



Teaching Feeling Words



We often think only of teaching words for common emotions like happy, sad, mad, etc. But there are many, many other feeling words that we can use to describe the range of complex emotions each of us (and our children) experience every day. Children benefit when they develop a “feelings vocabulary” that they can use to communicate what they are feeling and experiencing. While babies and toddlers won’t understand these words right away, over time and with practice they will grasp their meaning and begin to use these words themselves. Here are some ideas:

Brave
Cheerful
Worried
Joyful
Frightened
Calm
Excited
Confused
Frustrated
Curious
Friendly
Shy
Ignored
Lonely
Interested

Proud
Embarrassed
Jealous
Angry
Bored
Surprised
Silly
Uncomfortable
Stubborn
Safe
Relieved
Peaceful
Overwhelmed
Loving
Cranky

Putting It All Together

Understanding feelings is an important part of a child’s social emotional development. Babies and toddlers experience feelings just like you do, and know when you are feeling happy or down as well. When you use words to describe emotions, share in their good feelings, and comfort them when they feel sad or overwhelmed, young children are learning important social emotional skills. This learning takes a lot of practice on their part, and a lot of patience on yours. But the time and effort are worth it. The social-emotional skills children develop in the first two years are ones they will use and build on for the rest of their lives.