. Be a big, puffing locomotive of anger.

(Continue for 1 minute.)

Now come to rest.

(Begin scared music.)

Now let yourself be scared. Find a way to make your body scared . . . hide it from the world . . . hold your breath high up under your shoulders and move scared . . . creep around the room.

(Continue for 1 minute.)

Now come to rest.

(Begin joyful music.)

Now let everything be *great!* Let your head move as though you just found out you were going to Disneyland. Let your whole body be happy. Celebrate yourself!

(Continue 1–2 minutes or longer.)

Now come to rest.

VARIATIONS Try expressing different feelings:

- *Irritation:* Move as though a fly keeps landing on you.
- *Confusion:* Move your body in three directions at once, as though each is pulling on you. Let the feeling of confusion move through you.

Exploring feelings through movement

- *Depression*: Let your chest move as though a heavy weight is pulling it down to the floor. Drag yourself along, heavy and depressed.
- *Grumpiness*: Make your chin and elbows and fists say "I'm grumpy today," and "don't mess with me."
- *Being off-balance*: Move as though you can't find your balance. You can't find the middle of you, the center place. Let your legs and body keep taking you off balance.

Try different structures. Move the feelings through very quickly, changing every 10–15 seconds.

Use the image of a box that students can come out of moving to a certain feeling. When they go back into the box, it's rest time.

TALKING WITH YOUR BODY—TELEPHONE

TO THE LEADER Learning to listen to the messages of the body can build lifelong sources of discovery and renewal. Health and creativity are based in open channels between mind and body. This experiment is about making friends with our inner selves, and is the basis for more complex experiments we shall do with feelings.

Try this experiment with lights dimmed and non-rhythmic background music set at a soft tone to help students relax.

Exploring feelings through movement

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE GROUP Ooze your body down into a place on the floor . . . all the way down. Breathe in all the way to the top, and whoosh, all at once breathe out through your mouth. Close your eyes and breathe in again to the top and all the way out. Let your body wiggle as fast as you can.

(Hold for 15 seconds.)

Now rest and sink down into the floor. Let your ears become very large to hear an imaginary telephone ringing. The telephone is ringing in your right hand; listen with your insides to hear what your hand has to say. It might say, "I'm wiggly and excited"; it might say, "I'm tired and want to hold something." Let it begin to move just the way it wants to move. Moving is one way your body talks to you.

Now let the telephone ring in your left foot. Pick up the phone by letting your foot move *just the way it feels* . . . listen with all of you as your foot talks . . . big movements . . . tiny movements . . . the way your foot is right now.

Now let the telephone ring where your body feels most tight. What does this tight place have to say? Let your body listen to the way the tight place wants to move. Ask yourself what you need, and listen to the moving.

Let the telephone ring someplace in your body, wherever you hear it. Does it ring very loudly, or can you barely hear it? Allow that part to talk to you, to say anything it wishes.

Now rest and take a moment to remember whether your body needs anything from you. Take a breath that

Exploring feelings through movement

says, I love you; I'm willing to talk with you. When you feel awake and alert, open your eyes, stretch, and get up.

VARIATIONS Let the telephone ring in different body parts: back of the neck, eyelids, ankles, behind the knees, belly, inside the elbow.

Let the telephone ring in a part of your body where you feel sad . . . in your most relaxed part . . . in a part of you that you really like . . . where you feel confused.

After a little practice, students can do this seated at their desks as well as lying down. This experiment is a good warm-up before going on to other movement exploration.

FINDING THE YES AND NO PLACES

TO THE LEADER Knowing what we like and dislike, what we most deeply want and don't want, is part of *metalearning*, learning about how we learn. Taking responsibility can be vital and exciting when we can identify impulses that are truest to our deepest nature. In this experiment, we've found that saying no often opens the possibility of saying yes.

This experiment can be quite noisy.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE GROUP Find your place in a circle. Take a moment to look around and see everyone. We're going to take turns saying no, listening to all the different ways we say no. Say a big no. I'll begin.

Exploring feelings through movement

(Make eye contact with each person as he or she says no.)

Now let's go around again. This time, let your arms and legs and face say no along with your voice. Make it *bigger* than everyday.

(Go around the circle a couple of times in quick succession.)

Pause a moment and notice your body. Now move around the room, repeating no in all the ways you can, and feel where the no starts in you. If you see someone else's no that looks like fun, try it on too. Where is your no place?

(Continue for 2-3 minutes.)

Now quickly find a partner and stand facing each other. Take turns letting your whole body say no to each other. Let your body be a big drum that booms no!

(Continue for 1-2 minutes.)

Now keep saying no, but without words. Take turns letting no out your fingers and back and feet.

(1-2 minutes.)

Now one of you keep saying no with your body and the other one start saying yes with your body. A yes-no conversation. Say yes just as big as you said no.

(2 minutes.)

Now switch. If you were saying yes, now be a huge no. If you were no, begin finding your yes place.

Exploring feelings through movement

(1–2 minutes.)

Everyone now move around the room again saying yes, sometimes out loud and sometimes just with your body. Where is that place in you that feels, “All right! Go for it!”? Your feeling good about yourself place? Let the movement start there.

(2 minutes.)

Come back into the circle now and let’s go around once more, sharing our yes with each other. Let all of you say yes!

COMMENT Discussion of this experiment is often very useful to share students’ insights about which expression was easier. Questions and comments that might come up include: Is saying no bad? I love saying no, but I couldn’t find a yes place; when my partner said no, I forgot about saying yes; saying no was so much *fun*, is that okay?

Assisting students in claiming their internal experience and expression of this fundamental feeling cycle can lead to a deeper sense of acceptance of all feelings and the decisions that emerge from them.