We all have emotional needs. Emotionally we need to feel loved, feel we belong, feel we are accepted by others, and feel cared for and safe. We can think of our relationships and the things we do as either ‘feeding’ our emotional self ‘healthy food’ or ‘unhealthy food.’ ‘Healthy food’ might look like time with good friends or family, playing with a pet, creating or surfing. We feel positive and truly satisfied, complete and good about ourselves.

What do you consider to be positive ‘emotional food’? List six things that make you feel emotionally full and satisfied.

How do people who are emotionally satisfied and happy think and behave?

Often when people feel emotionally needy they opt for ‘unhealthy emotional food’: unhealthy relationships, substance abuse, comfort eating, bullying, stealing, and long TV or video game playing periods. These unhealthy habits make us feel a little bit numb to the world. After ‘unhealthy emotional food’ we often feel depressed, flat and crave the next fix.

What are some of the unhealthy emotional feeding habits you see in yourself and others?

How do you feel afterward?
In any situation there are positive and negative ways of coping with stress and anxiety and meeting our emotional needs. Unhealthy ‘feeding habits’ or coping strategies have a cost in the longer term. Healthy coping strategies bring us a lasting sense of wellness with few emotional costs.

Which of the following positive emotional needs can you identify with:

- Friendship
- Connection
- Understanding
- Acceptance
- Reassurance
- Clarity
- Security
- Learning
- Creativity
- Challenge
- Growth
- Safety
- Forgiveness
- Love
- Guidance
- To be of service

Do any other emotional needs come to mind?

How might you meet these emotional needs?

What triggers emotional neediness in you?

Which of the above ‘emotional feeding habits’ do you want to use in the future?

How could you make sure this is possible when you are feeling down or sad?

When do you feel emotionally supported here at school?

What kinds of things can we do in the classroom to create a sense of emotional satisfaction?