



Supporting Children to Identify Emotions

Having the ability to identify one's emotions, managing those emotions to attain goals, using those emotions to facilitate thinking, and accurately perceiving the emotions in others are skills set that many employers are looking for in employees. How does that relate to your child? The ability to understand feelings and accurately identify emotions begins in infancy. Helping your child to identify emotions and manage those emotions to attain goals is a skill set that will help your child excel in life. Here are a few ideas/activities to help your child learn about feelings.

Emotion Faces – Create feeling faces by drawing them, generating them from the computer, or cutting them out of magazines. Ideas for emotions may include surprised, happy, sad, angry, tired, scared/frightened, frustrated, curious. Lay 4 or 5 of the emotional faces on the floor face down. Play some music. You and your child march around the faces. When the music stops, pick up the paper closest to you. Have your child identify the emotion on the paper. Ask your child simple questions such as “what makes you *insert the name of feeling your child picked up.*” Now you identify your emotion and name something that makes you feel the emotion on your card.



Selfie Faces – Have your child make a face. You mirror the facial expression. Take a selfie. If your child is old enough, have your child identify the emotion. Your child will enjoy going back through the pictures. Talk about what things/activities make your child feel the emotion. If you don't want to use your cell phone, use a mirror instead.

Sing When You're Happy, and You Know It – Instead of clapping, stomping feet, and yelling hurra. Make facial expressions, sounds, or body gestures to go with the emotion. For example, when you're happy, give a smile. When you're sad, wipe your tear. When you're excited, jump up and down. Have your child generate ideas for a variety of emotions.



Explore Empathy through Reading – While reading stories, have children identify how characters in the story are feeling. Ask questions such as:

- How is the character feeling?
- What clues from the story makes you think that is the way the character is feeling?
- Show me how you might look if you felt *insert feeling.*
- What did the character do when he was feeling *insert feeling?*
- What else might you do if you felt *insert feeling?*

References: Moore, Roberta. (2019, October 17). *Emotional Intelligence at Work: Becoming the Leader of the Future*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2019/10/17/emotional-intelligence-at-work-becoming-the-leader-of-the-future/#52ff9b607991>
Tominey, Shauna L., O'Bryon, Elisabeth C. Rivers, Susan E., Shapses, Sharon; Young Children / March 2017 / *Teaching Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood*. <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/mar2017/teaching-emotional-intelligence>; *Ideas for Teaching Children about Emotions*. Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation. Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development; *Emotional Intelligence New Ability or Eclectic Traits?* John D. Mayer University of New Hampshire Peter Salovey and David R. Caruso Yale University. September 2008 <https://www.psychologytoday.com/sites/default/files/attachments/1575/rp2008-mayersaloveycarusob.pdf>