



ALL FEELINGS ARE FOR FEELING

Deep Dive Resource



Recognizing and Naming Emotions

- As adults name, acknowledge, AND explain **OUR OWN** emotions, feelings, and actions:
 - **EXAMPLE:** I'm building blocks with kids and my tower falls over. I might say, "Oh man! That is so frustrating! I worked so hard on that tower and now it's destroyed!"
 - "I did not sleep well last night. I am feeling very slow and cranky today."
 - My best friend is coming to see me this weekend! I am so excited to see her!"
- Adults name, acknowledge, AND explain **CHILDREN'S** actions (only what we see/hear and then ask to label the emotion):
 - "Ben, your face is red, you're yelling and crying. Are you feeling sad?"
 - "Anna, your hands are clenched like this, your face is scrunched up and red. You look angry. Are you angry?"
 - "Rachel, you're smiling and laughing. Are you feeling happy?"
- Adults work to give up control when it is safe and appropriate:
 - Children are going to feel **ALL THE FEELINGS**, every day. Let them!
 - Don't rush to move them away from feeling. Let them sit with their emotions/feelings. Just don't let them live in them.
 - Give a name to what they are feeling **WITHOUT** judgment or shame.

Emotions Boards and Books

- Providing children with concrete, visual representations of what an emotion looks like, helps them begin to build a connection between the name of the emotion and what they are feeling.
- Children are visual learners! It is most effective to use real pictures and/or pictures of the children in your program when representing emotions.
 - Take several pictures of one emotion using different children in the room to post, because your "mad" and my "mad" might not look the same!
 - Make a classroom book about the children in the room and their emotions.
- When children see their own and their peers' faces representing emotions, their brain makes a connection that says, "See! You can do this! This is what it looks like when you are feeling happy. This is what it looks like when Sarah is feeling sad."
- Sad/Mad/Happy/Tired are NOT the only emotions out there. You can add and use any number of emotions - as long as you are able to clearly communicate (through discussions and pictures) what those emotions mean.



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Managing Emotions

- Adults name, acknowledge, and explain **OUR OWN** emotions, feelings and actions:

- **EXAMPLE:** I'm building blocks with kids and my tower falls over. I might say, "Oh man! That is so frustrating! I worked so hard on that tower and now it's destroyed!"
- **Acknowledge and Model:** cross your arms and sulk for a second, see what they do. You might be surprised. They might offer to help you rebuild it or tell you "it's okay, don't worry."
- **Embrace and Teach:** if they don't offer suggestions or comfort you can ask them, "What do you think I should do now?"

- Adults name, acknowledge, AND explain **CHILDREN'S** actions (only what we see/hear and then ask to label the emotion):

- "Anna, your hands are clenched, your face is scrunched up and red. You look angry. Are you angry?"
- **Acknowledge and Model:** clench your fists, scrunch your face
- **Embrace and Teach:** "It's okay to be angry! I get angry too. How can I help you?"

- For some children, the simple act of acknowledging how they feel, putting words to it, and offering a solution or release from the big emotion is what they need.

- For some children, asking them to calm down and talk about it before they are ready will likely result in their emotions becoming bigger and their actions to become unsafe. It is important you give them the time and space to regulate/take a break while you stay near them to ensure safety for all.

- Don't forget to come back to them once they are calm and talk about it!

Materials to Help Children Manage Emotions

- Young children use their senses (sight, hearing, touch, smells and taste) to learn about the world around them (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).
- Materials could include: squeeze balls, loofah puffs, baby dolls, sensory bottles, weighted animals, stretchy dough, things to smell, different textures/fabrics, pictures of their loved ones, small liquid/sand hourglass timers, etc.



Photo credit: Sarah Holmes

Safe Space

- Provide children a designated space where they can safely explore their emotions and feelings that is comfortable, inviting, big enough for one child, and easily supervised by any adult in the room.
- When creating and introducing a safe place - it is so important that you are talking with the kids about the safe space BEFORE they need or want to use it. Let them know what it is for and how to use it - and then CONSISTENTLY reinforce their expectations every day.
- The safe space should only be for the purpose of calming!
- This area is NOT to be used as punishment, for time out, or as a way to keep a child contained.
- "Taking a break" can be a very powerful replacement strategy for children to learn when they are feeling big emotions!
- **This does NOT mean "time out!"**
- **Time out**, like sending a child to sit alone and think about what they've done, is not a developmentally appropriate discipline strategy for children under the age of five, it is **punishment**.
- Go with them!
 - When you see a child experiencing big emotions and feel the safe space might be a helpful solution, do not send them to the safe space to "calm down" on their own.
 - If they already know how to calm down (and use the safe space), they would do it, without you prompting them.
 - You have to **TEACH** them how to use it, and then, **MODEL** it's uses for them.



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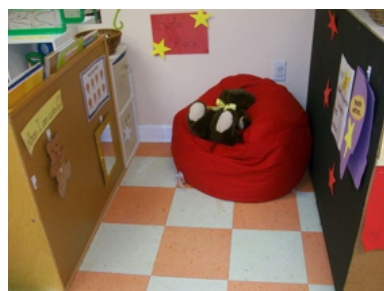


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