

## How do *WE* live well with others?

### USING CONTEMPORARY ART TO BUILD AN EMOTIONAL VOCABULARY

This resource has been designed by Lyn French to be used with the emotional learning cards from the set entitled '**How do we live well with others?**' Purchase the cards online at [www.inivacreativelearning.org](http://www.inivacreativelearning.org)

The descriptions on the pages that follow identify feelings and emotionally resonant experiences which match artists' images from the set entitled **How do we live well with others?** You can use this resource in individual or group therapy sessions, workshop settings or in the classroom. If you are facilitating larger groups or working in the classroom, you may choose to ask participants to divide into pairs or small groups. Here are some examples of how this resource can be used:

- Cut the pages into strips with each one featuring an artist's name, the text describing his or her work and the related questions. Put the strips into a large envelope or place them text-down in a small box. Your client(s), student(s) or workshop participants can be asked to take a strip, read the description aloud (or you can read it) and then find the card it matches. The questions posed can be explored together and expanded on to include related themes. Repeat the exercise until the end of the allocated time or continue over a number of sessions. You may wish to go through all the artists' work featured over regular sessions (eg. weekly) or dip into this exercise when your client is stuck or, in the classroom/ workshop setting, when you want to focus on emotional learning. You can also write your own questions.
- You may want to suggest to your client(s), student(s) or workshop participant(s) that they make an **Illustrated Dictionary of Emotions**. Prepare blank cards beforehand by cutting coloured or white card to the same size as those in the boxed set of emotional learning cards. Ask your client(s), student(s) or workshop participant(s) to make an image on the front to illustrate an emotion relating to a letter of the alphabet. Then ask them to write descriptions on the back of situations in which one might feel that way and when one could feel the opposite. As a starting point, draw on the emotions and 'felt experiences' highlighted in this resource. You may wish to use more than one card for each letter of the alphabet (eg. A= ACCEPTED (opposite: REJECTED or UNWANTED); A = ASHAMED (opposite: PROUD) A = ANGRY (opposite: CALM) etc). This exercise can focus on traditional art materials or use photography, found images (eg. images from the internet or magazines), photoshop or mixed media. A box can be made and decorated or you can make a small artist's portfolio for them from card and ribbon and decorate the front. If you are working in a group, you can make a collective set by choosing one or more cards from each client/ student/ participant and laminating them or mounting them in a book. You can also photograph them and create a poster to promote emotional learning or frame the images along with their text and hold an exhibition.

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#### INTRODUCTION

We all can all have uncomfortable feelings such as anger, envy, jealousy, anxiety or fear as well as good ones. Experiences such as being excluded, not fitting in, being embarrassed or humiliated or being emotionally hurt in some way are common to us all. None of us behave well all the time nor are we all 'good' or all 'bad'. Sometimes we know when we have stepped out of line or when we are provoked into a hurtful response. At other times, we might be unaware of behaving thoughtlessly or do not admit to ourselves that we have bad thoughts about others.

We can all benefit from becoming more aware of what triggers our strongest feelings and how best to express them so that we don't hurt ourselves or others. Knowing that from time to time everyone has uncomfortable or painful feelings can leave us feeling less alone. Looking at art and exploring the emotions pictures or sculptures evoke helps us to learn about feelings and make sense of our experiences. Answering the questions posed below will help you to build your emotional understanding. If you cannot think of examples from your own life, or do not feel comfortable revealing personal experiences, describe more general situations when people might feel the emotions highlighted.

#### Bani Abidi

By photographing different types of intercoms which can be found on housing blocks or gated properties, this artist might be suggesting we think about who we 'let in' and who we 'keep out' in general. Whether we are aware of it or not, we all make choices about who is in our lives. As well, choices are made about us – some may want to be our friend or have a relationship of some kind with us and some will not. Being part of a friendship group can make us feel **Accepted/ Appreciated/ Valued/ Of Interest**. Even good friends or partners can feel **Jealous / Hurt / Angry or Upset** with each others. Sometimes we are not included in a group or a part of life which we'd like to be. In such instances we can feel an Outsider/ Inadequate/ Overlooked.

- ***In what situations might friends feel jealous of each other, hurt or angry?***
- ***What guides people's decisions about who to be friends with or who to get close to?***

#### Faisal Abdu'Allah

This artist has set up a scene to photograph which resembles a famous painting called 'The Last Supper'. The original painting shows Jesus with those closest to him eating their last meal together before Jesus died. At the dinner is the friend who betrayed Jesus. **Betrayal** means being **disloyal** or **going behind the back of someone** close to us. This photograph highlights the same theme as the man standing on the far right holds a gun and may be about to betray Jesus by threatening him or shooting him. **Betrayal hurts** as it means **trust has been broken**.

- ***Give an example of an everyday experience when a friend or family member betrays another. What feelings come up?***
- ***Now give examples of the opposite – when trust is respected.***

## Roohi Ahmed

This artist has arranged sewing needles in two very straight lines with all the sharp ends pointing outwards like guns or a line of fire. Needles are a household item so perhaps we are being invited to think about everyday ways in which we hurt people or push them away with sharp words or hurtful comments. Being criticised, mocked or teased leaves emotional 'wounds'. We can feel **Shocked/ Humiliated/ Hurt/ Angry**. The needles also suggest order because they are so carefully lined up. When our relationships are carefully managed and 'in order', we are able to **Share** things that are important/ **Trust others** and **Take Risks** by revealing personal thoughts and feelings.

- **Give examples of the kind of personal criticism which can hurt. Now describe how it differs from critical feedback which is something we all learn from.**
- **Give an example of taking a risk in a friendship or with a family member.**

## Francis Alys

This artist has set up a scene showing a long line of people toiling together on the side of what looks like a desert mountain, shovelling sand. Perhaps we are being shown how we can all follow whatever everyone else is doing even if it is pointless or worse, in some way 'wrong' or anti-social. We might fall in with others because of **Peer Pressure** or out of a desire to **Fit In** or **Belong**. When we do this unthinkingly, we risk losing our Self-Agency/ Independence/ Unique Personality. Choosing not to follow the crowd can be unsettling as it might feel as if we will be **Left Behind/ Lose Our Way/ be On Our Own**. However, 'being our own person' can give us **Emotional Strength/ Independence / Self-Belief** and **Self- Value**.

- **Describe the kind of peer pressures we can feel.**
- **Give some examples of saying 'no' or doing something different from everyone else.**

## Sonia Boyce

This picture is of a woman who seems to be holding a group of people above her head. It looks like they could be her family. This could remind us of the kinds of mixed feelings we might have about our own family. On the one hand, they usually **Take Care** of our basic needs when we are young and give us **Love** and **Acceptance**. On the other, there may be times when our family can feel like a burden. Perhaps a family member has **Personal Troubles** which **Worry Us**. This could include problems with drugs or alcohol which is always sign of difficult past or present circumstances which cause pain. Or perhaps a family member has mental health problems which are upsetting or worrying. Maybe someone from the family is in prison and we are confused about this as we still love them. Or a family member might be too **Critical** or **Harsh/ get Angry at Us** too often / i **Unsupportive/ Misunderstand Us** or might **Not Accept Us** for who we are.

- **In 'good enough' families, what might family members get from each other?**
- **What life experiences might leave people with pain inside which could lead them to take drugs or drink to numb the hurt?**

## Tania Bruguera

This photograph shows a piece of performance art. People dressed like police are on horseback, moving around a crowd of onlookers. Maybe the scene is being acted out to make those who are watching feel some of the feelings one could have living in a country where people are controlled more tightly by the army or the police. In countries where this is the norm, people can feel **Loss of Freedom/ Fearful of Stepping out of Line/ Forced to Obey** those in authority or laws they might not agree with/ **Worried about their Future**. Or we might 'read' the uniformed people on horseback as guards whose role is to protect the crowd gathering. People such as community activists, socially minded politicians and human rights lawyers work to **Protect our Rights/ Ensure Basic Freedoms/ Give us a Voice/ Empower People**.

- **Give some examples of everyday experiences when we might feel a loss of freedom or worry about 'stepping out of line'.**
- **Now describe what you believe our basic rights and freedoms should be.**

## Chen Chieh-jen

The two women in this photograph seem to be in a big factory-like warehouse almost buried by a chaotic jumble of chairs. Maybe the artist is showing us that jobs and wealth are not fairly shared in our society. In common with the women in the photograph whose job it may be to stack the chairs, some people have to work at seemingly endless, exhausting tasks for long hours. This can feel **Dispiriting** or **Undermining** and even **Kill Hope**. Societies all aim to create working conditions that give people a Sense of Order/ a Shared Purpose/ a Sense of Achievement. Sometimes, work is repetitive and is not very stimulating but if we develop **Meaningful Relationships** with our co-workers and know that what we do creates something that is needed (like chairs), then we can feel our job has **Purpose** and **Value**.

- **Give examples of tasks or jobs at home or at work that could go unappreciated. How do we change this so that we value everyone's contribution?**
- **What do you think makes relationships meaningful?**

## Lu Chensheng

The dark and gloomy sky provides a backdrop for this picture which shows what looks like ordinary people standing on very high pedestals. The artist may be telling us that we can all **'Puff Ourselves Up'** acting bigger or better than we really are and **Looking Down On Others**. If we do 'put ourselves on a pedestal' like this, we risk being **Alone** and **Isolated**. This kind of behaviour creates **Distance between People**. The opposite is to understand that everyone has the same human rights and is of equal value. However, some people are born into better or more privileged circumstances than others. Instead of judging them as **'Better Than'** or **'Less Than'**, we can see them as **'Equal but Different'**.

- **In what ways do people commonly show off or try to convince others that they are 'bigger' or 'better' than everyone else? Why do people do this?**
- **What do we gain from seeing ourselves as having the same value as others but with our own unique personality?**

## Godfried Donkar

This artist has combined two old photographs to create a new image. The top photograph shows a boxing ring from the past. The image underneath is a historic drawing of a slave ship. Placing these two pictures side by side encourages us to think about what they share in common. Both are about black people so maybe the artist would like us to reflect on how we view ethnicity, class and culture. No one nation has the right to **Dominate** another or to **Exploit** their people. In the past, black boxers, for example, were often exploited by white managers just as white slave owners exploited people from Africa. Instead of **Taking Power/ Exploiting Others** or **seeing others as 'Less than'** simply because they are different, we can **Share Power/ Work and Live Collaboratively and Cooperatively** and aim for greater **Fairness and Equality** between people regardless of age, ethnicity or status.

- **Give examples of the everyday ways in which we might try to take power and dominate our friends or exploit our family's good intentions.**
- **Now describe the qualities it takes to create a fair and just community.**

## Nilbar Gures

Perhaps this artist is showing us how people live in other parts of the world. In the West, we **Take for Granted** having a flat or a house with running water and electricity. It isn't so common in other countries where people may have to make do/ live creatively with very little/ travel distances to get basics such as food or water. This can be experienced as hardship and leave people feeling **Ground Down/ Hopeless/ Stuck**. Or it may feel normal, simply how life is. In such communities, people may be very good at **Supporting Each Other/ Ensuring Everyone is Looked After/ Sharing Together**. Our material possessions and the kind of home we live in doesn't have to define whether or not we can live **Purposefully/ have Meaningful Relationships/ Value our Community**.

- **Give examples of the different kinds of homes or shelters people live in where you are or in your country.**
- **Describe what makes home 'home' regardless of how rich or poor we are.**

## Zarina Hashmi

This image shows a number of framed drawings of floor plans of houses. They are arranged along the lines of a grid but there is one space left blank. This could suggest absence. Maybe it captures a home that has been left behind in another country and can never be visited again. When we move between homes, cities or countries, we often leave behind people. We might **Miss Them/ Be Missed Ourselves/ Wish We Could Return/ feel Homesick** or we may be pleased to be in a new place. The blank space could also point towards the future and homes which we might live in during another stage of our life.

- **Describe what it might feel like to say goodbye to friends or relatives whom you might never see again.**
- **Now describe what it could feel like to move to a new place and start again, getting used to a new home, new community and new people.**

## Margareta Kern

An attractively decorated cake has been made in the shape of a large gun. Colourfully iced cakes are usually made for celebrations. Guns such as the type featured by this artist are associated with war or street violence. It could be that we are being asked to think about where our attitude to violence comes from. Perhaps we 'take it in' through absorbing cultural or family attitudes. Some cultures feel they are **Not Acceptable** to others and disputes between them can turn **Violent**. In such examples, people may feel they are forced to defend their family or their culture's beliefs but can violence ever be the answer? Or maybe we are influenced by films or video games which, like the nicely decorated gun-shaped cake in this image, make violence seem less harmful. But violence is always **Dangerous** and **Damaging**. Sometimes people use the threat of violence to **Terrify** others as a means of **Controlling** them. Violence isn't only the result of owning a gun. Serious conflicts can break out between family members and people might hit out. Managing our **Anger** And **Frustration** is important whether we are part of a group against whom wrongs have been done or an individual.

- **What kind of argument or conflict might lead to physical violence? Why is using a gun or a weapon always wrong?**
- **When adults are violent with each other at home, it is usually because they are hurting inside even if they don't know it. What kind of childhood hurts might lead to an adult resorting to hurting the ones they love? How can this be dealt with compassionately?**

## Carrie Mae Weems

This photograph is of an adult woman seated at the table surrounded by two children and a teenager. It looks like an everyday family scene. All those present are female. Perhaps it is showing us that families take many different forms. In some, the father and mother live together with their children. In others, the father and mother may have moved on to new relationships so family may include step parents and step siblings or perhaps adoptive or foster parents. Some parents are the same gender while others parent alone. There is no 'best' or 'right' family unit. Families create **bonds** and **meaningful relationships** through how they **Communicate/ Show their Love/ Understand Each Other** and **Interact** with each other.

- **Did you grow up thinking there was an 'ideal family'? Give examples of family experiences or celebratory events that show a family is getting on well, regardless of who is in it.**
- **Write a statement describing the ideal family focusing not on who is in it but what qualities the family has.**

## Oscar Munoz

This artist has been filmed painting a portrait on a hot pavement using only a brush and water. The water continually evaporates so he has to start again. He may be telling us that who we are is not fixed. We can keep changing our identity in light of new learning about ourselves and the world. We have the **Freedom to Define Ourselves** and to decide what kind of person we want to be. The picture may also show us how **Memories Fade In and Out Of Focus**. When someone leaves or dies, their memory is stronger or fainter at different times.

- **What makes up our 'identity'? Describe ways in which we might change over time.**
- **Give some examples of the kinds of memories which might come and go.**

## Sherin Neshat

An adult's hands are cupped around a child's in this photograph. This could suggest that adults naturally feel **Protective** towards young children and **Want to Look After Them**. The artist who made this work is Persian but lives in the west. The adult's hands are painted with an intricate pattern that seems to reflect the artist's country of origin. The child's hands remain undecorated. Maybe she is showing us how children born in the West to parents who come from another culture never fully absorb their parents' culture. Or perhaps she is commenting on how we can feel **Torn Between Two Cultures**. Maybe the adult in this photograph is asking herself, what parts of my culture of origin do I want to **Pass On** to my child and which parts do I want to **Leave Behind**? Even if we are not from a mixed heritage, background, all families have their own culture and as we grow older, we decide what we want to **Build On** and what we want to **Let Go Of**.

- *What aspects of a home culture might someone want to hold onto?*
- *What ideals or life values might we want to use to guide our own lives or pass onto those younger than us?*

## Sudhir Patwardhan

This painting is showing us two scenes from family life. There is a lot going on but a common feature of both scenes is that none of the people are really interacting with each other. They seem to be lost in thought or doing their own thing. The painting is titled 'Family Fiction'. Maybe it is showing us how we all have our own version of our family 'stories'. No one experiences their parents, for example, in exactly the same way as their siblings do.

**Everyone is different**. Sometimes we have to **Check Out** what other family members are **Thinking or Feeling** or how they perceive us. We often **Take Relationships for Granted** in the family – we can benefit from opening conversations and finding out more about those we are closest to.

- *What do you know about your parents' own early life or their current thoughts or interests? What kinds of questions could you ask them?*
- *What would you like to tell your family members about yourself?*

## Navin Rawanshaikul

This picture captures a city in all its detail. It shows how cities have a 'life' and a history. Ways of celebrating important occasions are part of a city or a culture's identity. Celebrations or religious festivals **Reinforce our Connections** to the past/ **Strengthen our Shared Values** and help us to feel **'A Part of'** a larger group. Sometimes past rituals support and sustain us while at other times, they may feel outdated and even oppressive.

- *What values, beliefs or religious stories are part of your country's culture or your family's celebrations?*
- *What aspects of the past still feel relevant to you? What feels outdated?*

## Doris Salcedo

The series of photographs making up this art work show more and more chairs attached to the side of the building until they look like they are 'swarming' all over it. Chairs are used by all of us to sit on so they could be seen to represent people. The artist may be using the chairs to show us what it is like to be on the outside trying, but failing, to get in. When we are **Excluded**, we can feel **Left Out/ Hurt/ Inferior** and as if we are Missing out. Perhaps there have been times in our life when we have **Left Others Out** either on purpose or without being aware of it. Often we are drawn towards people who seem like us or who show that they like us or want to get to know us. It is easy to **Overlook** people who are **Different From Us**. We, too, may have felt the **Discomfort and Pain** of being overlooked.

- **Why are most of us drawn to people who are like us? What do we miss out on if we never try to get to know people who are different from us?**
- **What are some of the ways in which people exclude each other?**

## Yinka Shonibare

The sculpture in this photograph is very large. The artist has made a copy of a famous British ship – Nelson's – but rather than white sails, he has made ones sewn from boldly patterned cloth that we commonly associate with Africa. Perhaps he is inviting us to think about what happens when two cultures come together. Sometimes, one culture or nation tries to take power and force the other to 'do things their way'. People can do this to each other too. Relationships that **Share Power** are ones where **Everyone has a Voice/ Each Wants to Respect the Other/** it is accepted that we can **Learn From Each Other** and **Ideas Are Shared**. Often more can be achieved by groups than individuals.

- **What difficult feelings might come up if we try to do things together? What positive feelings result?**
- **What kinds of gains can be achieved from working together rather than on our own?**

## Ai Weiwei

The piece of art pictured in this photograph is made up of thousands of sunflower seeds. They have been created by the artist who directed a community of people to make them by hand from clay and then paint them. The people making the sunflower seeds relied on art and craft techniques that are no longer in use. Perhaps it shows how we used to work in small groups to make what was needed to meet our needs. Nowadays, big factories and machines fulfil this task. Perhaps we have lost touch with **Learning a Craft/ Passing it On/ Working Together** and **Valuing What We Produce** and what we use. It is easy to buy things and soon discard them rather than make them or recycle 'the old' so that we protect our resources and look after our planet.

- **What did your parents or grandparents make that you now buy? Is this 'progress' or is it something we need to think about?**
- **What does 'looking after our resources' mean to you?**



*What did you think of this resource? Please go the next page to give us your feedback.*

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### About Iniva Creative Learning

Iniva Creative Learning is a not-for-profit partnership between *A Space* (arts and therapy service, Hackney) and *Iniva* (the Institute of International Visual Arts). We share a commitment to producing art-based resources and delivering initiatives which promote emotional learning, personal development and psychological growth.

### Emotional Learning Cards

It is now widely recognised that well-being in every part of life depends on successfully building understanding, insight and emotional resilience. **A Space** and **Iniva** have been co-publishing **Emotional Learning Cards since 2008** and they now occupy a leading position in the growing fields of **emotional learning and psychological therapies**.

### Each boxed set of Emotional Learning Cards includes 20 cards:

- **On the front:** visually rich images of a contemporary artwork by a variety of culturally diverse and emerging artists known for their engagement in social or political enquiry.
  - **On the back:** open questions and discussion prompts around the theme 'What do you feel?', 'Who are you? Where are you going?' and 'How do we live well with others?' for group or one-to-one use.
- Suggestions for using the cards in different contexts such as school, home, gallery workshops and individual or group therapy settings are offered in a **fold-out leaflet**.