

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

## Discussion Group Guide



### Step 1

*Identify colleagues to join your discussion group.*

Identify colleagues to join your discussion group and begin recruitment. Decide if you would like to assign groups (recommended for 5 or more) or if you would like participants to form their own groups.

To assign groups:

- Use your school's communication channels to let your colleagues know that you would like to organize a discussion group around the course, *Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress*.
- Ask your colleagues to sign up for the group by a specific date.
- Organize interested colleagues into groups and send out group rosters.
- Try to keep groups at a maximum of 5 people.

If you would like to organize group members organically:

- Reach out to your colleagues and ask about their interest in forming a discussion group, then decide together on how to organize into one or more groups.
- Try to keep groups at a maximum of five people.



### Step 2

*Have a discussion group kick-off meeting.*

Read through the course outline, and discuss to get a sense of everyone's goals and expectations for the discussion group experience (e.g. learn more about emotion regulation strategies, be held accountable for practicing emotional intelligence skills, improve school climate).

- Discuss group norms. Some example questions to ask include:
  - *How will we create an open, respectful, and safe discourse with each other?*
  - *If someone feels uncomfortable sharing, how will they indicate they want to pass? How can we respond to support this?*
  - *If people disagree, how will we facilitate the conversation?*
  - *If someone feels hurt by a comment, how will we restore our community?*
- Check in with group participants to ensure that they have registered and can access the course successfully.
- Decide on when and how to meet virtually or in person.
- Consider a creative group name!
- Complete the Discussion Group Schedule (pages 3-5 of this resource).

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

## Discussion Group Guide



### Step 3

*Share the Discussion Group Schedule with participants.*

- Share the discussion schedule with all discussion group participants.
- Schedule email calendar invites for when the discussion group is meeting and invite all participants.

\*Please turn to pages 3-5 for the Discussion Group Schedule.



### Step 4

*Hold your first discussion group.*

- Send a reminder email to discussion group participants the day before the discussion group is scheduled to meet.
- Consider having printed copies of the week's *Action Planning Pitstop*.
- Go through guiding questions below. Discuss and record key takeaways in shared notes.
- After the meeting, share your group's takeaways on social media [[@YaleEmotion](#) on Twitter and [@YaleCenterEmotionalIntelligence](#) on Facebook] using the hashtag #managingemotions.

## Accessing the Action Planning Pitstops

The Action Planning Pitstops are resources within the *Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress* course that help learners apply course concepts and strategies to their lives both in and out of school.

These PDFs can be located in the "Looking Ahead" section of each week on Coursera. Open the file and download for easy access.

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

*Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

## Discussion Group Schedule

**Discussion Group Name:**

---

**Participants:**

---

---

---

---

**Group Purpose and Norms:** The purpose of this group is to...

---

---

---

---

We will do this by...

---

---

---

---

---

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

## Discussion Group Schedule

Topic	Date/Time	Location
<b>Emotions are Information</b> <b>Pre-work:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete the "Week 1" of the course</li><li>• Optional: Complete the "Week 1 Action Planning Pitstop"</li></ul>		
<b>Identifying Emotions</b> <b>Pre-work:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete "Week 2" of the course</li><li>• Optional: Complete the "Week 2 Action Planning Pitstop"</li></ul>		
<b>Managing emotions: Action strategies</b> <b>Pre-work:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete "Week 3" of the course</li><li>• Optional: Complete the "Week 3 Action Planning Pitstop"</li></ul>		
<b>Managing emotions: Thought strategies</b> <b>Pre-work:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete "Week 4" of the course</li><li>• Optional: Complete the "Week 4 Action Planning Pitstop"</li></ul>		

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

## Discussion Group Guide

Topic	Date/Time	Location
<b>Becoming a culturally responsive emotion scientist</b> <b>Pre-work:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete “Week 5” of the course</li><li>• Optional: Complete the “Week 5 Action Planning Pitstop”</li></ul>		
<b>Identifying others’ emotions</b> <b>Pre-work:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete “Week 6” of the course</li><li>• Optional: Complete the “Week 6 Action Planning Pitstop”</li></ul>		
<b>Helping others manage emotions</b> <b>Pre-work:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete “Week 7” of the course</li><li>• Optional: Complete the “Week 7 Action Planning Pitstop”</li></ul>		
<b>Making a commitment to lasting change</b> <b>Pre-work:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete “Week 8” of the course</li></ul>		

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

*Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

## Sample Discussion Plan

### Week 1

---

#### Pre-work:

- Complete “Week 1” of the course
- Optional: Complete the “Week 1 Action Planning Pitstop”

#### Discussion:

This week we learned that emotions are information. When we understand what they are telling us, they can be extremely useful. Emotions affect:

- Attention, memory, and learning
- Decision making
- Relationships
- Physical and mental health
- Creativity and performance

Collaborate with your group to come up with a list of emotion words for how your students and colleagues might be feeling this school year. Then, for each word, discuss how that feeling might affect these capacities (attention, memory, and learning; decision making; relationships; physical and mental health; creativity and performance) for both students and faculty/staff.

- How can we be more aware of the ways in which the spectrum of emotions that we and our students experience impact how we thrive together at school?

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

*Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

## Sample Discussion Plan

### Week 2

---

#### Pre-work:

- Complete “Week 2” of the course
- Optional: Complete the “Week 2 Action Planning Pitstop”

#### Discussion:

Week 2 focused on how we can identify our own emotions, which is an essential first step to building emotional intelligence. The Mood Meter is a tool to help us build better self-awareness to identify our emotions and use more precise language to label our emotions. On the x-axis, we measure “pleasantness”, and on the y-axis, we measure “energy.” When we cross pleasantness and energy, this creates the four quadrants; yellow, red, blue, and green. Each of the quadrants represents different emotions.

#### With your group:

- Think of 4 or 5 feeling words for each of the four quadrants on the Mood Meter (yellow, red, blue, and green).
- Consider how these words relate to each other in terms of pleasantness and energy.
- Consider the cause of each feeling (e.g., anger is caused by perceived injustice; frustration by a blocked goal.)
- To close the session, reflect on the activity. What new knowledge or questions arose?

After identifying our emotions and their causes, we can tap into strategies for managing how we feel. These strategies will vary depending on the degree of pleasantness and energy we are experiencing, and are discussed in upcoming sections of the course.

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

*Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

## Sample Discussion Plan

### Week 3

---

#### Pre-work:

- Complete “Week 3” of the course
- Optional: Complete the “Week 3 Action Planning Pitstop”

#### Discussion:

This week was all about exploring and reflecting on a series of "action strategies" to help us manage our emotions in healthy, productive ways. The course mentions, “Managing our emotions is not about suppressing them, controlling them, or conforming to someone else’s idea about what we should do or feel. It’s not just about calming down. We manage emotions so that we can think clearly, make the best decisions, form and maintain healthy relationships, and experience well-being.”

- What does healthy emotion management look like? In students? In faculty/staff?
- What are some barriers to healthy emotion management in ourselves and our students?

How might the way we manage our emotions affect our ability to teach and manage a classroom or maintain healthy working relationships with colleagues and students?

Experiencing overwhelming emotions without being able to manage them well can have negative effects on our physical and mental health, our relationships, and our performance in and out of school. While the goal isn't to experience pleasant emotions all the time, we often need greater balance between pleasant and unpleasant emotions, and we need strategies that work for us to get there.



# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

*Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

## Sample Discussion Plan

### Week 4

---

#### **Pre-work:**

- Complete “Week 4” unit of the course
- Optional: Complete the “Week 4 Action Planning Pitstop”

#### **Discussion:**

Week 4 focused on “thought strategies,” research-based ways to shift the way we think in order to shift the way we feel. Practicing thought strategies, such as using positive self-talk and reframing difficult situations, actually helps us “rewire” our brains with new neural pathways. The more we practice, the more automatic these thoughts become. But this can be challenging when faced with a lot of stress and uncertainty.

We know that in order to activate a thought strategy, we need to be able to check in with our emotions. To explore this concept further:

- Collaborate with your group to create a list of where and when we could potentially be hijacked by emotions. An example might be at a staff meeting that is running longer than planned, or with a student who is failing to grasp a concept.
- Discuss as a group some of the signs of being hijacked by a stressful or uncomfortable emotion at school or in the classroom. Examples might include changes in physiology (faster heart rate), body language (crossed arms), tone or volume of voice (yelling at a higher octave).

By paying attention to our minds and bodies, and creating awareness about how emotions impact our lives, we can more easily access and activate thought strategies.

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

*Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

## Sample Discussion Plan

### Week 5

---

#### Pre-work:

- Complete “Week 5” of the course
- Optional: Complete “Week 5 Action Planning Pitstop”

#### Discussion:

This week we focused on applying strategies for approaching our own and others' emotions in scientific and culturally responsive ways. We considered common biases involved in identifying and managing emotions, as well as the importance of reflecting on the potential impact of our personal biases on our interactions with others.

The course mentions specific strategies that can be used when working with students. They include:

- Agree on norms or guidelines for safe conversations
- Let students be our guides
- Honor all feelings
- Discuss challenging topics
- Encourage students to work and play in diverse groups
- Model being a culturally responsive emotion scientist

- How do the strategies “honor all feelings” and “all emotions matter” relate?
- How can we leverage student voice to create a more positive learning environment?
- Why is it important to check in with our emotions and the emotions of others when discussing challenging topics?

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

*Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

## Sample Discussion Plan and Guiding Questions

### Week 5 Continued

---

- As the adults in students' lives, what are some strategies we can use to shift the focus away from empathy (which can be based on gut response and be subconscious) to focus on truly understanding what students are feeling and why? What does this look like?
- How can we work with each other so that we feel more prepared to use these strategies?

Being aware of the roadblocks to both approaching our emotions scientifically and responding to the unique needs of those around us will help us to become more culturally responsive emotion scientists.

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

*Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

## Sample Discussion Plan

### Week 6

---

#### Pre-work:

- Complete “Week 6” of the course
- Optional: Complete the “Week 6 Action Planning Pitstop”

#### Discussion:

Week 6 focused on strategies for improving our awareness of others' emotions, especially the emotions of our students. We explored the barriers to understanding others' emotions and ways to improve this skill as emotion scientists.

Given our blind spots and biases, it takes conscious effort to really get to know how other people feel. Blind spots include:

- Failing to notice or focus our attention on the other person in a meaningful way
- Wanting to control the other person's feelings
- Needing the other person to feel a certain way
- Thinking about how we felt in a similar situation and projecting it onto the other person
- Dropping out of the present moment when reminded of our own issues
- Being comfortable with certain feelings from some people but not others
- Being less comfortable with certain feelings in general

Go through the list above and discuss why individuals may have some of these blind spots.

- What are some ways we can become more aware of our own blind spots and biases?
- Are there ways that we can gently nudge others to become aware of their blind spots and biases? If so, how?

Once we can address our own blind spots, we can approach others' emotions as emotion scientists, not emotion judges.

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

*Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

## Sample Discussion Plan

### Week 7

---

#### **Pre-work:**

- Complete “Week 7” of the course
- Optional: Complete the “Week 7 Action Planning Pitstop”

#### **Discussion:**

This week we learned about research-based steps to help others manage their emotions. We were introduced to the concept of emotion co-regulation, as well as a five-step process to support students in moments of high stress. The course states that emotional co-regulation is an “ongoing process between two people, where one person's emotions are continuously influenced by the actions and emotional reactions of the other person.” Because we are social beings, we are continuously influencing how other people feel.

The 5-step process to managing stressful moments guides us through one method of co-regulation. This process consists of:

1. Setting yourself up for success by making sure you and your student are in the best emotional and physical space to have a conversation.
2. Exploring the student's feelings with empathy and as an emotion scientist.
3. Encouraging the student to try out helpful emotion management strategies such as breathing, taking a walk, and practicing positive self-talk and positive reframing.
4. Closing the conversation on a positive note and by making future plans to check in.
5. Following up to see whether the student's situation has improved and if their strategies are working or should be adjusted.

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

*Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

## Sample Discussion Plan

### Week 7 Continued

---

Break down and discuss this process together.

- What strategies could we use to get ourselves, as adults in students' lives, into the best emotional and physical space to have a conversation?
- What does "exploring students' feelings as an emotion scientist" mean? What does that look like?
- What does "closing the conversation on a positive note" look like? What types of things could you say?
- What are some realistic future plans for checking in? Consider:
  - What would be key components of that plan (who, when, how long, etc.)?
  - What are some ways to follow up?
  - How will we measure improvement?

# Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress

*Coursera Course Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*

## Sample Discussion Plan

### Week 8

---

#### Pre-work:

- Complete “Week 8” of the course

#### Discussion:

Week 8 was about bringing everything that we learned together and making a commitment to lasting change. In this group, we have been discussing how we can take what we learned in this course and apply it to our community culture.

- How can we continue to apply the concepts and strategies we learned during this course to our future work as educators?
- How can we hold each other accountable to do so?
- What is our plan for continuing to discuss and share what we have learned?



After each meeting, share your group's takeaways on social media:

[@YaleEmotion](#) on Twitter

[@YaleCenterEmotionalIntelligence](#) on Facebook

Use the hashtag [#managingemotions](#)