

# 'GIF' Us Your Feelings

Fun, social emotional interaction at the opening and closing of virtual meetings yields connection with content through connections with peers and presenters. GIF – Graphics Interchange Format – images are commonly utilized in Twitter, Snapchat, text, and other messaging platforms to convey an emotional response through short clips. The following activity demonstrates how educators can bring GIF technology to the ZOOM platform and encourage participants to visually express and relate to emotions.

## Social Emotional Learning Competency:

- Self-Awareness/Social Awareness

## Connection Key:

- Connection before content

## Purpose:

- Provides an anonymous moment to vent feelings.
- [Promotes laughter](#) – smiling and laughter lead to the release of dopamine in the brain.
- Promotes emotional recognition, understanding, and empathy as participants send, view, and relate to GIFs shown.

## Preparation

- Create a free [Google Voice](#) number prior to the activity, and test mechanics.

## Activity

- Open Google Voice and sign into your account.
- Use the 'Screen Share' option to share GIFs that are sent from participants to the Google Voice number.

**Option 1:** Prompt participants to use their cell phones to select a GIF that represents feelings associated with the moment, day, or week and text that GIF to the group using the Google Voice number on screen.

**Option 2:** Create a hypothetical situation and ask participants to respond with a GIF to show a potential reaction (*e.g. You woke up late for school – GIF me how you feel!*)

- Share GIFs so they will show on screen and all present can openly reflect on the GIF's meaning, OR participants can be given the option to talk more about the GIF(s) they personally shared.
- *Note:* Only phone numbers can be seen using the Google Voice platform. This ensures anonymity for participants. GIF messages should always be deleted prior to ending the activity.

For more information and activity resources visit <https://u.osu.edu/4hjjournal/>

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# Mood Meter

How *are* you feeling? Yale research psychologist, Marc Brackett, discusses that we often ask ourselves and others this simple question without giving time and language to answer. The world of virtual connection deprives us of much needed transition time. Coffee breaks with co-workers, walks with friends between school classes, and daily commutes typically provide our brains time to transition between tasks – to briefly disconnect so that we can effectively re-connect. As we travel quickly and efficiently from Zoom-to-Zoom, it is more important than ever to add time to assess our feelings so that we can create space for mindful transitions and connectivity. This activity demonstrates how to use the [Mood Meter](#) to do just that!

## Activity

### SEL Competency:

- Self-Awareness/Self Management

### Connection Key:

- Add time to create space

### Purpose:

- Demonstrates how to recognize and manage feelings.
- Teaches language for labeling feelings.
- Encourages a growth mindset.
- Success Indicators:
  1. Participants can label emotions.
  2. Participants report feeling calm after activity.

- Share an image of the Mood Meter with your participants via Zoom's 'screen share' feature. Be sure to adapt language to fit your audience.
- Explain the Mood Meter colors according to Dr. Brackett's description. Ask participants what color they are feeling:
  1. **Red** - Unpleasant, high energy emotions, like anxiety, rage, frustration, anger, and fear.
  2. **Blue** - Unpleasant, low energy feelings like disappointment, sadness, discouragement, hopelessness, and loneliness.
  3. **Green** - pleasant, low energy feelings like calm, relaxation, serenity, contentment, and balance.
  4. **Yellow** - pleasant, high energy feelings like joy, excitement, enthusiasm, elation, and empowerment.
- Prompt participants to assess their emotions, name feelings, and to permit those feelings so that they can be present.
- Sample guiding statements include the following. Intentionally add at least three seconds between each phrase when guiding participants:
  1. *We are not only doers. We are also thinkers and feelers. Take a moment to stop doing and to pay close attention to how you are thinking and feeling.*
  2. *Think about what you were doing before you joined this Zoom. Was it fun? Was it tough? Was it stressful? All three?*
  3. *Focus on your body – your heartbeat, your breathing, and your muscles. What does your body tell you about how you are feeling right?*
  4. *Now, name at least one feeling you notice. Write it down.*
  5. *We do not decide when to feel, and we know that feelings affect our connections with others.*
  6. *So, give yourself permission to be an emotional scientist! Accept your feelings as information, ask what your feelings mean for this moment, know they are temporary, and learn to walk with them.*

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# Bridge-Building and Resilience

We know STEM activities provide excellent opportunities for 'hands-on, minds-on' learning. Additionally, STEM-related concepts often parallel social emotional teaching. Research shows it is helpful to the learning process when we use hands-on programming to form connections that reach across topic areas. The following activity demonstrates how to explore the concept of social and emotional strength and resilience through a fun, simple bridge-building activity.

## Social Emotional Learning Competency:

- Self-Awareness/Social Awareness

## Connection Keys:

- Hands-on equals minds-on

## Purpose:

- Define the concept of resilience.
- Create a physical example of resilience.
- Discover ways participants are resilient and explore how to increase resilience.

## Materials:

- Popsicle sticks
- Masking Tape
- Scissors
- Straws
- Gap to build bridge over
- Weighted object(s) for testing
- Zoom whiteboard (if Virtual)

## Success Indicators:

- Participants can identify ways they can build their resilience and strength in their daily lives.
- participants can define resilience in physical and emotional terms.
- participants share that they enjoy building and testing their bridges.

## Activity

- Prompt participants to use materials from home OR provide kits for building together virtually.
- Share your screen and use the whiteboard feature to draw a bridge together, stopping at various points to discuss features of the bridge related to strength and resilience.
- After, give participants the opportunity to work on the STEM activity of building and testing their bridges with weights, hot wheels, or other objects.
- Ask participants to share their building progress along the way and use struggles and successes to make connections between the processes of building strong bridges and building their psychological strength.
- Sample discussion questions include:
  1. *Bridges help people travel safely over rivers, roads, and canyons. What bridges do build in your life? Why?*
  2. *Support beams help keep a bridge from collapsing under stress. What are some of your support beams? How do those things/people help you when you feel you are collapsing or stressed?*
  3. *Sometimes bridges fall and we have to re-build. Tell about a tough time when your feelings just felt too heavy.*
  4. *Special materials help to hold each part of a bridge together. Share some connections that help hold you together?*
  5. *How do you 'bounce back' when tough things happen?*

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# Rocks, Pebbles, and Sand

Managing life and stress requires that we learn about how we use our time. Prioritizing life and time often means asking big questions. Who, what, and how should I prioritize for healthy living? What habits or objects can I do without? How do I tell the difference between big, medium, and small importance? The following activity demonstrates a simple and adaptable approach to exploring priorities and managing time.

## Social Emotional Learning Competency:

- Self-Awareness/Self Management

## Connection Key:

- Keep it Simple

## Purpose:

- Define the concept of resilience.
- Create a physical example of resilience.
- Discover ways participants are resilient and explore how to increase resilience.

## Materials:

- Pen or Pencil
- Paper
- Rocks
- Pebbles
- Sand or Dry Soil
- Open transparent Container

## Success Indicators:

- Participants can:
  1. Define priority.
  2. Differentiate between big, medium, and small priorities.
  3. Identify specific priorities that cause or help with stress.

## Preparation

- Watch the [Rocks, Pebbles, and Sand video](#) to review the activity procedure and decide how to modify the activity for your audience and purpose.
- **Option 1:** Gather materials and adapt your space to share your screen and present the activity, via Zoom.
- **Option 2:** Create and distribute kits of materials, or direct participants to find materials at home or in nature to complete the activity alongside you, via Zoom.

## Activity

- Use this sample reflection in agreement with the activity option you choose:
  1. Add the rocks, pebbles, and sand to the container as the video demonstrates, asking '*Is the container full?*' after each addition.
- When the container is filled with all materials, discuss that the rocks, pebbles, and sand represent big, medium, and small priorities. Next, define what priority means. Finally, reflect and share together:
  1. *What are your rock (big), pebble (medium), and sand (small) priorities? Write them down.*
  2. *Tell us about what would happen if I added the sand first?*
  3. *Adding our important things (rocks and pebbles) first helps us stress less about how many small important things (sand) we have. Tell one way you can add your important things into your day or life first.*
  4. *Think about your life right now. What are some important priorities that make you feel stressed? What size are they? When should they be added into the jar (your day or life) so that you feel less stressed?*

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# Let's 'Chat' about...

Common video call platforms allow participants and facilitators to mute their voices, turn off their cameras, and simply use 'chat box' features to communicate. The use of these features can make it feel like connection cannot be powerful in the virtual environment. It is important to remember that Zoom and other video-call platforms also provide users a unique way to make aspects of connecting with others feel less 'risky,' particularly for young people. We know that feeling safe is crucial for genuine trust and connection, and activities that utilize chat box features can create safe spaces for sharing that are not available in-person. The following activity explores anonymity on Zoom and demonstrates a way to use online platforms to cultivate social emotional connection.

## Social Emotional Learning Competency:

- Relationship building/social awareness

## Connection Key:

- Safe spaces create connections

## Purpose:

- Provides a safe space to discuss big and small topics as a group.
- Participants learn to process a variety of topics without feeling social consequences of sharing aloud.
- Promotes emotional recognition, understanding, and empathy as participants send, view, and relate to shared topics.

## Success Indicators:

- Participants share topics in chat with the host and share about the selected topics.
- Participants report feeling safe to share during the activity.

## Activity

- Make sure that the 'direct chat' option is available to participants via the Zoom chat box.
- Prompt participants to think about a topic or question he or she has. Shared thoughts can be a simple questions (e.g. How is everyone handling their college search) or participants might want to share about a deeper issue they or someone they know is facing (e.g. Depression, anxiety, or other health struggles).
- Ask participants to use the 'direct chat' feature to anonymously share topics and questions with you only.
- Save suggestions in a word document or save the chat as a file on your computer so that you can keep track of suggestions made.
- Select a topic at random and present it to the group.
- Facilitate discussion with the group about the selected topic, directing focus to the question or topic rather than the people sharing.
- Allow participants space to share verbally or in the chat.

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