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Book Review

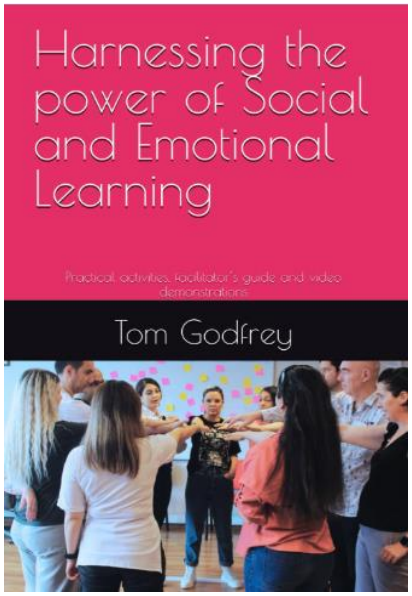
Harnessing the power of social and emotional learning: Practical activities, facilitator's guide and video demonstrations (teaching art and soul)

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Harnessing the power of social and emotional learning: Practical activities, facilitator's guide and video demonstrations (teaching art and soul), Tom Godfrey. Independently published (Amazon KDP, USA), (2024). 55 pages. ISBN 9798334999664



Harnessing the Power of Social and Emotional Learning by Tom Godfrey is a unique book that combines teacher education, drama, and emotional intelligence-focused learning. The book is the first volume in a three-part series titled *Teaching Art and Soul* and provides concrete activities for practitioners who are interested in integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into their classrooms. Both as a theoretical and practical guide, the book is based on the author's experience in drama-based teaching.

The importance of social-emotional learning for teachers working with immigrant and disadvantaged students is highlighted in the book's prologue by Luis Javier Pentón Herrera. Herrera (2020) explains how SEL enhances students' empathy, self-awareness, and decision-

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making skills and states that learners should be seen not only as academic beings but as whole learners.

Godfrey's prologue and initial chapters could be summarized as a call to shift the traditional understanding of teaching. The first chapter, titled *Embracing Social and Emotional Learning: A Paradigm Shift in Education*, suggests that teachers should take on the role of facilitators, focusing more on interaction and participation than on content delivery. The idea that learning is a social dynamic is discussed with examples, concluding that a sense of trust and belonging in the classroom is much more important than the transfer of knowledge.

The second section, titled *Ice Breakers and Getting to Know You Activities*, includes eight fundamental activities (e.g., Trust Walk, Getting to Know You Circles) that can be used to strengthen the sense of community in the classroom. This section provides practical guidance for teachers by explaining why and how the activities can be applied to reduce the tension teachers experience when interacting with learners.

The third section, titled as *The Reflection: What is Your Educational Philosophy?* focuses on questioning teachers' educational philosophies. The section invites teachers to question whether learning is an individual or social process and whether the teacher is a transmitter of knowledge or a facilitator. Therefore, the book defines SEL not only as a student-centered process but also as a process that requires teacher self-awareness.

In the fourth section, the five core components of SEL are defined: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Drama-based activity examples such as Blind Trust, Wall Crash, Zombie Game, and The Knot are presented for each skill. These activities are designed to develop learners' skills in trust, cooperation, empathy, and self-regulation.

The fifth chapter consists of teachers' evaluations of these activities. While games like Zombie Game are stated to improve cooperation and communication skills, some mentioned culturally challenging parts of the Blind Trust activity. In this section, the book adopts a critical perspective, drawing on teachers' comments and offering adaptation ideas for various teaching contexts.

The final section focuses on teachers' roles as facilitators and gives practical guidelines through Video links, safe practice notes, and feedback questions. In this way, the book moves beyond a collection of activities. In the Postscript, the author states that this material, born of face-to-face workshops, is the outcome of a teaching-as-art approach that promotes holistic teacher development.

Godfrey's book is a strong, practical resource that calls for a rethinking of social-emotional learning in the context of English language teaching (ELT). The most significant contribution of the work is its support of abstract concepts with concrete activities that teachers can use in their classroom practice. Each activity is designed around the targeted SEL skill, implementation steps, and follow-up guiding reflection questions. This framework also helps teachers measure their learners' awareness by utilizing the same format in their own classrooms.

Another particular strength of the book is its embodied pedagogy approach, which is centered on multi-sensory and physical learning. Integrating elements such as drama, movement, and silence into learning both allows learners to engage actively and enables teachers to adopt a whole-person teaching approach. This is directly related to the concepts of teacher well-being and reflective practice, which are emphasized in today's ELT literature. Besides, the book promotes a teacher-community perspective. The inclusion of teachers' evaluations provides both academic and experiential credibility to the book. This approach offers ideas for integrating SEL's universal principles by adapting them to local contexts.

Furthermore, video demonstration links in the book provide practitioners with the opportunity to observe teacher-participant interaction and classroom dynamics as they implement each activity. With video support, this practice-oriented book helps readers learn through realistic stage applications of the activities.

As a valuable guidebook, it has a few areas for improvement. First, most activities are face-to-face and based on physical interaction; leaving recommendations for online or hybrid teaching environments is limited. In addition, the cultural adaptability and assessment part of the activities could have been more detailed. Scales or sample rubrics for assessing the effect of SEL could have increased the book's academic value. To conclude, *Harnessing the Power of Social and Emotional Learning* could be considered a valuable resource for teacher training and classroom applications. The book can be used both as a professional development tool and as a classroom application guide by ELT practitioners interested in drama and creative pedagogies. By emphasizing the human dimension of language teaching and offering practical, ready-to-use activities, Godfrey successfully bridges theory and practice. In general, the book makes a meaningful contribution to the growing literature on social and emotional learning in ELT and would be a valuable resource for pre-service and in-service language teachers, teacher educators, and researchers seeking innovative, learner-centered approaches to language education.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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