

103 - InsideU: Digital Application for Social Emotional Learning

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Purpose: The purpose of the transcripts is to provide readers and listeners with a written version of each episode of the UAGC Center for Early Childhood Education's Early Childhood Chatter Podcast so they can follow along with the audio content. URL at www.uagc.edu/ece-center/chatter-podcast

Audience: Current Active & Enrolled Students

Episode Transcript

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Hello everyone and welcome to Early Childhood Chatter with Dr. Shipley and Dr. Heald. We will upload a new episode every other week on Wednesdays.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: This podcast is your go-to source for inspiration and practical tips to unlock the full potential of every little learner. Don't forget to subscribe to the podcast for notifications about future episodes. Today we have with us Dr. Sam Hubley. Dr. Hubley is an assistant research professor, at the Renee Crown Wellness Institute and the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, at the University of Colorado Boulder. His research focuses around novel delivery methods of evidence-based psychological treatments and art-based approaches, to mental health and wellness education. Welcome, Dr. Hubley.

Dr. Hubley: Thank you so much. What a pleasure to be here.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Hi Dr. Hubley. I'm so excited about your session title. It is InsideU, a digital application for social emotional learning inspired by Disney's Pixar's Inside Out, which is awesome, and I love it. I can't wait to hear more. So, tell me a little bit about what you do.

Dr. Hubley: I'm a licensed clinical psychologist, but I function mainly as a research professor here at CU Boulder. And I direct or co-direct a couple of different research projects. And one of my main passions is this social emotional learning app we've been creating.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Okay, so I love it. So, what was your inspiration for building the app? And tell us a little bit about it. So, if we were brand new and we didn't know anything about it, what are we going to find out? What are we going to see?

Dr. Hubley: Absolutely. InsideU is a digital interactive app that's cost-free. There's no login required. You just go to the URL, which is Inside U, with a u colorado.edu. And you can start playing right away. It's organized into these interactive choose your own adventure episodes. And it functions kind of like almost texting, with one of the characters from the movie. So, there's a combination of film clips, these dialogues with the mind worker, who's the guide for the app. And then these interactives that really allow you to explore the content, in the movie Inside Out more.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: Okay, so I have so many questions. The first one is you have, you know, this app, right? Where is your inspiration for starting to build this app?

Dr. Hubley: It's really twofold. The first is, I've had a number of different positions within the university. And at one point, I had a strong emphasis on doing education both within the university, and outside the university. And I was really interested in doing these public-facing talks about different mental illnesses or treatments or preventions. And we just fell flat on our face a few times. We would set up these talks at a local community organization or on campus. We'd get a good number of people to RSVP. And then oftentimes, zero people showed up. And it was just disheartening, that we put so much work into this, but mainly that people were not accessing what we thought was useful information about evidence-based treatments. So, after failing several times in doing this, I kind of paused for a while. And Inside Out came out in 2015. And I've always been keen on this idea of entertainment education, the formal study in sociology where you use entertaining pieces of media, to promote health education. And I always thought that was such an interesting idea. When Inside Out came out in 2015, I thought, oh my goodness, we have such a golden opportunity here to take this film Inside Out, which is a beautiful Pixar film, and integrates a lot of modern science on emotions, and make it accessible to people who wanted to learn more about emotions. And I've really found that when you lead with art, when you lead

with interaction, when you lead with fun, it's much easier to get people in the room and much easier to keep them in the room.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: So, tell me, like, if a teacher opened this app in her classroom, and put it up on the smart board or had them on their iPad, or if a parent did this at home, what are they going to see? Like, if they open it up, what's it going to be like? What are they going to do? What are they going to see? What are they learning?

Dr. Hubley: We really tried to design this to be very easy to use and intuitive. So, there's no login required. There's no long setup. You go to this website, and you immediately can get started. So, if you go to the home screen, for example, you'll see these tiles that have a play button. And when you click on the play button, it'll play one of the four episodes that we've created. As you play the episode, the very first episode starts off with a montage of film clips. So, we've pulled together some of the key clips from the movie. We added our own music, our own narration, and really set people up to get started on learning one of the basic frameworks in emotion education, which is that emotions don't come on out of the blue. They exist in a particular context, and they are often triggered by different things. And once that emotion is on board, there is an action that follows. So, we spend this first episode. It takes about 10 minutes to complete, introducing the user to this trigger emotion action framework. And then from there, the other three episodes build on that.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: I love that.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: Oh, my gosh. So, what has been the initial response from kids who have used this? Because I'm imagining they're engaged in it. They're starting to maybe come up with some things that haven't been in their emotional wheelhouse before. So, what is the reaction? What is the response?

Dr. Hubley: It's been so positive, which is so exciting and encouraging. One of our core values here at the Crown Institute is that all of our research projects progress within the context of a community partnership. We really believe that expertise exists beyond the university. So, this app was actually co-designed with mental health team members and kids down at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver. So, they had a hand in helping us decide what content to put in there, and especially around how to describe the content, and how you can interact with the content. So, we've been working with them for the past three years, really, on building first a prototype of the app, and then this current version that we just released. And it has been so positive. Anecdotally, the social workers who work down there, they say that in the past, sometimes they'd walk into a room, kids know they're coming, they get some eye rolls, like, oh, here we go, talking about emotions again. But now they walk in with some iPads or their laptop, and you can describe how they can see the kids' eyes light up, because they know that they're going to play kind of what feels like a game, and learn about emotions at the same time, and get to interact with picks up kids.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: That's super cool. Because we know that social emotional learning is, you know, something that teachers, as early as four-year-olds, they're incorporating into their classrooms. It's something that teachers are needing to learn about. We're incorporating it into our college courses. So, what are some specific trends that you're seeing in the industry, or how teachers are changing, or how this app is changing things, or how is it going to go?

Dr. Hubley: We are so inspired by the many effective social emotional learning programs that are out there. And we know from our colleagues in the schools, and after-school programs and from parents that there are some challenges with the programs. For example, many of them are pretty expensive to license, and unless you have a sizable budget and are ready to make an investment, that can be cost prohibitive. We also know that a lot of these programs, partly why they're so effective is because they really help the teachers learn more about emotions and how to teach it to kids. And that's also a sizable investment to carve out time for their own professional development. We wanted to shortcut some of those things. So Inside U is free. You don't need to log in or pay anything. And you don't really need a ton of information to get going. I would say it's helpful for adults to check it out before they show it to kids. But honestly, you could get started without ever having seen it before and play it together. So, we wanted to do something that was complementary to the many amazing programs that are out there, by creating something that was free, easy to use, and did not require a huge upfront investment, either in money or in time.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: So, can you go to the app store and download this? Is it a website? Where exactly do they need to go to find this app?

Dr. Hubley: It is just a website. You go to a URL, and it takes a couple seconds to load. And then you're up and running.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: And it would just be Inside U?

Dr. Hubley: With a U. InsideU.Colorado.edu.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Perfect.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: And we'll add the link in the show notes to listeners, so be sure that you can get it there. Dr. Wubbly, can you please – oh, I said your name completely wrong. See what happens when you're focusing on downloading the app as you're talking? Can you please give our listeners three takeaways that they can walk away with? And my apologies.

Dr. Hubley: Oh, please. No worries whatsoever. Well, the first thing I would say is that all emotions have important jobs in our lives. Even when we don't want to feel something, that emotion is trying to tell us something important. And I think that's one of the key lessons that the movie Inside Out got right and did a really effective job, of setting us up to learn more about the different functions of emotions. And talking about emotions with young people can be really hard. We're kind of like born with all the emotions that we're going to experience, and very few of the skills that we need to help develop awareness around them and to develop regulation skills. So, I think that that's hard for kids to talk about, and it's hard for grown-ups to talk to kids about. So, I'd say the third takeaway is that InsideU can make this whole process a little bit easier and maybe even fun along the way.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Yeah, and I think it's something that teachers can put right into a lesson plan and just add. Are you going to continue to add different episodes? I know you said there are four.

Dr. Hubley: There's currently four right now. We're running a pilot evaluation with the Boys and Girls Club down in Denver that includes a miniature curriculum that goes along with the So they can bounce back and forth between in the app and talk about these ideas and concepts, thinking about the main character of the movie. And then we have these different discussion prompts and activities, for them to do so they can then start to personalize it to themselves.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: So just a quick tidbit that I want to know, have you reached out to the movie and told them you were doing this?

Dr. Hubley: Oh, yes. Yes, that's very, yeah. You cannot use any Disney or Pixar intellectual property.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Well, yeah, I was just wondering how supportive they were, if there was anything going on with that. So that's very cool. Okay.

Dr. Hubley: It's such a fascinating story that maybe I'll tell you another time.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: I figured it was. That's why I wanted to ask. I mean, I knew you had reached out, but I didn't know if you were working with them. That's super cool. Okay. So, as we leave, I want to know one challenge that you have for our listeners.

Dr. Hubley: I would say if you're even a little bit interested in this conversation, go to the website. Play at least one episode of InsideU. And try yourself to follow one of the tips that we include in the app. One of my favorites is that when you notice a strong emotion on the console, is to take a moment of pause to check in with your body, check in with what you really want, in that moment. And use some of the tools in the app to imagine what you're going to do and how that's going to move you closer or farther away to what you actually want in that moment.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Dr. Hubley. I love this. I'm super excited. I am going to get on. I'm going to share it with my students. So, I can't wait. Thank you so much for being here. I hope you can come tell your story at some point and I'm sure we'll be in touch. Thank you so much for being here.

Dr. Hubley: Oh, you're so welcome.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Thank you, listeners.