

Discovering Feelings



CENTER FOR
Early Childhood
Mental Health
Consultation

Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development

Happy

Place pictures of children who appear to be **HAPPY** in space provided on this page.

Happy

DISCUSSION

What else makes you happy?

What do you do when you are happy?

On the count of 3, let's put on our **happy** faces!



Activity

Telling stories is a great way to help young children understand and relate to new concepts. Create a story about a child who is happy to be eating his favorite snack. Encourage children to share their favorite snacks and add those to the story. For infants, suggest some typical 1st foods they may have eaten e.g., milk, bananas, apples, sweet potatoes. Have them to pretend eating their favorite snack and watch for signs of happiness. When appropriate, label their expressions and your own as being “happy”. Begin the discussion questions when you’ve finished the story.

Tips for Young Infants

With infants, you will generally need to model or offer what you know about the baby in order to build the receptive language and understanding of younger infants. You may ask, “What else makes you happy?” and then after giving the infant wait time, say “I know that a kiss from grandma, eating bananas, and taking a nap make you happy. You may ask, “What do you do when you’re happy? After giving the infant wait time, you may say, “When you are happy, I see you smile and coo, and hear you gurgle.” During these interactions, you should make a happy face and describe your emotion and notice as infants mirror your emotions.

Sad

Place pictures of children who appear to be **SAD** in space provided on this page.

Sad

DISCUSSION

What do you do when you are sad?

What do you do when other people are sad?

How can your feelings change when you are sad?

On the count of 3, let's put on
our **sad** faces!



Activity

It is often helpful to have for children draw pictures of emotions that may be difficult for them to verbalize, or those that are sad or scary for them to experience. Provide children with paper and an assortment of large crayons and butcher paper so they can draw with plenty of space.

Tips for Young Infants

A simple way to introduce this concept is to look for teachable moments during the day. For example, when they are being left at childcare or when all the milk in their bottle is gone and they begin to cry. Use this and other opportunities to introduce the word sad to the child's vocabulary. Let them know it is all right to be sad and remind them that their feelings can change. You may say, "I know that it is hard when you are wet and I need to change your diaper. In a few minutes, we will have you all dry and you may feel all better."

Excited

Place pictures of children who appear to be **EXCITED** in space provided on this page.

Excited

DISCUSSION

What else makes you excited?

What do you do when you are excited?

When the music begins again,
let's all get **excited!**



Activity

Here's an opportunity to show excitement in motion. Find an age appropriate song that expresses excitement in the lyrics or one that gets the children in the group energized. Encourage children to dance or move when music is played by suggesting they wave their hands, jump around, dance and generally become animated. Identify this display of emotion as being excited. Stop and start the music and encourage them to notice the difference in their feelings and to recognize when they experience excitement through their movement and facial expressions. This will also help them understand the concept that feelings can change.

Tips for Young Infants

Sit together with an infant and turn on some music. Begin to wave your arms, sing and generally show excitability in your actions. Identify your emotion as being excited and encourage the baby to mirror your actions. If they do, label their expression as being excited. You may say, "I see you're excited because you're waving your arms!"

Angry

Place pictures of children who appear to be **ANGRY** in space provided on this page.

Angry

DISCUSSION

What makes you angry?

What do you do when you are angry?

What is a good way to handle being angry?

On the count of 3, let's put on
our **angry** faces!



Activity

Read a book that contains a story about a character that became angry. Highlight from the story what is appropriate versus inappropriate behavior, and be sure to emphasize a suitable resolution to any conflict that may have occurred. You may also choose to reiterate at this time the rules of what is appropriate behavior in your childcare or home setting, e.g., talking with someone about what's causing you to be angry *is* ok, but hitting is *not* ok)

Tips for Young Infants

You can use naturally occurring opportunities to help younger infants begin to recognize their own anger. When babies appear to be angry or frustrated, focus on labeling the emotion, and showing the child what an angry face looks like by holding up a mirror for them to look in.

Surprised

Place pictures of children who appear to be **SURPRISED** in space provided on this page.

Surprised

DISCUSSION

Can you tell me about another time when you were surprised?

What do you do when you are surprised?

On the count of 3, let's put on our **surprised** faces!



Activity

Young children typically enjoy being surprised when they feel that they are in a safe environment. You can use stuffed animals or puppets to help you play with infants and toddlers, and use the characters to surprise them. You can hide the puppet or animal behind your back, then pull him out and say “surprise!” You can laugh with the child and say, “I surprised you!” or, “Your face looks surprised, the doggie must have surprised you!” Allow children to reciprocate if they can and make sure that you act surprised. You can say, “You surprised me! Look at my face, I am so surprised!”

Tips for Young Infants

A game of “peek-a-boo” may help you convey the concept of surprise. Focus on the anticipation of being surprised when you remove your hands from in front of your eyes and talk about how it feels to be surprised. Label your expression as being surprised and encourage them to mimic your facial expressions and hand gestures.