From “How are you?” to “Where are you?”: Using Pictorial and Word Continuums to Support Students Experiencing Grief

WSCA Annual Conference
February 2020

Why Scales?

Meets Wisconsin SEL Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>CASEL DOMAIN</th>
<th>6th-8th (can easily meet all grade levels)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Recognize and label a variety of complex graded emotions in self and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Self-Management</td>
<td>Express emotions in an appropriate and respectful manner using a variety of modalities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Self-Management</td>
<td>Identify what triggers a strong emotion and apply an appropriate calming or coping strategy to defuse the emotional trigger.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Social Awareness</td>
<td>Provide support and encouragement to others through perspective taking, empathy, and appreciation for diversity.</td>
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Scale Use in Grief

- Provides for better support opportunities
- Opens avenues to understanding and normalization of grief
- Assists one in walking through grief by gaining self-awareness
- Facilitates in meaning-making and continuing bonds
### Why Mindful Scales?

- Fresh approach, opens communication, low risk, versatile, shared language
- Individuals experiencing trauma oftentimes are not able to articulate themselves, Malchiodi, C.A (2015)
- Images lessen communication barriers
- Allows for rich conversation
- Can separate feelings and reactions (Cacciatore, J. (2017)
- Allows for “self-anchoring” to personalize placement
- Can be tailored to needs of individual

### Using Scales in Grief Support

“Companioning the bereaved is not about assessing, analyzing, fixing or resolving another’s grief. Instead, it is about being totally present to the mourner.”  (Wolfelt A, 2012)

### Understanding and normalization of grief

- Tools are not needed to get out of grief, but to withstand it and live inside it as we find ways to lessen the anguish brought on by profound grief. Devine, (2017)
- With grief awareness, one can establish strategies to advocate for oneself. Bottomley, Burke, & Neimeyer, (2015)
- With understanding, comes acceptance of feelings without self-judgement or fear. Gross, (2018)

### Manifestation in the body


### Normal mental/ emotional reactions


### Grief theory/Models

#### Stages:

- Kübler-Ross
- 5 Stages
- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

+ Meaning Making (Kessler)

#### Tasks

- Worden

To accept the reality of the loss
To work through the pain of grief
To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing
To find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new life

*Rando (6 R's)*

Process 1: Recognizing the loss (avoidance)
Process 2: Reacting to the separation (confrontation)
Process 3: Recollect and re-experience (confrontation)
Process 4: Relinquishing old attachments (confrontation)
Process 5: Readjusting (accommodation)
Process 6: Reinvesting (accommodation)

**Needs:**

*Wolfelt*

1. Acknowledge the reality of the death
2. Embrace the pain of loss
3. Remember the person who died
4. Develop a new self-identity
5. Search for meaning
6. Receive ongoing support from others

**Reactions/Styles:**

*Martin/Doka*

Intuitive
Instrumental
Blended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage/Task/Need/ Reaction</th>
<th>Theoretician</th>
<th>Scales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Denial/Acceptance/ Acknowledging reality | Kübler-Ross, Kessler, Worden, Rando | ● Moose - Close up… “moose, what moose?!”  
● Ready to face the day… hiding under my bed |
| Anger/ Embracing the Pain | Kübler-Ross, Kessler  
Wolfelt | ● Dormant volcano… “here she blows.”  
● I got this… man, this sucks |
| Making connections/ Continuing bonds/ Remembering | Worden, Wolfelt, Rando | ● Memory (Three phases of flying kite with Dad)  
● Finding comfort in the memories… too painful to go there right now |
| Meaning Making | Kessler, Worden, Wolfelt | ● Finding peace (light through the clouds) … losing hope (storm clouds)  
● Window wide open… door slammed shut |
| Adjusting | Worden | ● Swishing down the slopes... stuck in a snowbank  
● Newly stitched quilt... unraveling at the seams |
| Intuitive reaction | Martin/Doka | ● No tissues needed… hand me a mop  
● Smiling contently… full on ugly cry |
| Instrumental reaction | Martin/Doka | Cool as a cucumber… about to blow a gasket  
| Ongoing support | Wolfelt | Standing up tall… tipping over, need a shoulder  
| | | Perfect timing… now is not a good time |

Walking through grief by gaining self-awareness

- Allows feelings to be present without self-judgement or doubt in order to move through grief. Johnson, R. & Brock, D., (2017)
- Can lead to more readiness for healing. Cacciato, J., (2012)
- The body will not heal if grief is not acknowledged, experienced, and released. Popowitz, (2018)

Self-Awareness/Self-Management

1. **Notice**: Feelings/emotions/thoughts
2. **Name**: Identify feelings/emotions
3. **Nurture**: What do you need? What are you going to do?

Meaning making/Continuing bonds

- Lessens the chance of complicated grief after a loss by suicide. Pritchard (2018)
- Pursue the meaning of one’s changed life and seek to “reconnect to the life narrative of their loved one.” Neimeyer (2019)

“If art can help us grieve, can help us mourn, then lean on it.” Lin-Manuel Miranda, (2016)

Scales

- Individualize
- Personal connection
- Connect with continuing bonds/meaning making (through the arts, music, memorials, and living their legacy)
- Spiritual/faith-based
- Furry Connections

Considerations and Applications

Considerations

- Interpretations differ (how one “sees” or understands the scale)
- Relativity (what’s going on in the “big picture”)
- Receptions differ (what works for one, not for another)
- Modify for non-readers (non-linear)
- Use manipulatives
## Applications

### Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Happy as a lark</th>
<th>Angry as a hornet</th>
<th>Empathetic language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Gold, chromium, zinc</td>
<td>Barium, francium</td>
<td>radioactive waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Pianissimo</td>
<td>Grave</td>
<td>Lento</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Full-functioning State</td>
<td>Failed State</td>
<td>Peace and Conflict Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Positive numbers</td>
<td>Negative numbers</td>
<td>Integers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Topic-specific

### Specific Topics for classroom lessons/small groups/individual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Where are you? From...</th>
<th>To...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>storming/ Norming: healthy friendships to toxic friendships</td>
<td>Peas in a pod...</td>
<td>...Toxic Waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>digital citizenship</td>
<td>Social Butterfly...</td>
<td>...Zombie Apocalypse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body image</td>
<td>Fancy car...</td>
<td>...Junker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Pick-a-stick

On desk in office or classroom, Daily entrance

## Lesson Plan Outline

### Lesson 1

Introduction to Scales: Notice/Reflect: Explain scales/mindfulness activity

### Lessons 2 - 3

Notice/Name/Reflect: Mindfulness, Plutchik Emotion Wheel, interpret scale by adding emotions

### Lessons 4 - 6

Notice/Name/Personalize/Reflect: Create own scale, interpret

### Lessons 7 - 8

Notice/Name/Expand/Reflect: Use outside of class

### Lessons 9+

Notice/Name/Nurture/Reflect:
- How do you react to emotions?
- What does that look like?
- What are the results?
- What works/doesn't work?

### Evaluation

At some point (sometime around lesson 6) have students evaluate using the scales up to that point, discuss with them, make adjustments as needed
Testimonials:

- “I can clearly see why, as a professional, I need to share this with my clients as well as seeing that I as a grieving person can use it as well.” ~Barbara Rubel, nationally recognized author, keynote speaker, and trainer
- “They really enjoy the pictures scales. They are now asking where they are if I don’t have them out.” ~Ginny W., School Counselor (middle school boys’ grief group)
- I think more than anything, ..., it went from a teacher to student relationship to a friend to friend relationship. It was no longer like, ohhh she’s a teacher, Ms. Cantu does it out of her kindness that is in her soul. ~Jessica H., 10th grader
- “Sometimes when you are struggling, you tire of talking and rehashing the pain time and time again. Using a scale brings simplicity and with that clarity -- the ability to express, share, let someone in without the burden of the explanation.” ~Melanie H., Dealing with profound adversity in her personal life
- I am learning so much about these students because of the scales. Ginny W., School Counselor (all-girl 10th grade group of Hmong-American students)
- “When days do not go as smoothly as one would like, it’s not always easy to express how you are feeling -- both good and sad. Having a sliding scale to more accurately give an answer makes it easier -- and can be fun also. It has truly helped me.” ~Dianne N., Grieving Jim, her husband of 64 years
- “The Scales have allowed me to acknowledge my feelings and to know it is okay to not let the grief consume me. Some days are bright and sunny and I’m thankful for all we have had, and others I want to cry my eyes out.” ~Diane P., Experiencing anticipatory grief for her husband John who is afflicted with dementia
- “The most beneficial aspect of the daily scales for me is the fact that they really make me think about how I am feeling at that very moment. Knowing I would get new scales each day gave me something to look forward to during the dark, gloomy grieving days.” ~Kari M., Grieving Don, her brother, and grandparents
- “I lie how it makes me evaluate and think about my emotional state as well as where I am. ~High school student in Alternative Educational Program
- “I like taking a little bit of time to see how I am doing, or to calm myself down when I am not doing the greatest.” ~High school student in Alternative Educational Program
- “I like that I was able to customize my own scale, it is easier to reflect if it is something I can relate to.” ~High school student in Alternative Educational Program
- “I can show emotions without saying it.” ~High school student in Alternative Educational Program
- “It gives me a good start to the day.” ~High school student in Alternative Educational Program
- “You can understand different parts of your mental health.” ~High school student in Alternative Educational Program
- “It kinda helps me realize my emotional state, and overall its helped me a lot so far.” ~High school student in Alternative Educational Program
- “I find it very helpful to take a couple breaths before I do this assessment.” ~High school student in Alternative Educational Program
References:


