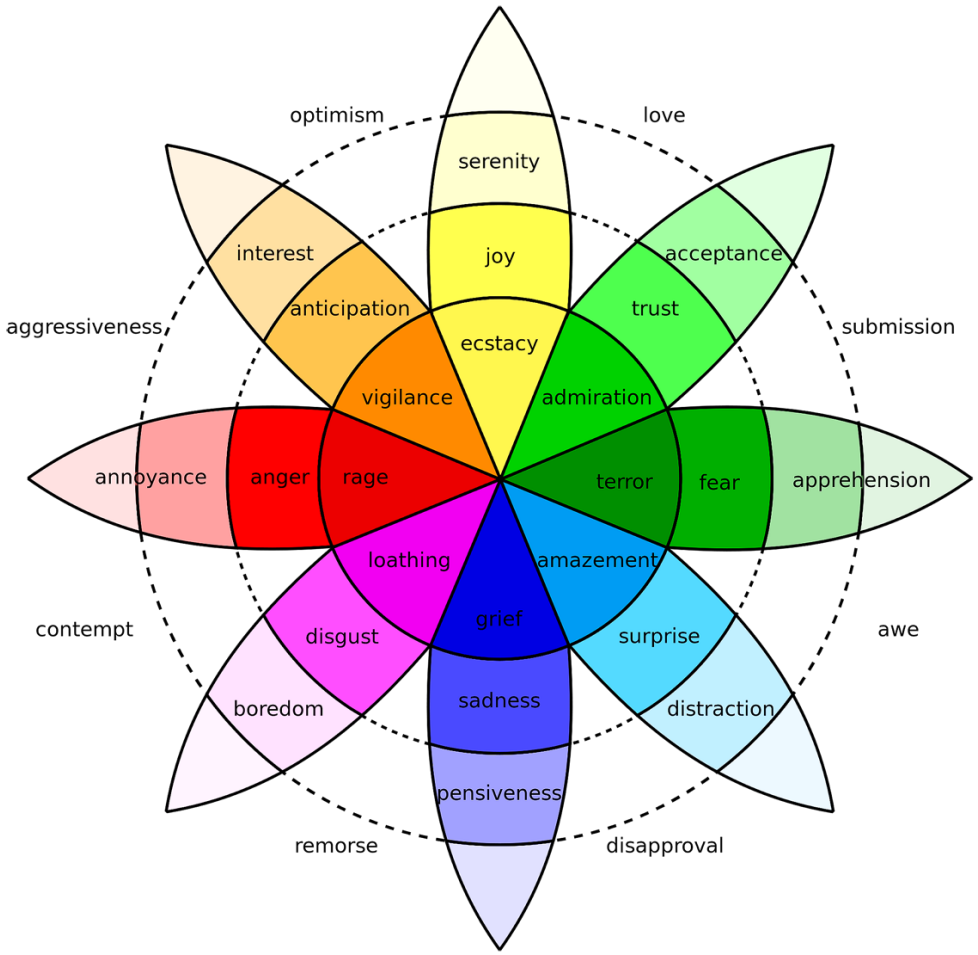
Helping Students Understand Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions

What is Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions?

Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions is a visual tool that helps us understand the complex relationships between different emotions. It organizes emotions in a way that shows how they are connected and how they can change in intensity.



Key Components of the Wheel

1. **Primary Emotions**: There are eight basic emotions located at the center of the wheel:
    - **Joy**
    - **Trust**
    - **Fear**
    - **Surprise**
    - **Sadness**
    - **Disgust**
    - **Anger**
    - **Anticipation**

2. **Intensity Levels**: Each primary emotion can vary in intensity. The innermost part of each petal shows the most intense form of the emotion, and the outermost part shows the least intense form.
    - For example, Joy can range from **Serenity** (least intense) to **Ecstasy** (most intense).
3. **Opposite Emotions**: Emotions are arranged in pairs of opposites, positioned directly across from each other on the wheel.
    - **Joy** is opposite **Sadness**
    - **Trust** is opposite **Disgust**
    - **Fear** is opposite **Anger**
    - **Surprise** is opposite **Anticipation**
4. **Dyads**: When two emotions are combined, they create a new, more complex emotion called a dyad.
    - **Primary Dyads**: Formed by two adjacent emotions.
    - **Secondary Dyads**: Formed by emotions two petals apart.
    - **Tertiary Dyads**: Formed by emotions three petals apart.
    - **Opposite Dyads**: Formed by opposite emotions.

How the Wheel Can Help Students

1. **Recognizing and Naming Emotions**:
    - The wheel helps students identify what they are feeling by providing a range of emotions to choose from. This is especially useful when dealing with complex or mixed emotions.
2. **Understanding Emotional Intensity**:
    - By showing different intensity levels, the wheel helps students understand that emotions can be mild or intense and can change over time.
3. **Exploring Opposite Emotions**:
    - Understanding that emotions have opposites can help students see the balance and connections between different feelings. This awareness can be useful in managing and regulating emotions.
4. **Creating Dyads**:
    - By combining emotions, students can better understand complex feelings. For example, combining **Joy** and **Trust** might help them identify a feeling of **Love**.
5. **Improving Emotional Vocabulary**:
    - The wheel introduces a wide range of emotions, helping students expand their emotional vocabulary and express themselves more accurately.
6. **Facilitating Discussions**:
    - Using the wheel in discussions can help students share their feelings and understand each other better, fostering a supportive classroom environment.

Activity Ideas

1. **Emotion Charades**:
    - Students act out different emotions from the wheel while others guess which emotion is being portrayed. This helps students recognize and name emotions based on body language and facial expressions.
2. **Emotion Journals**:
    - Over a week, students monitor and record their emotions throughout the day. They can identify patterns or habits in their emotional responses and reflect on what triggers different emotions.
3. **Emotion Wheel Walk**:
    - Lay out a large wheel on the floor. Students step into an emotion and recall a time they experienced it. Discuss where they felt it in their body and how the emotion helped them in that moment.
4. **Wheel of Emotions Card Game**:
    - Create cards with different emotions from the wheel – place face down. Add cards that could associate with the emotions (e.g. colours, images, weather, a situation, a physiological response, etc.) Students draw 5 'association' cards each. One student turns over an emotion card – other students place the card they have that best relates to the emotion and explains why. The student with the emotion card chooses which card and explanation they resonate most with. The student with the chosen card wins the round. This helps them become familiar with the emotions and understand them on a personal level.
5. **Daily Check-In**:
    - Use the wheel as a check-in tool when students arrive in class. They can point to or write down how they are feeling, promoting self-awareness and emotional regulation.
6. **Story Analysis**:
    - While reading stories, students identify the emotions characters are experiencing and discuss how these emotions influence their actions. This enhances understanding of emotional impact in different contexts.

Personal Reflection: Exploring Your Emotions

1. **Identify Your Current Emotion**:
    - Look at the wheel and identify where your current feeling falls. Is it a primary emotion like **Joy** or a more specific feeling like **Serenity**?
2. **Intensity Check**:
    - Determine the intensity of your emotion. Is it strong or mild?
3. **Find the Opposite**:
    - Look across the wheel to find the opposite emotion. How does this opposite emotion compare to what you're feeling now?
4. **Combine Emotions**:
    - Think of a situation where you felt a mix of emotions. Use the wheel to identify the primary emotions involved and see what dyad they create.
5. **Share and Discuss**:

- Share your findings with a classmate or group. Discuss how using the wheel helped you understand your emotions better.

By integrating Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions into daily practice, students can gain deeper insight into their emotional experiences, improve their ability to communicate feelings, and develop better emotional regulation skills.