

PURPOSE

To expand students' knowledge of the importance of communicating their emotions effectively for the benefit of their health and those around them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

1. Understand how the brain and testosterone impact our emotions.
2. Understand what certain emotions feel like.
3. Understand why communicating our emotions in a healthy way is the mature choice.
4. Understand why recognizing and acting appropriately on emotions benefits ourselves and the people around us.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- **Lesson 8 teenMEN** powerpoint
- **Worksheet: Where do you feel emotions?**
- **Case Study: Rowan and Daniel**

VOCABULARY

- **Hormones:** Chemical signals that travel in the bloodstream, directing the activity of every system in the body.
- **Hormonal feedback:** When a hormone that has been produced in the body feeds back to the brain to either increase or decrease its own production.
- **Testosterone:** A hormone that stimulates the development of male characteristics.
- **Emotion:** A state of feeling.
- **Communication:** The act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings
- **Recognition:** Acknowledgement of something's existence; identifying something from having previously noticed it.
- **Emotional awareness:** Knowing what emotion you are feeling and why.

- **Habit:** Something you do so often that it becomes natural to you.

PREPARATION

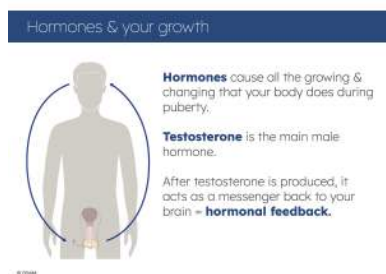
- ☐ Print the **Where do you feel emotions Worksheet** for each student.
- ☐ Print the **Case Study: Rowan and Daniel** to read out loud to students.

PROCEDURE

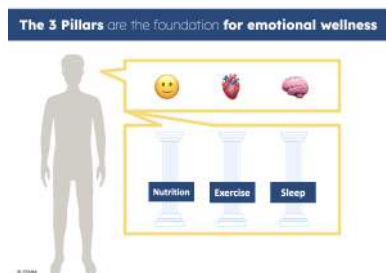
Step 1 (5 minutes): Review hormones & the brain. Introduce hormones & emotions.

Do you remember what controls the activity of every system in the body?

Yes, hormones! You're basically experts now.



Hormones are directed by your brain and, as we learned last class, hormones can actually give feedback to the brain to make it want to act in certain ways, like choosing to do certain things when we are around our peers. This is where we need to practice those habits of self-determination, to make healthy choices for ourselves and others, so that we're prepared for when we feel peer pressure to do otherwise.



We know that testosterone is an important hormone for us and that it helps us in many different ways. When it comes to emotions, testosterone also plays a role. Testosterone is sometimes thought of as the hormone that contributes only to rage or aggression, like the Incredible Hulk.

But testosterone has actually been linked to many different types of emotions. Not having enough testosterone at certain points in our development has been linked to depression later in life. Supporting healthy testosterone levels by practicing the three pillars of health, will help you better manage your emotions overall, especially when faced with challenges.



During adolescence, there will probably be times when we feel like it is hard to control our emotions. Or, we may not know why we are feeling or saying certain things. This is where recognizing certain things about emotions can be really helpful to us.

Step 2 (10 minutes): How can you start to recognize your emotions?



It's important to know that emotions themselves are neither good nor bad. They give us information. It is **what we decide to do** when we are feeling a certain emotion that can have a lasting impact on us, our friends or family, or the people around us. If we are feeling really mad about something and we punch our fist into our bedroom wall, that is going to have an impact on our family (somebody is going to have to patch that hole!) It will also have an impact on our hand: ouch! If we are mad and our fist finds a person's head, then that is going to have a big impact on him and you.

So, how can we help ourselves to deal with a lot of emotions that we might be feeling?
Recognizing them is the first step.

Tuning into our bodies can be a way to name what emotion we might be feeling. Anger sometimes feels like a hot sensation that spreads up through our torso and into our neck, the back of our throat and maybe even out to the arms and hands. Sadness sometimes feels like a heaviness in our chest or stomach. Joy can make us feel light and airy, like we could bounce up and down. Recognizing what each emotion feels like for us can be an important step in getting to know ourselves better.

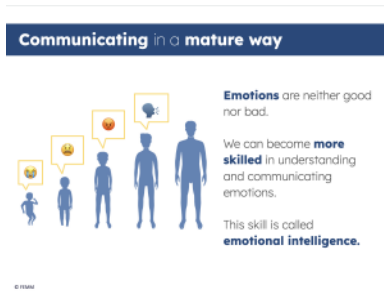
Worksheet: Where do you feel emotions?



Pass out the **Worksheet: Where do you feel emotions?** Give the students a few minutes to try to recognize how they may have felt certain emotions in the past and what they felt like physically.

Step 3 (10 minutes): Communicating in a healthy way + Case Study

Like we said before, emotions in themselves are neither good nor bad. We can remember that it is the way we react to our emotions, and the way that we let others know how we are feeling, that is important. In fact, becoming more skilled in understanding and communicating our emotions is a sign of maturity; it's called emotional intelligence. When we were little, we let all of the emotions we were feeling come out right away. Sad, angry, excited, scared... it didn't matter when we were little guys!



Now that we're getting older, we are starting to realize that it's not okay to have temper tantrums anymore. It is important to have emotional awareness. Being able to recognize our emotions - identifying what they are and putting them into words - is an important skill to build as you grow into mature men. We can get better and better at this skill as we get older and know ourselves better.

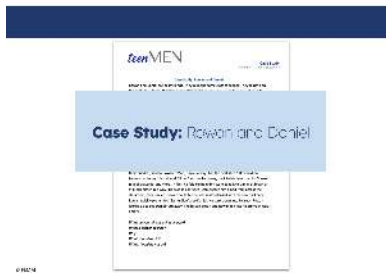
Emotional awareness is a type of intelligence. It's something we can practice and get better at. It can help us to build better relationships with those people around us.



If we are aware of our emotions, we can know when it's the right time to walk away, the right time to speak up, the right time to help someone, and the right time to talk to someone.

Do you have someone in your life that you can talk to about emotions you are having? Maybe your dad, your mom, your grandpa or grandma? Maybe a coach or an older sibling? Let's read a case study about Rowan and Daniel.

Read the following Case Study aloud, or have students take turns reading aloud.



Case Study: Rowan and Daniel

Rowan and Daniel are best friends. They're in the same class at school. They're both on the basketball team. They both love playing chess. They have a wide circle of friends, but they're both really glad when each other is at school, because they seem to get along the best. Rowan's family doesn't have a lot of extra money, but they do fine. Daniel is an only child and he usually has new things. In fact, because he's a bit taller than Rowan, he often gives Rowan his hand-me-downs. Rowan loves getting Daniel's shirts and sweaters.

Today, Daniel showed up at school with a new green backpack. It was the kind that he and Rowan had been messaging each other about for weeks. Rowan really liked them, too, but he knew his parents would never buy him one. They were just too expensive. Plus, as his dad said, "You already have a perfectly good backpack!" That morning, Daniel showed up to class with the new backpack. All the other guys crowded around him. "Wow!" "Nice!" Rowan didn't say anything. He didn't know why, but he felt his head pounding a little bit. He stared at Daniel, smiling while the other guys crowded around him. Rowan didn't know why, but he almost felt like he couldn't talk. When Cole, one of their buddies, said to Rowan, "Man, Daniel always has the best stuff!" Rowan didn't know what to say. He just said "Hmm" and walked away, back to his desk. He didn't want to look at Daniel any more. In fact, he felt like he didn't want to talk to Daniel at break or at lunch either. But why? He was so confused. Daniel gave him a nod from across the classroom, then smiled. Rowan could tell he was really pleased with his new backpack. Rowan quickly pretended like he didn't see Daniel. He sank down into his seat. Rowan looked up to see Daniel turn away. The lesson began and Rowan felt like his stomach was empty.

Note to teacher: After reading the case together as a class, prompt the class to work through some possible issues/problems that arise in the case by asking: *What do you think is going on here? What is Rowan feeling? Why?*

Write answers that students provide on the board. Make sure to let all students answer. There are no right or wrong answers to the issues/problems that students might bring up, so continue to promote answers, even if some seem unlikely, etc.

Next, come up with a list of solutions together as a class by asking: *What should he do? What should he **not** do?*

Again, no possibilities should be dismissed immediately and can be added to the board. Let the students see the spectrum of possible solutions that might be available for Rowan. The best solutions will be discussed in Step 4.

Step 4 (10 minutes): Healthy communication benefits us and those around us

Case Study Solutions

☐ Rowan could talk to someone he trusts when he realizes he feels jealous.

☐ He could go for a walk or jog to clear his head and cool off.

☐ He could _____.

One solution is that Rowan could talk to someone he trusts when he realizes he feels jealous. It's normal to feel jealous from time to time, but just remember that Daniel is your friend and the feeling will pass. It's just a backpack. Another thing Rowan could do is take some time to just think and clear his head, go for a jog to boost those feel- good emotions. He may even find that by the time he's finished he isn't as bothered. *Any other ideas what Rowan could do?*

Some things that Daniel should not do, include: hurting Daniel or stealing his backpack. It also isn't a very mature solution to ignore Daniel. After all, Daniel didn't do anything to intentionally hurt Rowan. Daniel probably doesn't know how Rowan feels. Rowan needs to recognize his feelings and then figure out a way to resolve them.

When we are able to communicate our emotions in the right way to other people, it is a way of showing respect: it demonstrates that we respect ourselves enough to communicate in a mature way, and it demonstrates that we respect the other person enough to explain to them what we're feeling, why we acted like we did, etc.

CONCLUSION

Emotions are neither good nor bad; they provide us with information and we have the power to think and choose how to act in response. If you are able to recognize emotions and communicate them effectively, you will mature into impressive young men and leaders!

Summary of teenMEN Grade 7

The girls in your grade have completed their grade 7 teenFEMM course as you have been working through this course. Although their changes are different from yours, their hormones are also playing a major role in their body and brain development during puberty. For you, getting bigger, stronger, and growing hair are all signs of hormonal health. It is important to remember that all kids go through puberty. You have daily surges in testosterone. You are both going through these incredible changes, and with a little bit of extra focus on making good choices, you can support your body and mind through this process of maturing and becoming young men!

REFERENCES

- Barch, D.M., Shirtcliff, E.A., Elsayed, N.M., Whalen, D., Gilbert, K., Vogel, A.C., Tillman, R., Luby, J.L. (2020). Testosterone and hippocampal trajectories mediate the relationship of poverty to emotion dysregulation and depression. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117 (36) 22015-22023; DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2004363117
- Tyborowska, A., Volman, I., Smeekens, S., Toni, I., & Roelofs, K. (2016). Testosterone during Puberty Shifts Emotional Control from Pulvinar to Anterior Prefrontal Cortex. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 36 (23) 6156-6164; DOI: 10.1523/JNEUROSCI.3874-15.2016