

Specific question/ Brief

“It would be very dangerous if we didn’t have emotions. It would also be a very dull life. Because, basically, our emotions drive us — excitement, pleasure, even anger,” said Ekman, the creator of the wheel of emotion. Emotions are central to what it means to be human, and play a significant role in our daily life (Davis, 2022). It is a spontaneous mental reaction, such as anger, happiness, calm, jealousy, sadness, frustration, etc. The five primary purposes of emotions are summed up nicely by psychology expert Kendra Cherry as follows: Emotions assist us to take action, to survive, strike and avoid danger, to make decisions, and to understand others (iMotions, 2015). Having the ability to identify, express, manage, and understand one’s own and others’ emotions is crucial as it has a huge impact on our interpersonal interactions, emotional health, self-confidence, empathy, and the overall wellbeing. The process of learning emotions includes understanding, identifying, naming, and managing them. “Identifying your emotions and learning how to manage them is one of the most important skills you can have.” said Shahana Knight, a child mental health expert. Emotional learning should start in infancy. It is important for caregivers to start teaching children about emotions at a young age, as neuroscientific advances show that the period between birth and five constitutes a crucial time for both learning and teaching, which must include the development of emotional competence and the growth of self-regulation (Housman, 2017). Hence, for my independent project, I want to focus on the topic of colours and emotions, which explore how colours may be used to teach children about emotions and the appropriate ways of teaching children about emotions.

Colour is influencing almost every aspect of our life, and it is often associated with emotions. For example, red is often associated with anger, blue is often associated with sadness, yellow is often associated with happiness, and green is often associated with calm. Different emotions can be evoked by colours depending on their brightness, shade, tint, or tone. In colour psychology, colours have been demonstrated to influence a person’s mental and even physical health such as increasing blood circulation and adrenaline. For instance, research showed that some people’s heart rates increased when they looked at the colour red (Team, 2012). Also, colour is a powerful tool that we may use as a visual language to help us visualize and communicate our emotions. In particular, for children, colour can make the understanding of emotions more accessible, as emotion is a very complicated thing to talk about and understand. According to university research by developmental psychologists, children connect various emotions to colours. The majority of them associate positive feelings with bright colours like yellow, red, and green while associating negative feelings with dark colours like blue, brown, and black. (Boyatzis & Varghese, 1994) Hence, colour is an useful tool for teachers or caregivers in order to effectively teach children about emotions, which would be an interesting topic to look into.

Context

There are 3 major emotional stages in childhood development, which are: noticing emotions, expressing emotions and managing emotions (Meinke, 2019). Infants between the ages of birth and one are in the first stage, which is when they start to notice emotions. They are exploring the world and observing how everything makes them feel. During this stage, infants show joy, fear, and anger with their facial expressions. Also, they are beginning to learn how to smile to positive input like sounds, touches, and even smells (Mcilroy, 2022). Children between the ages of two and three are in the second stage, which is expressing emotions. During this stage, children are experimenting with expressing emotion in new ways, and they start interacting with others and learning empathy. Children of this age may have strong emotions, but because they are still learning to talk, they have not yet learned how to express those feelings in acceptable ways. Hence, caregivers will start teaching children how to name emotions, as well as how to verbalise it. Children aged three to five are in the third stage, which focuses on managing emotions. They start labelling others' and their own emotions based on their tone of voice or facial expressions. At this age, kids are also prepared to start preschool. Consequently, it's crucial for kids to practice how to manage and regulate emotions as they can't always rely on their parents anymore. This project will focus on the third stage, whose major goal is to educate kids how to understand and regulate their emotions, and the target audience will be children between the ages of 3-5. This process is also known as emotional regulation, which is understanding and controlling your emotions, as well as how you experience and express them (Li, 2022).

The Zones of Regulation is the original framework and curriculum (Kuypers, 2011) that develops awareness of feelings, energy and alertness levels while exploring a variety of tools and strategies for regulation, prosocial skills, self-care, and overall wellness (Figure 1). It categorized how the body feels and emotions into four colored zones, which are blue, green, yellow and red, for the purpose of assisting the children in understanding and learning how to manage their emotions. Blue zone includes emotions such as sad, bored, tired, shy; green zone includes emotions such as happy, calm, proud, relaxed; yellow zone includes emotions such as excited, frustrated, worried, anxious; and red zone includes emotions such as angry, scared, upset, and disgusted. As mentioned, colours help children understand emotions much better and easier. Hence, in this project, The Zones of Regulation served as a significant reference.

WHAT ARE THE ZONES?

The Zones of Regulation is the original framework and curriculum (Kuypers, 2011) that develops awareness of feelings, energy and alertness levels while exploring a variety of tools and strategies for regulation, prosocial skills, self-care, and overall wellness. This curriculum provides us an easy way to think and talk about how we feel on the inside and sort these feelings into four colored Zones, all of which are expected in life. Once we understand our feelings and zones, we can learn to use tools/strategies to manage our different Zones in order to meet goals like doing schoolwork or other tasks, managing big feelings, and healthy relationships with others. The simple, common language and visual structure of The Zones of Regulation helps make the complex skill of regulation more concrete for learners and those who support them.



Figure 1

The final outcome of this project is a children's book and a sticker set. Children's books come in a wide variety of types, and each type has a particular target audience. For example, board books are appropriate for children ages 0 to 3, picture books for children ages 3 to 8, early readers for children 5 to 9, etc. Since the age range of my target audience is between 3 and 5, the most appropriate type of children's book would be picture books, which combine illustrations and text. Hence, the book that categorized emotions into the four colours of blue, green, yellow, and red is designed. *How Do I Feel?* is the title of the book. 3 different emotions are featured in each chapter, and for each emotion, 2 real-life scenarios that regularly happen to children are provided in order to assist them understand various emotions and the reasons behind the emotions they experienced. The book also provided the ways and instructions of how to regulate emotions after helping the kids understand their emotions and the causes of such emotions. Kids can follow along while reading the book, which may also boost their interest and interaction. The colour of the main character changes throughout the story depending on the emotions, and the other illustrations are likewise colourful and vibrant, which helps draw children's attention. Along with colours, typography is an important component in this book. Certain text has been highlighted and designed based on the story to add fun, playfulness, and quirkiness to the book. The book also plays around with repetition in order to strengthen kids' impression and comprehension. Also, there is a sticker set along with the children's book. Children may use the stickers, which featured the book's character, as a tool to help them identify, understand, and express their emotions.

As previously mentioned, it is crucial for children to learn about emotions. According to research, early emotional competencies are associated with greater wellbeing and positive outcomes later in life (St. Olaf College, 2018). There are a few reasons why it is important. First of all, understanding emotions enables children to solve underlying issues. By being able to observe and identify their emotions, they can understand the reason behind that feeling they experience. Children are better able to solve problems and make better decisions in life when they are aware of the cause of the problem. Aside from that, children who are able to identify and understand their emotions are more likely to manage their impulses and control their emotions. They tend to speak calmly or in appropriate ways to express their emotions instead of acting out by throwing temper tantrums, being aggressive, or being defiant. In addition, learning about emotions enables the kids to build better relationships. Children who can identify their own emotions as well as those of others are better able to gauge a situation and respond appropriately. These kids tend to have better empathetic and social skills, which can help in forming relationships. Besides, one of the first steps in raising emotionally healthy children is teaching children to understand their own emotions. Understanding and regulating emotions is crucial for children's emotional development as suppressing emotions can result in stress, anxiety, and even unhealthy behaviours and social withdrawal. Children who can identify and manage their emotions will feel more confident, competent, and capable (Karani, 2021). In a nutshell, it influences a child's self-confidence, empathy, emotional health, the ability to form strong relationships, as well as the overall wellbeing. Therefore, this book series can assist parents in teaching children about understanding and regulating emotions, allowing children to develop the ability to manage their emotions from an early age.

Both primary and secondary research were conducted in this project. An online survey was conducted as the primary research approach as it allows us to collect data by asking individuals directly. This survey was sent out to the parents who have kids or early childhood educators. The purpose of this survey is to find out how caregivers or early childhood educators are educating children ages 3-5 about emotions. The form was opened for 1.5 weeks, and 9 people responded to this. According to research, parents and early childhood educators think it's crucial that children learn to identify, understand, as well as learn how to manage and express their emotions (**Figure 2**).

Also, Additionally, the majority of them found it difficult and challenging to teach kids about emotions (**Figure 3**). Therefore, carrying out this project will be beneficial and useful in helping parents and early childhood educators teach children about emotions more easily and efficiently. In addition, the survey inquires about the feelings and emotions that their kids or students might experience in various situations, and how they help the kids in managing these emotions. The respondents are expected to answer the question based on their personal experiences, and this gave me a lot of ideas for the books' content. Other than primary research, secondary research was carried out to have a deeper understanding and a broader perspective on this topic. Books, online articles, journals, are used as research approaches for secondary research, to learn more about the emotional regulation in children, various children's book genres and their intended readers, The Zone of Regulation, and so forth.

I think it's crucial that children learn to identify, understand, as well as learn how to manage and express their emotions.

9 responses

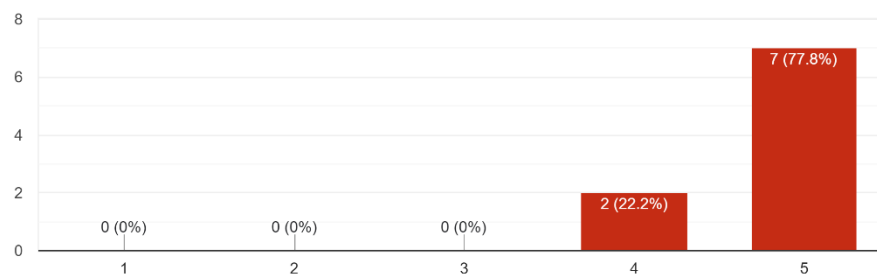


Figure 2

Teaching children about emotions was challenging for me.

9 responses

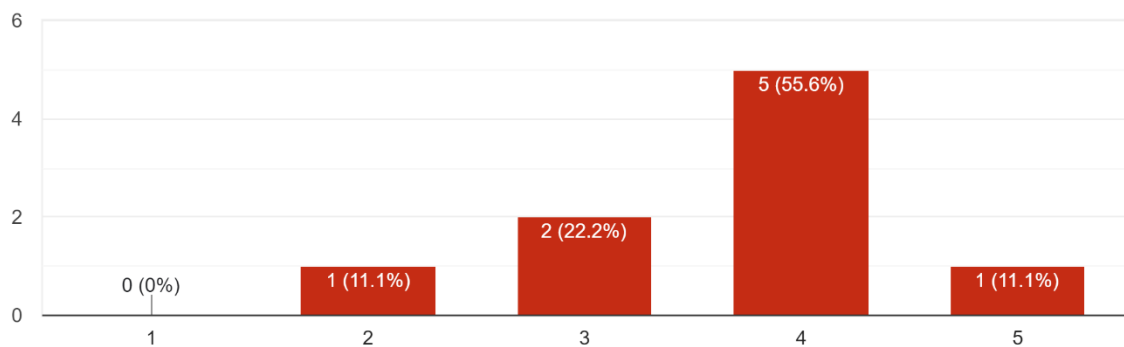


Figure 3

Critical Reflection

Reflecting on the design process helps designers in gaining a broader perspective and allows us to analyze what went well and poorly, learn from errors, and make improvements moving forward. This project's completion was an overwhelming and difficult process, but it is wholly worthwhile.

I've always wanted to work on a project that focuses on child-related topics and makes children my target audience. Hence, the topic about children's emotional regulation was selected as the focus of this semester's independent project. After conducting some research, I realized how crucial it is to teach kids about emotions from a young age. Parents and early childhood educators also agreed with this, but they have also found that teaching kids how to manage their emotions is a very challenging process. Therefore, it was hoped that the final design outcome would be practical, effective and helpful to parents, early childhood educators, and children themselves. Through the process of research and exploration, I looked deeply into this topic and eventually came up with the design of a children's book that is able to effectively communicate my idea and objective, which is to assist children in understanding and regulating their emotions.

Initially, the concept and idea were weak, and the purpose was unclear as I tried to cover too many topics. But after conducting more study, it was ultimately decided to narrow down the scope, and focus on helping the kids understand and manage their emotions. Also, the project was planned to experiment with different interactive book-making techniques, such as die-cut or pop-up books. However, I have chosen to concentrate and put more effort into the illustrations, as they are the main focus of this project. But I believe it would be interesting to incorporate some interactive elements into the book.

Also, the online survey used for the primary research can be done better. The online survey was sent to parent and early childhood educators since they are the ones who know children best. It was intended to gather ideas and inspiration from the respondents in order to make my book's content more approachable to children. Since I don't know many people who are parents or early childhood instructors, it was challenging to gather responses. The survey form was shared on social media platforms, which assisted in collecting more responses, but the period of time for collecting responses should have been longer so that there is more time to acquire more responses as the number of responses so far is insufficient.

Additionally, rhymes and repetition could have been used more creatively in this book. Children's books often use rhymes and repetition to assist newborns and young children learn about words, sounds, and language creation as well as to peak their interests. As a result, this is an area that could use improvement and further exploration. For illustrations, perhaps more detailed illustrations can be tried, such as those with backgrounds and interesting layouts to make the entire visual more appealing to children. Also, it's impermissible to have grammar and typo errors in children's books. A typo was nearly missed before printing, and this serves as a reminder for me to be more cautious. Therefore, it's crucial to double-check and proofread everything before printing to prevent these mistakes.

Besides, book printing also required a lot of effort. Initially, the idea was to create a set of four children's books that categorized emotions into the four colours of blue, green, yellow, and red. However, due to the high cost of printing, I eventually combined all four books into one book. For this children's book, hard cover thread sewn binding was chosen as the binding method. Given that this book contains a large number of pages, it would be overly thick if the perfect binding method was used. Hence, the most suitable method would be the hardcover thread sewn binding. This was my first attempt at a hardcover book, much knowledge and experience has gained through this

project, including how to work on bleed and spine. Even though there's still much room for improvement, I'm genuinely satisfied with the outcome.

Looking back at the projects I did in previous semesters, I can see that illustration is always a key component in almost all of my design work, and through this project, I'm more certain now than I was before that illustration, especially children's illustrations, is what I'm interested in and something that I hope to pursue. It was an enjoyable process to explore and experiment with different colour combinations for children's book illustrations.

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