Art4Wellbeing
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Session 9

Emotional Awareness: Understanding Triggers and Needs

Exploring how images evoke different emotions, recognizing personal triggers, and discovering the needs beneath our emotional responses.

Art Forms Used: Photography / Visual Images | Storytelling (written and spoken) | Reflective Expression

MAIN OBJECTIVE	Increase emotional awareness; recognize that the same image can evoke different feelings; connect emotions with triggers and underlying needs.
TARGET GROUP	Young people (14–30); adaptable for diverse groups.
TOTAL DURATION	90 minutes
MATERIALS	Printed photographs or image cards; sticky notes; pens; paper; wall or floor space; music; optional reflection cards.

TIME	ACTIVITY & TITLE	PURPOSE	INSTRUCTIONS (KEY STEPS)	FACILITATOR PROMPTS
20 min	**9.1 Gallery of Emotions** Warm-up / Visual Exploration	Notice immediate emotional responses; explore the diversity of interpretations.	1. Spread photographs around the room and invite participants to walk among them while music plays. 2. Ask everyone to write an emotion on a sticky note and leave it beside at least three different photographs. 3. Invite a second gallery walk to notice the words others have left. 4. Reflect together on similarities and differences.	• What did you notice on your second walk? • Which image carried the most different emotions? • What surprised you?
25 min	**9.2 One Photograph, Many Stories** Creative Storytelling	Explore how experiences and perspectives shape meaning.	1. Invite each participant to choose a photograph that speaks to them. 2. Individually write a short story or reflection inspired by it. 3. In pairs or small groups, share stories voluntarily. 4. Notice how different narratives can emerge from the same image.	• What drew you to this image? • What story do you see in it? • How might another person see it differently?
20 min	**9.3 Behind the Story: Triggers and Needs** Guided Reflection	Identify emotional triggers and consider needs beneath feelings.	1. Invite participants to identify an emotion within their chosen story. 2. Reflect privately: What might have triggered it? What need might be connected to it? 3. Share insights in pairs if comfortable; no personal disclosure required. 4. Collect general examples of emotions and needs without naming personal experiences.	• What may have activated this feeling? • What could this emotion be telling us? • What might this person need: safety, respect, connection, space or support?
15 min	**9.4 Giving the Emotion a Voice** Expressive Storytelling	Practice naming emotions and expressing needs compassionately.	1. Invite participants to speak or write from the perspective of an emotion in their photograph. 2. Use the sentence starters: “I am feeling…” and “What I need is…” 3. Optionally share in pairs or with the group. 4. Invite listeners to respond with curiosity rather than advice.	• If this emotion could speak, what would it say? • What does it want others to understand? • How can we listen without judging?
10 min	**9.5 A New Perspective** Evaluation & Closing	Consolidate learning and close safely.	1. Return to the original photograph or gallery. 2. Invite each participant to share or write one new insight about emotions, triggers or needs. 3. Close with a one-word check-out or gesture. 4. Thank participants and remind them that sharing is always a choice.	• Has your understanding of an image changed? • What will you take from today? • What is one word for how you feel now?

FACILITATOR TIPS	Create a non-judgmental environment. Do not interpret participants’ images for them. Respect voluntary sharing and privacy. Avoid pressuring participants to disclose difficult experiences. Offer a grounding option if emotions become intense.
KEY MESSAGES	Different people may experience different emotions in response to the same image. Emotions offer information, not absolute facts. Understanding triggers and needs can support empathy and self-awareness.
FOLLOW-UP (OPTIONAL)	Invite participants to keep a visual emotion journal: choose one image during the week and note the feeling, possible trigger, and need it brings to mind.