



Helping teachers work with children when they first return to education following major traumatic or life-changing events

My Many Coloured Days

This dance work explores the relationship between feelings and colours. Using a picture book as a starting place, students create and share original movement to describe an experience – perhaps the excitement of being back at school, having been in isolation, or perhaps sharing feelings about siblings.

Level 1 Lesson Plan

Adaptable for ages: early childhood - 12 years old

Resources

- **My Many Coloured Days** by Dr Seuss. If you don't have a copy of the book, there is one being read on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lum83DLPXlw> - but you may want to read it yourself so the children hear your voice.

- Chalk paths drawn on the carpet or outside. Curvy, wiggly, zigzag, straight, squiggly. Students can help with this if needed.

- Enough pieces of coloured card/paper for the students in your room. Try to get a range of colours. Red, Yellow, Green, Blue, Pink, Orange, Purple Brown, Grey ... whatever is available.

Key Dance Language

Body Awareness – locomotor, non-locomotor, shape

Space – pathways

Warming into the work

Play some music and invite students to find ways of moving along the pathways – within physical distancing limits.

Add challenges

- What are all the ways you can move? *E.g. Jump, skip, wobble, creep, glide)*
- Which pathways do you feel like moving low/ high, OR arms out stretched OR fast/slow
- Can you reverse that? *E.g. Move slow and low on a path that you want to skip on*

Exploring Dance

1. Briefly discuss: If the pathways were feelings which would be which?
Ask “**for you** which would be happy, worried, exhausted, chilled, excited...”
Just as in drama, try to avoid only using “glad, sad, mad’ as the only options.

*Tip – if your students don't have a wide vocab of emotions try a Mood Meter from **Ruler** by Marc Brackett 2019*



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An example can be found here:

<https://www.vasseps.wa.edu.au/emotions-matter-for-parents-thurs-19-sept-2pm/>

A TEDtalk about this can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8UhRBwmvd4>

2. Read the first few pages including Red and Blue.
Invite students in pairs to tell each other about a time recently they felt in a “bright red” or “flapping blue” kind of mood.
3. Students then stand up and create a shape for the mood. Initially they may do this as an “acted” version. Encourage them to express this as a shape by making it bigger. Ask one or two students which pathway they would travel on with this shape. If willing, they might demonstrate.
4. Continue reading Brown, Yellow and Grey pages from the book.
5. Have the students help you spread the coloured card/paper around the space. Tell the students that as the music plays, they can move around the pieces of paper, but when the music stops, whichever piece of paper they are beside, they make a shape that shows their mood as they see that particular colour.

Remind them that some people might see blue as sad while others see it as free, but there is no ‘right’ answer.

6. After 3-4 freezes, ask the students to share with a person close by what colour they have chosen, what mood they think of, and a time they may have felt this. For some colours they won’t have an idea – which is fine.

Creating Dance

If starting as a new session, revisit the dance around the card as a way to warm up,

Invite students to stand next to a piece of card and create the shape they most know they have a story for. You might like to model this. It doesn’t matter if more than one person starts at the same colour (but with social distancing if required).

E.g. Make a shape by purple and say, “*I was deflated when I couldn’t see my friends in lockdown.*” OR Beside orange, “*I was thankful to see the sunshine on my walk.*”

Tell students this is a movement sentence.

Add challenges

- Can you keep this shape while you move to a second piece of paper?
- Can you melt from one shape to the second one?
- Can you keep this shape and move back to the first one?



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- Can you repeat this?
- Can you add a pathway that shows how the feeling changes from one to another?

VIDEO EXAMPLE E.g. *"I was deflated at purple with this low shape, but my walk on the street was in straight pathways (model this) and I get higher and higher until I feel an orange mood."*

Students may want to say these aloud as they go along to remind themselves. Eventually take out the voice and leave just the movement sentence.

Sharing dance

After rehearsing these a few times. Have the students share in a half and half share.

For a more performative sharing, clear the paper and have 3-4 students share their pieces. Invite the audience to discuss the **pathways** and **shapes** that have been created and what they mean to the viewer.

Remind the audience that in some art works, the person watching or listening finds things that they think it is about. This isn't a guessing game.

However, at this year level, the students do tend to a) want to tell their story, and b) want to know if they were 'right'. Encouraging a balance of other possibilities is important in arts learning.

Possible Next Steps

- Photograph the favourite shape of each student. Print and have the student add a thought bubble either writing or drawing what they might be thinking.
- Create 2-3 intersecting pathways on a piece of paper. Use the mood colours to the segments created by the pathways
- Use the dance piece as a place to start writing
- Create a playlist of songs that use colours in them
- Create a word wall of feelings that students associated with each colour
- Read other stories around characters managing their mood. E.g. *Alexander's No Good, Terrible, Very Bad Day*.

TO ADAPT THIS WORK FOR OTHER LEVELS

The basic shape of this work can stay the same with some additions.

Add further challenges.

- Create at least 3 shapes with pathways between
- At least one shape requires a different body base (not on feet)
- Vary the tempo of the locomotor movement between shapes



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- For students used to this kind of work, have the pathways cross and change the mood movement of another dancer. In discussion, consider how the mood of one person can rub off onto another person.

Embellish this to suit your students.

DANCE FOR UNDERSTANDING

A FEW TIPS

Creating a movement phrase or 'movement sentence' means students are working in the Developing Ideas strand of the curriculum. Creating within a structure helps those who are new to the work.

This dance work is designed to make space for students to discuss (but not dwell on) having been in isolation, making room for the positive and not-so-positive stories.

Adapt Like all work, the ideas here should be adapted for the age, stage, and nature of the learners in your space.

Encourage students to:

- start in stillness – like a capital letter
- finish in stillness – like a full stop
- to use all rehearsal time wisely by rehearsing and refining their work.

Using the phrase 'movement sentence' can help.

Time Keep adding challenges that use dance language. About 1-2 minutes, is enough for each new challenge.

Sharing A quick way of sharing the early ideas is to create a half and half share. Have half the room bob down where they are. The other half share their movement sentences at the same time. The movers then bob down and the other half share.

Creating Have students explore ideas individually at first. Initially students may try to be in a partner so gently remind them to work individually during this phase. Once in pairs observe social distancing guidelines as needed.

Music For this type of work, find music that is instrumental only to avoid students "dancing the words". Use soundtracks from movies, classical music, background music – but get a range of tempo and timbre. Spotify even has a list called *Contemporary Music that is not Classical*.



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- Warm up** A warm up in dance should be part of the precursor to the work that is about to happen. Try to use the dance language at this time when setting out the task. *E.g. Can you use the **levels in space** differently and move **high, middle and low**?*
- View** There are many pieces of dance online. Share dance often with students. Exposing students to the wide variety of ways people dance lets them into other worlds of expression.