

# Welcome Home: Empowering Our Students Through Emotional Awareness

---

Presenter: Nicholas Daniel Sienkiewicz (he/him)

Prepared for the CMS Great Lakes Regional Conference

Slide Access @: [www.nicksienkiewicz.com/resources](http://www.nicksienkiewicz.com/resources)

PW: sien2021



What percentage of your time do you spend preparing the following items?

1. Planning for content?
2. Planning for methods and materials?
3. Planning for feelings?

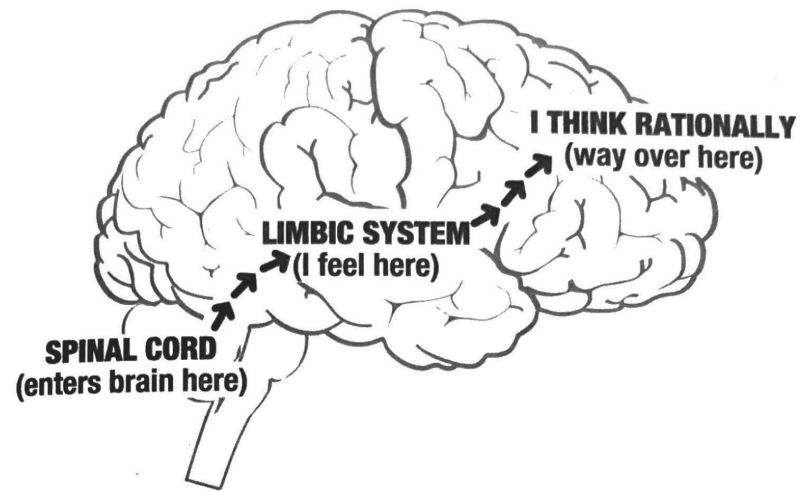


Image borrowed Bradberry and Greaves,  
*Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, 2009

## Why is an emotionally intelligent environment so important for students?

---

- Education
  - “All learning is state dependent” (Jensen 2005).
  - Amygdala inhibits our frontal lobe from encoding information (Ven der Kolk 1994).



## Mental Health

- “One in four adolescents report feeling nervous, feeling irritable or having difficulties getting to sleep every week.” (WHO 2020)
- Suicide is the leading cause of death among adolescents (10-19) in low- and middle-income countries. Suicide is the second leading cause in high income countries in the European region (WHO 2015)

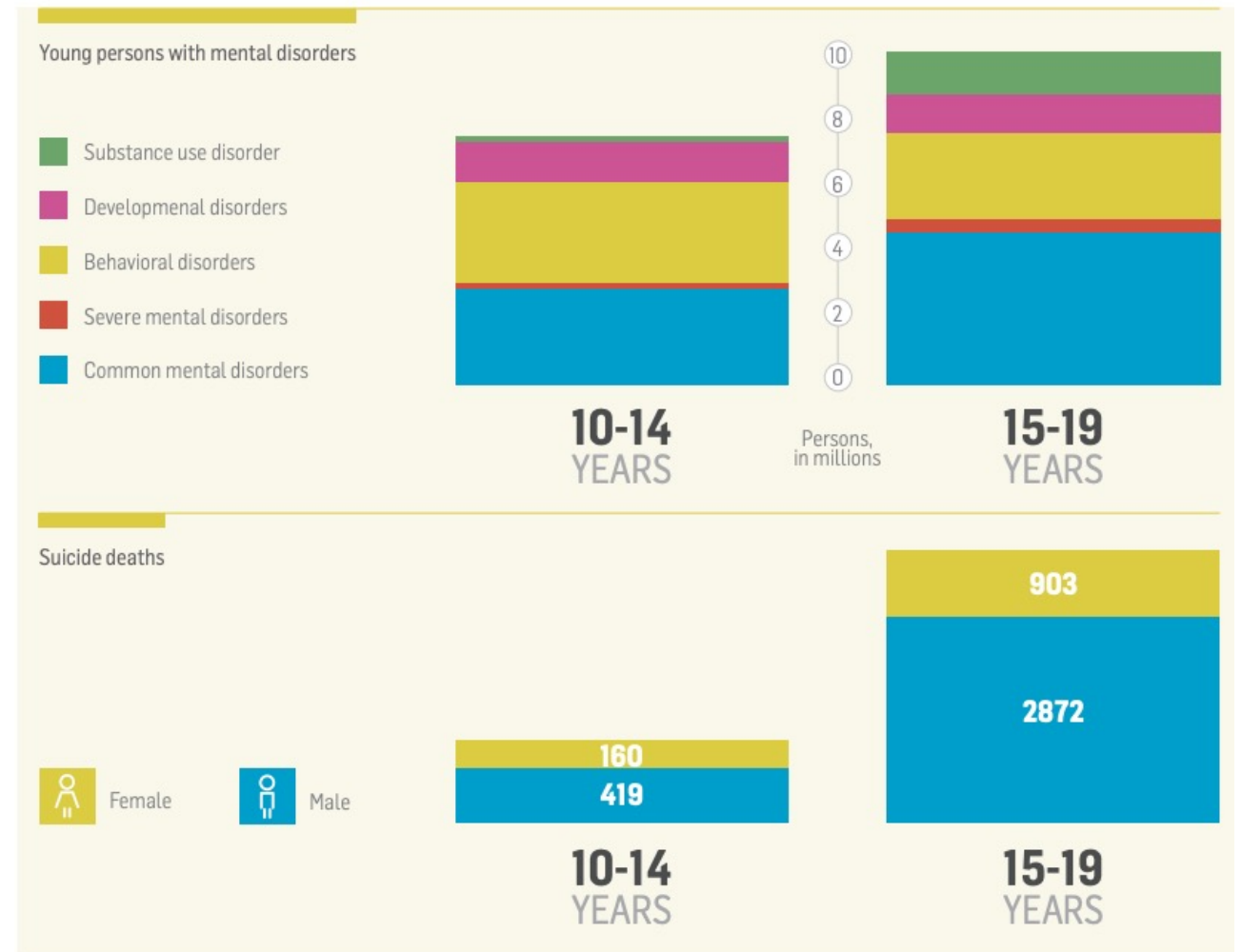


Image borrowed from the WHO, *Adolescent mental health in the European Region*, 2018

# Trauma

---

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)
  - “About 6 in 10 adults surveyed reported experiencing at least one ACE, and nearly 1 in 6 of them reported experiencing 4 or more different types of ACEs” (CDC 1997).
- By taking an emotionally intelligent approach to music teaching, we begin to recognize every student with a trauma-informed lens
  - Meaning, we are less likely to potentially trigger a traumatic experience
  - Recognizing our student as an entire human being



# Why the music classroom?

---

- Music is an incredibly vulnerable place
- Musicians are often exposed to high degrees of criticism and often are more critical of themselves
- Many of the musical skills we teach, most specifically in reference to listening and perception, can incorporate principles of emotional intelligence
- Our bodies and minds are directly connected to our art form

# Emotional Awareness

---

- The ability of an individual to recognize *their own* emotions, the emotions of *others*, and to be able to appropriately manage these emotions.
- Involves four key areas divided into two subcategories (Bradberry and Greaves 2009)
  - Personal Competence
    - Self-Awareness and Self-Management
  - Social Competence
    - Social Awareness and Relationship Management



# Big Idea

---

Through music teaching, we as music educators can craft safe, comfortable, and emotionally intelligent environments that **empower and value our music students**, provide a space for positive coping, encourage authenticity and vulnerability, and develop the most self-actualized musical performance.



# Discussion Question #1

---

- What are the elements of a safe environment?
  - How does the meaning of “safe” change among age groups?  
How does the meaning of “safe” stay the same?

# Safety

- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs\*
- Safety Needs include...
  - Order, predictability, and control
  - This can be both at the individual and group level
  - Can also include emotional security, freedom from fear, social stability, and health and well being
- \*This is recognizing that many of these concepts have been updated and modified



Adapted from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Green and Maslow 1994)



# Creating a Safe Musical Environment: Affirming Identity

---

- Affirming Identity
  - Simple adjustments including pronouncing a student's name correctly, asking/using their correct pronouns, and using inclusive language in class
    - For example, rather than saying "male" and "female" voices, using more inclusive language like Sopranos, Altos, Tenors, and Bases
  - Using appropriate gender-neutral language such as "folks," "musicians," "humans," "y'all," etc.
  - Representing compositional identities of various ethnicities, sexualities, genders, and religions across various musical periods as conceivable

# Creating a Safe Musical Environment: Belonging Cues

---

- Belonging Cues (Coyle, 2018)
  - **Non-verbal signals** that humans use in order to create safety, connection, and future within groups.
    - 1. They are a part of the group
    - 2. Reminds them that the group has high standards
    - 3. Assures them that they can reach these standards
  - These signals generally have three factors
    - (1) energy invested in the exchange, (2) showcasing that the group members are unique and valued, (3) signaling the relationship will continue into the future



# Creating a Safe Musical Environment: Belonging Cues (Con.)

---

- Your body
  - Are my arms crossed?
  - Are my muscles tense?
  - Is my posture open/closed?
  - More generally, does my body showcase vulnerability?
- Your eyes
  - Am I making appropriate amount of eye contact?
- Tone
  - An authoritarian tone should be seldom used
  - An overly positive tone may relay as superficial
  - A tone that is playful, suggestive, in a comfortable range, and most importantly *authentic* is key

# Creating a Safe Musical Environment: Language

---

- Feedback
  - Utilize a growth mindset approach to feedback
    - “I’m giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know that you can reach them” (Yeager et al. 2014)
  - Using a suggestive, rather than authoritarian approach
    - “Can we try...?”
    - “What would it sound like if...?”
  - Emphasizing the collaborative, rather than the individual
    - Utilizing “we” instead of “I”
- If the issues persists
  - Ask the students for more information



# Language: Practical Session

---

- Scenarios
  - Pick one of the following scenarios and craft feedback in such a way that would **affirm identity, encourage growth, and utilize a suggestive tone.**
  - In what way might **seeking more information** benefit these scenarios?
  - Might a more *authoritative* tone be necessary? Why or why not?
- Instrumental
  - A particular rhythm in an orchestral movement is continuously incorrect. You have tried correcting the issue on multiple fronts, but to no avail. Although you are encouraging your students to practice the passage, the issue still persists. You're only a few days away from performance.
- Choral
  - The stepwise descending line of an alto passage continuously flattens as they move further down the scale. You asked them to use a kinesthetic gesture (pointing and motioning upward while singing the descending line), but the alto section gave about 15% of their usual energy.

# Language: Practical Session

---

Choral

Instrumental



# Emotional Intelligence in the Classroom

---

- Now that we have some ideas for establishing a safe classroom, how can we begin to incorporate these emotional intelligence concepts into our own teaching?
- For one, emphasizing a safe rehearsal environment is already an *emotionally intelligent* approach to instruction as one is recognizing the emotional impact of the classroom environment on student learning

# Planning for Feeling: Comfortable Enough for Discomfort

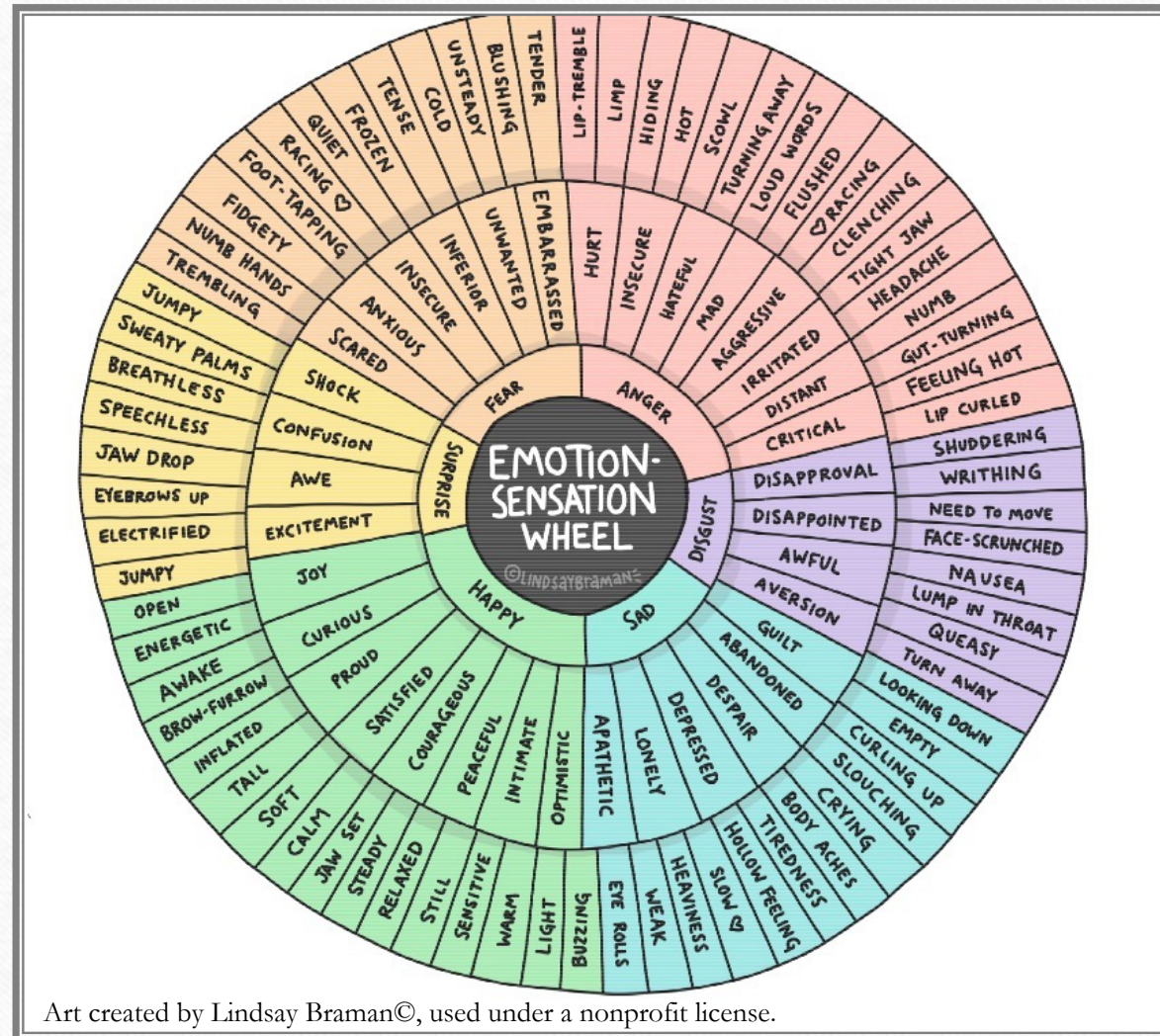
---

- What if we planned for content, methods, and materials that same way that we planned the emotional environment and what might that look like?
- Feelings
  - A sense of safety allows a more comfortable space to take risks
  - A sense of value will empower students to ask questions and see their contributions as worthy
  - A sense of challenge will motivate students to learn and grow



## Planning for Feeling: Picking Some Feelings

- Pick a feeling, or a few, to focus on during instructional periods
  - Ex: I want my students to feel calm as this week deals with particularly challenging/frustrating/debatable content
- What ways might we be able to do that?
  - Play tranquil music at the beginning and end of class
  - Use a quieter more focused tone of voice
  - If students are to move, instruct them to do so peacefully
  - Take moments in instruction for mindful breathing

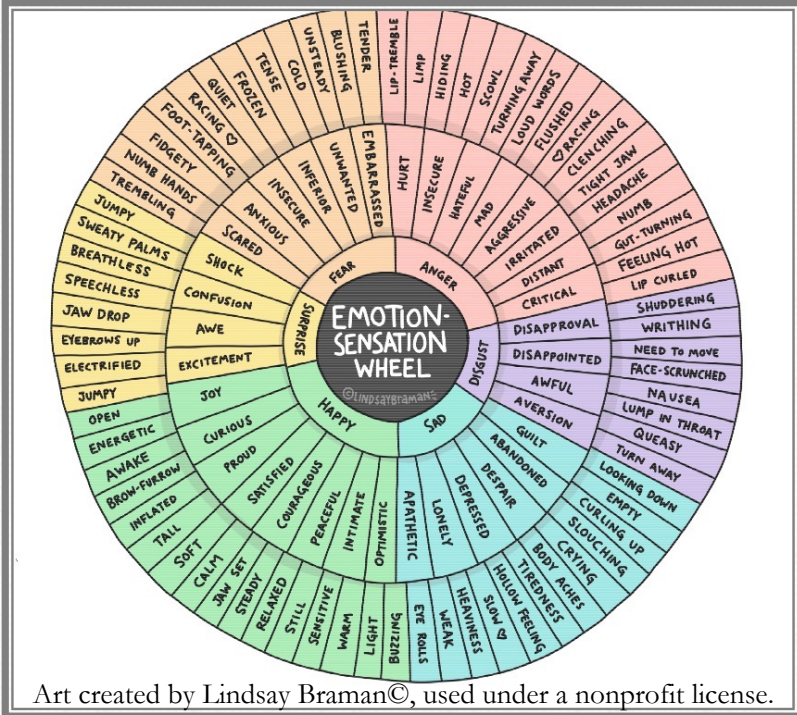


Art created by Lindsay Braman©, used under a nonprofit license.



# Planning for Feeling Activity

- Pick a single feeling (try something you're not as comfortable with)
  - In what ways might you incorporate this into the classroom environment?
  - In what ways might you put these ideas into the instructional content?





# A Model for Emotional Regulation

---

- The RULER method, developed by Dr. Mark Brackett (Brackett, 2019)
  - R: Recognize
    - Acknowledge that you are feeling something and decide to engage with it
  - U: Understand
    - Understand where that emotion is coming from.
  - L: Label
    - Specifically label the feeling/sensation, using a wheel such as in the previous slide
  - E: Express
    - Express it verbally, through writing, or through music
  - R: Regulate
    - Decide how you can approach a similar feeling in the future

# An Activity For Labeling Emotion

---

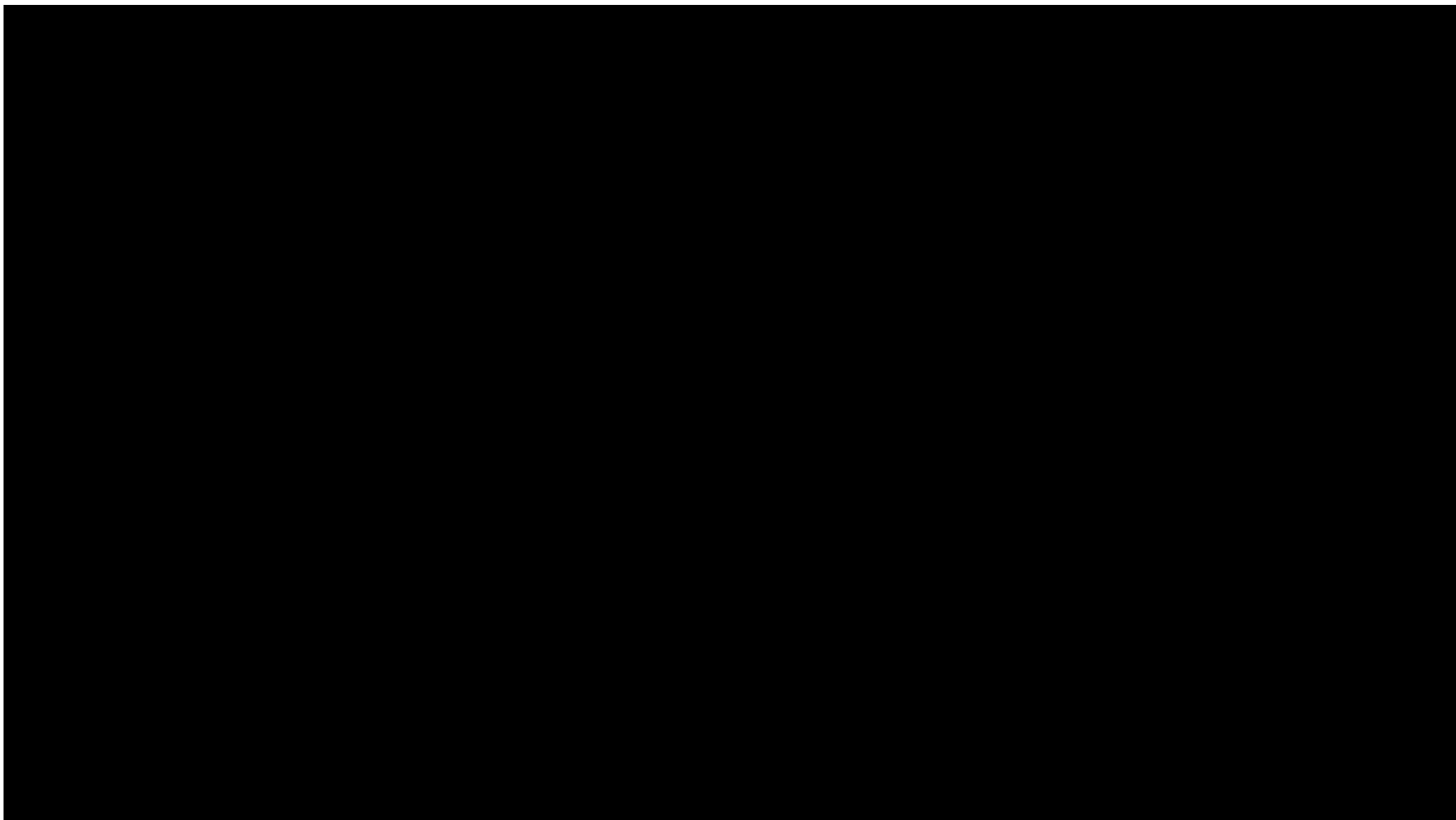
## Activity

- **Watch** the following music video
- **Work** in groups and choose **one** emotion-sensation from the wheel
- **Prepare** to chat about why your group felt that emotion/sensation best represented the music

## What to watch/listen for...

- × Body Language
- × Images
- × Lyrics
- × Music
  - × Speed, major/minor, instruments being used, etc.





# Positive Coping

---

- By modeling emotionally intelligent behavior, students will feel more comfortable with their own emotions
- Through activities, such as the previous music video, students will begin to understand how the process of emotional awareness can be experienced and learned through music
- These activities can lead to greater conversations about positive coping both in the music classroom and outside of it
- “There is always time for feelings.”



# Why?

---

- In order to develop the most self-actualized musical performance, we must create an emotionally intelligent environment
  - It will impact the final musical product, affirm our students' identities, give them the tools to be shame-resilient, create a safe place for learning, and positively impact their mental health
- As the world changes, we must be willing to adapt to the needs of our students in a rapidly changing artistic environment.

“I have learned that  
people will forget what you said,  
people will forget what you did, but  
people will never forget how you made  
them *feel*.”

-Maya Angelou



# References

---

Brackett, Mark. "Part Two: The Ruler Skills," in *Permission to Feel*. New York: Celadon Books, 2019. 71-139.

Bradberry, T. and Jean Greaves. *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*. San Diego, California: Talent Smart, 2009.

Coyle, Daniel.. *The Culture Code*, New York: Random House Publishing, 2018.

Green, Christopher and A.H. Maslow. "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review*, (1943): 370–96.

Felitti, Vincent J., Robert F. Anda, Dale Nordenberg, David F. Williamson, Alison M. Spitz, Valerie Edwards, Mary P. Koss, and James S. Marks. "REPRINT OF: Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 56, no. 6 (2019): 774–86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2019.04.001>.

Jensen, Eric. *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. ASCD, 2005.

Mcleod, Saul. "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs." *Simply Psychology*. Simply Psychology, December 29, 2020. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html#gsc.tab=0>.

"Spotlight on Adolescent Health and Well-Being." *World Health Organization*, 2020. <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/332091/9789289055000-eng.pdf>.

"Suicide." *World Health Organization*, March 4, 2021. <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/noncommunicable-diseases/mental-health/areas-of-work/suicide>.

Van Der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score: Memory and the Evolving Psychobiology of Posttraumatic Stress*. Etats-Unis: Harvard Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, 1994.

Yeager, David Scott, Valerie Purdie-Vaughns, Julio Garcia, Nancy Apfel, Patti Brzustoski, Allison Master, William T. HSSERT, Matthew E. Williams, and Geoffrey L. Cohen. "Breaking the Cycle of Mistrust: Wise Interventions to Provide Critical Feedback across the Racial Divide." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 143, no. 2 (2014): 804–24. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033906>.

# ***Connect with me!***

***Nicholas Sienkiewicz***

***Email: [nsienki@iu.edu](mailto:nsienki@iu.edu)***

***Resources Link, PW: sien2021***

