

Happy, Sad, Mad

Learning to understand feelings

Children experience lots of different feelings. Every feeling has its own name. But each child feels and shows their feelings in different ways.

The Basics

Everyone has feelings. Babies might smile when an adult makes a funny sound or cry when hungry.

As children get older, it is important for them to learn to show their feelings with words and actions. Are they sad? Mad? Scared? Children get frustrated when adults do not understand them. And adults cannot help without knowing what children are feeling.

Sometimes a child might not know what they are really feeling. Understanding feelings takes practice.

Note

Supplies that are underlined can be found in your kit.

Things to Try with Ages 2 to 5

Exploring Faces

- Point to each face on the face chart and name the feeling. Talk about how you know which feeling a face is showing. "I can see this face is sad because the eyebrows are down." Look in the mirror. Make the faces on the face chart together. What are your eyes doing? Your mouths?
- Invite your child to use pieces of playdough to make a face on a plastic plate. Ask how their playdough face is feeling and when they might feel that way. "When do you make a happy face like this? When you're dancing?" Make more faces with different feelings.

Getting Started

Feelings can be positive or negative, and both are okay! Let your child express their feelings. Listen to their words. Say aloud things you notice. "I see your fists are in tight balls. Are you feeling mad? Or maybe scared?" Give your child time for their feelings. Sometimes adults want to make things better too quickly!



More! →

Things to Try with Ages 2 to 5

Puppet play

- Invite your child to choose one puppet for themselves and one for you. Ask your child's puppet how they are feeling. "Hi Pig! How are you feeling?" Act out different feelings. "Cow is sad because he didn't get a turn on the slide." "Rabbit is excited to see grandma today!"
- Set out some blocks and things from your recycling bin (egg cartons, toilet paper tubes). Invite your child to create a small, pretend world for the puppets. Listen to the story your child is creating. Introduce feelings to their play. Ask the puppet your child is playing with how they feel. "Oh no, Lion, you dropped your cookie! How do you feel?"



Colorful feelings

- Give your child two or three colors of finger paint. Encourage them to make dots, lines, or shapes on their paper. Talk about how the colors make you each feel. Maybe red makes them feel happy. Maybe it makes you feel mad. It's okay to be different!
- Listen to music as you paint together. Play soft music, then loud. Slow, then fast. Try music with different instruments. Ask your child to tell you about their painting. How does the music make them feel?



Everyday Interactions

Talk about the feelings of the people or animals in the book you are reading. Ask your child when they feel those same feelings.

During a quiet moment, talk about your child's day. How did playing at the playground feel? How about when they lost their ball?

Model, Notice, Practice

"Your grandpa sent us a nice card. It makes me happy!"

Model when you have feelings and name those feelings.

"I see tears coming out of your eyes. I know this is making you very sad."

Notice your child's feelings. Name the feelings and tell them how you know what they might be feeling.

"Let's try to make a disappointed face."

Practice making faces that show different feelings. With time, your child will learn to communicate their feelings with words and actions.