

LIC 7 – Social Emotional Wellbeing

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Dr. Anil Teotia (Core Design Team)

Dr. BP Pandey (Core Design Team)

Dr. Mohammad Zameer (Core Design Team)

Dr. Mukesh Agarwal (Core Design Team)

Dr. Charu Verma

Dr. Divya Mann

Dr. Kanwaljeet Kaur

Dr. Lakshmi Pandey

Dr. M.M. Roy

Dr. Neelam

Dr. Sangeeta Choudhary

Dr. Shyam Sundar

Mr. Parveen Kumar

Ms. Anju Bala

Ms. Atuba Seed

Ms. Ila Varma

Mr. Joginder Kumar

Ms. Kamayani Joshi (Core Design Team)

Ms. Kapila Parashar

Ms. Monika Jagota

Mr. Sudhir Rathi



LIC 7 – Social Emotional Wellbeing (For TDCs)

What Is Social Emotional Wellbeing?

Being socially and emotionally well means being able to realise your abilities, cope with the day to day stress of life, work productively and contribute to your community. There is a growing body of evidence that shows *‘a significant impact of social and emotional characteristics on academic success, results show significant correlations between socio-emotional wellbeing, self esteem, social integration and a positive perception of the school social climate, and academic achievement’* (Berger et al., 2011)

With the unexpected Covid Crisis, all of us have been pushed into a ‘new normal’ that we did not choose. We have all had to keep social distance from our peers, friends, and family – and, in many cases, this is leading to people feeling emotionally distant from others. The advisory by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) warns on the effects of Covid 19 on mental health, *“COVID-19 is also bringing new stressors on teachers, parents and caregivers. This can hamper their capacity to provide adequate support and remain positively engaged with their wards. One aspect is certain that COVID-19 will have a profound impact on the psycho-social wellbeing of students, families and teachers across the country.”*

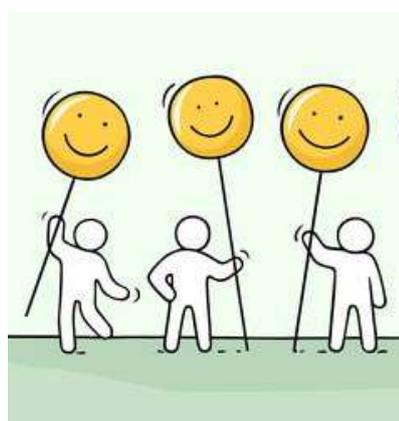
With many of our students having to travel back to their hometowns, deal with personal losses, and make sense of rising uncertainty, a large number of them may also have gone through trauma that can further inhibit their readiness to learn. Here is a helpful video that demonstrates how trauma affects learning: <https://youtu.be/KoqaUANGvpA>

Keeping this in mind, we will be using LIC 7 to focus on the Social Emotional Wellbeing of our students and ourselves.

What Can We Do for Students?

Some of the practices recommended by experts to support children’s social emotional wellbeing, that teachers should focus on with their students, are as follows

- **Provide clear information** – Talk to children about the pandemic, the science behind it, preventive measures and why they are important, and make sure their questions are answered. This can help reduce their confusion and, consequently, their anxiety about Covid-19.
- **Share positive stories** - Children also need to know stories about adults who are working to make things better – so they can feel encouraged. Also share stories of patients who have recovered and are well. Positive reflections have been linked to increasing resilience and can help students cope in a better way.
- **Sense of Belongingness** – One of the most important factors is for students to feel a sense of community and belonging with their peers and teachers. Physical distancing from peers can be a source



of distress for children, thus, it is important that we help them remain connected in whatever way possible.

- **Space to Express Feelings** – Children need a space where they can express their fears, anxieties, and thoughts freely. Avoiding their questions will only lead to them feeling greater anxiety. They must also be given space to reflect on positive things in their lives to promote resilience.

What Will We Do in LIC 7?

In LIC 7, we will be focussing on the following two strategies:

- **Strategy 1: Active Self-Reflection** – Encouraging students to reflect on and share their feelings and experiences related to positive developments during the lockdown, issues they are worried about, and questions they might have.
- **Strategy 2: Student Collaboration** – Small collaborative tasks integrated with lesson plans to help students interact with each other and maintain a social connect while remaining socially distanced - enabling them to feel a sense of belonging.

Strategy 1: Active Self-Reflection

1) Why is it important for students to reflect on and express their feelings?

There is a growing body of evidence that shows *‘a significant impact of social and emotional characteristics on academic success, results show significant correlations between socio-emotional wellbeing, self esteem, social integration and a positive perception of the school social climate, and academic achievement’* (Berger et al., 2011)

One of the first few suggestions for psychosocial support issued by the MHRD is to *‘give children space to share how they are feeling’* and to *‘allow children to ask questions... and ensure they know they can come to you if they have a concern’*. One of the foundations of Social Emotional Learning is to help children learn to identify their emotions so that they can then narrow down on effective strategies to manage those emotions. Additionally, research on resilience shows us that taking time to reflect on some positive developments during difficult times, helps build resilience.

2) What is the strategy?

1. The strategy is simple:

Once a week (*or at a frequency that works best for teachers and their students*), teachers send students a prompt that helps them reflect on one or two of the following:

- How they are feeling
- What they are worried about/Any questions they may have
- Their strengths
- Positive ways in which they have contributed to other people
- Things they are grateful for

- Any other positive reflection
2. Ask the students to reflect on the prompt and write or draw about it.
 3. Facilitate sharing by giving students the option to share what they wrote/drew on a group in which their peers are present, or to share with the teacher directly
 4. Celebrate positive stories and achievements; respond to questions by providing accurate information; and reach out and offer the support to those students who are struggling in one or the other way.
 5. Encourage peers to do the same for each other

(Teachers can plan to run this activity weekly on a rotation basis, so that all teachers get a chance to help students feel more comfortable with them)

Remember!

- ✓ While it is important to give students a chance to express their worries and ask questions, it is equally important to help them reflect on the good.
- ✓ Never disclose any personal information that a student shares with you in confidence unless it requires that you speak to a specialist who can assist the student.
- ✓ Practice active listening. Active listening makes others feel like what they say, matters.
- ✓ Validate any feelings regardless of your own opinion. Never make them feel guilty for their emotions.

3) An Example of How to Use the Strategy

Shabana has been a TDC for the past two years. She and her colleagues have been working hard to stay connected to their students. During the ART meeting, they discuss how only a few students reach out to them in case they are feeling worried or have questions about the situation. During the ART meeting, they also learn about resilience and how being able to identify the positives in hard situations helps build resilience. So, the ART members and Shabana decide that they will create a routine by which students are able to reflect on their worries, questions, strengths, contributions and so on.

They decide that all the teachers teaching a particular class will conduct the activity on a weekly basis. For example, for class 9-C. Shabana will run the activity in Week 1, Aparna will run it in Week 2 and so on. This will ensure that each of them gets to build their relationship with the students, and the students will get a chance to share with whichever teacher they feel most comfortable with.

Each group of teachers then gets together to decide two prompts for each week. The group working with class 8-A makes the following:

Week 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Close your eyes for a minute and think about the current situation. How does it make you feel? Can you express it in words or through a drawing? 2) Think about one thing in the week that made you feel happy. Can you write about it in words or draw a picture of it?
Week 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Write down or draw 3 things you feel grateful for. Why are you grateful for them? 2) Do you have any questions you often think about? Write them down.
Week 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How is your life today different from your life 5 months ago. How does this change make you feel? Write or draw about it. 2) What are two ways in which you helped someone else in the past one week?
Week 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What are you most looking forward to doing once we can all go back to school? 2) Do you sometimes feel sad? What makes you feel sad?

They ask students to send a picture of their responses directly to them or on the WhatsApp group with their peers - whatever they feel most comfortable doing. For students who do not have smartphones, the teachers call them and let them know the prompts. If the students want to share their answers that time, they let them share then. Otherwise, they tell those students that they will call the next day to hear about what the students' wrote/drew. Shabana and her colleagues also make sure they share their responses before asking any of the students to answer, so that they can role model this culture of sharing.

Students took some time to open up but, slowly, the students started enjoying this activity and looking forward to it every week. Learning to open up emotionally requires baby steps. It requires time and efforts. Shabana and her colleagues make sure they reach out individually to any students who seem worried so they can reassure them, they make it a point to listen to their students and let them know that it is okay to feel whatever they are feeling! They also try and respond to all the questions with accurate information, and celebrate their students' strengths and achievements! If they don't know how to respond to a student's questions or worries, they decide to consult each other or the school counsellor before responding.

Success Criteria:

- 1) Plan Beforehand** - Plan your prompt for the month beforehand so that you can cover all important areas
- 2) Enable Sharing** - Give students a few different ways in which they can share their responses - directly to you, with their peers, or they can send you their response and you can share with their peers anonymously
- 3) Respond** - Ensure that you respond to your students, whether by celebrating them, or responding to their worries and questions
- 4) Role model** - Role model the routine by regularly sharing your own reflections, and by responding to the students with empathy

4) Practice & Feedback

Use the following questions to plan how you can implement this strategy with your students:

What are some questions you might ask to enable such reflections with your student? (You can refer to the list of positive psychology exercises in the sources for more ideas - for ex. What are you grateful for? What has the experience taught you?)	
What are some different ways by which students might be able to share their reflections? (Try also thinking about students who do not have smartphones)	
What can you do if you don't know how to respond to a student's concern?	
How often would you like to run this activity?	

Share your plan with a peer and get feedback to help improve!

5) How do we know this works?

- This strategy is based on a technique called 'writing therapy' in which individuals are given specific prompts that they write about for 5-15 minutes.
- A study conducted by Pennebaker, et. al (1988) indicated that individuals who engaged in therapeutic writing experienced more well-being and happiness (i.e. resilience) months later.
- A study published in the Clinical Psychology Review confirmed the benefits of habitually focusing on and appreciating the positive aspects of life on resilience and well-being. (Wood, et. al, 2010).
- A study led by Sherry Hamby of the Life Paths Appalachian Research Center in Monteagle, Tennessee highlights the importance of a strengths-based approach in helping people recover from trauma (Hamby et. al, 2018). Hence, it is important that we help students identify their strengths, contributions, and what they are grateful for.