

Emotion Coaching for Schools

Why emotion coach – and how to use emotion coaching?

What is emotion coaching?

Emotion coaching is a whole-school approach to supporting sustainable emotional health and wellbeing (Rose et al 2015)

Emotion coaching encourages all adults in a school to **look for** indicators of low-level emotions (often reflected through a pupil's behaviour or body language) and to **empathise** with, **label** and **validate** those emotions as they occur.

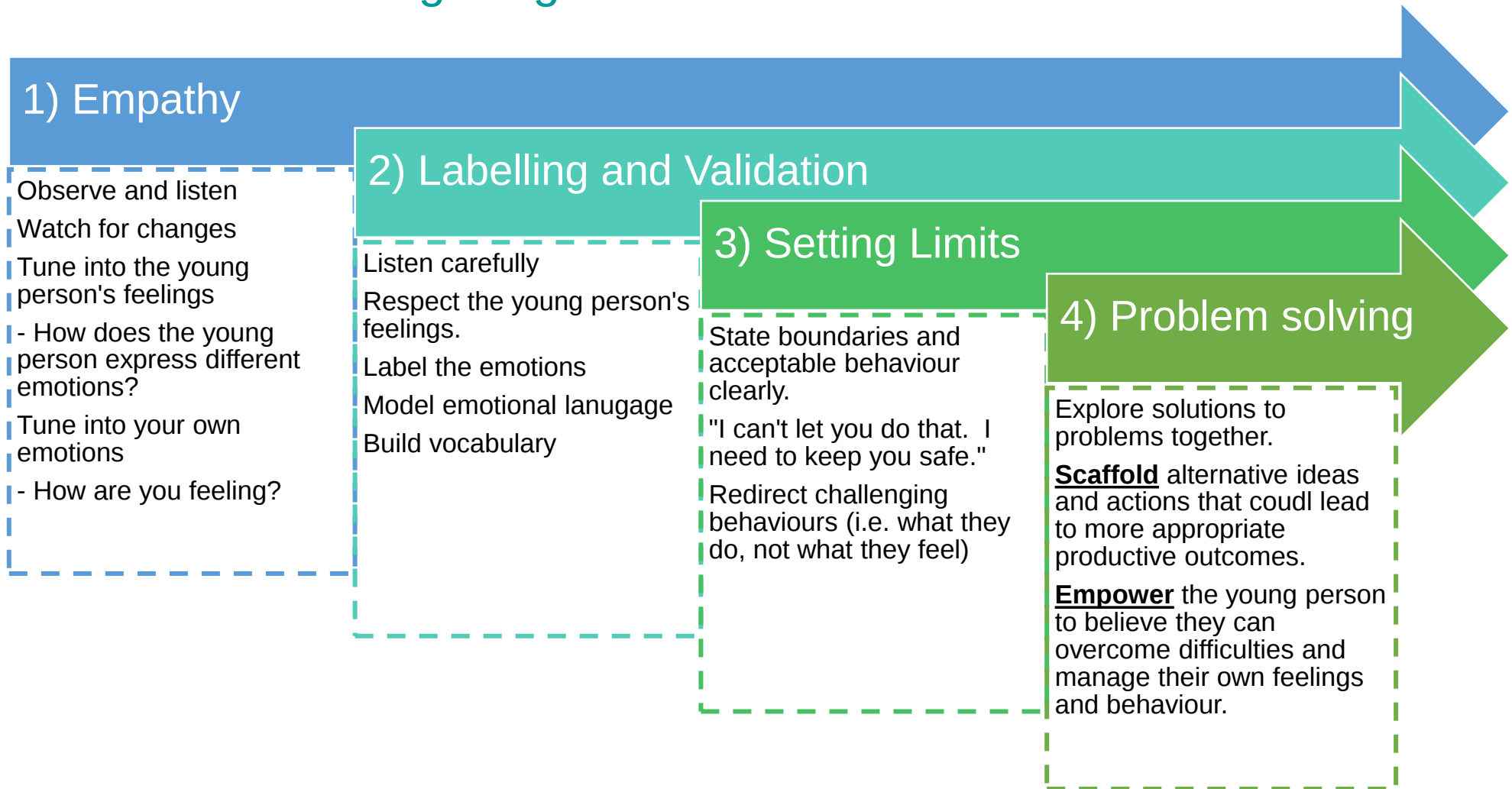
This approach is contrasted with ignoring or minimising the behaviour (and emotions or feelings) or solely applying consequences to the behaviour.

What are the benefits of emotion coaching?

- It is a universal provision and can be overlaid on a school's existing system (Gus et al 2015).
- There is no curriculum, resources to be purchased, timetabling or staffing implications (aside from initial training).
- It is a simple approach – with only four key steps.
- As it is an integrated approach rather than a discrete “programme”
- It improves the quality of teacher-pupil relationships.
- It provides a framework for teaching pupils about emotions and how to handle them.

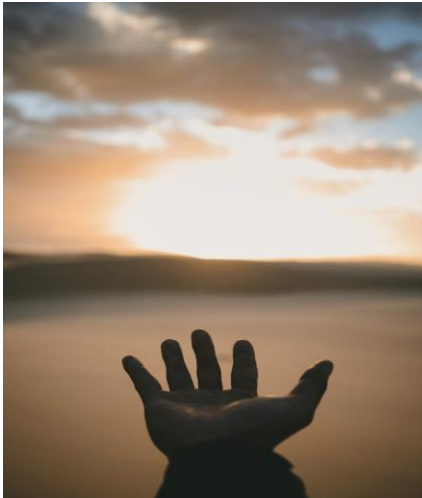


Emotion Coaching Stages



Emotion Coaching for Schools

Example questions and scripts



There's no single way to have an emotion coaching conversation; it will be specific to each young person and situation. However, some of the scripts and reflection points in this table might give you some ideas and prompts for each stage of the process.

Stage 1: Empathy

- Have you noticed any changes in the young person's behaviour, communication, body language etc. What might these be telling you?
- What am I feeling? How is that shown in my face/body language/voice?
- How can I show this young person that I have noticed them and their feelings?

Before you move to stage 2, do you need to sit with stage 1 and allow the young person time to regulate?

Stage 2: Labelling

I noticed that you've left the classroom. I'm wondering if the noise of the other people was too loud for you and you felt a bit overwhelmed?

I can see you've turned away. I wonder if you're feeling sad. That's ok, I'd be feeling sad if this happened to me.

I can see that you're angry. I'm thinking that it made you angry when this happened. That's ok, I'd feel pretty cross if that happened to me too.

Emotion Coaching Questions and Scripts

Stage 3: Setting Limits

I can't let you climb on the bookshelf. I need to keep you safe.

You can either sit on the chair here or go for a walk outside. Which one would you like to do?

This isn't a safe place to be. Let's go inside where it's safer and we can have a talk.

It's ok to feel angry but it's not ok to hurt people.

Stage 4: Problem Solving

What could we do next time you are feeling angry?

What do you think you will do next time you are feeling like this?

How can I help you when you are feeling frustrated?

It seemed like it helped you to have some space when you were feeling overwhelmed. Maybe next time you feel like this you could tell me you need to go outside.

Emotion Coaching for Schools

Emotion Coaching across Childhood and Adolescence

Emotion Coaching is an approach which can be helpful for all of us from childhood to adolescence and even into adulthood. Although the way we speak to a young child, adolescent or adult may change, the principles of emotion coaching remain the same. We all experience emotions daily and experiencing empathy and validation from others helps us to feel understood and to manage our feelings.

Babies and Young Children

For very young children, the principles of attunement are particularly relevant. Attunement is a way of connecting and interacting with your child in a highly responsive way. This involves recognising how your child is feeling, noticing changes in behaviour or expression and adapting your response.

At the simplest level this might include mirroring or repeating words and actions, taking turns, working together, using eye contact, smiles and nodding to show that you are interested and invested. Showing your child that you are emotionally available and responsive can help their development.

Teenagers

Teenagers' brains are still developing. This means that adolescents are still learning, including from their social experiences with friends and family. The adolescent brain is very adaptable and emotion coaching approaches can help to develop effective strategies for managing emotions. Because their brains are not yet developed, teenagers can experience difficulties managing emotions and stresses. For example, the prefrontal cortex involved in rational decision making and planning is still developing. Teenagers may still need help in understanding their feelings and boundaries and solving problems as guided by the emotion coaching stages.

