



Teaching Emotions: Activity Ideas to Share with Families

Feel free to copy these and put in a newsletter or on a handout to send home to your families.

Share a story in a new way.

Read a story book to your child that shows characters who experience an emotion (e.g., sad, happy, scared, worried, confused, etc.). Stop on a page where the character is showing the expression. Ask your child “What do you think he is feeling?”, “Why is he feeling that way?”, or “Look at her face, how can you tell that he is ___?” Other questions could be “Have you ever felt___ . What make you feel that way?” or “What will happen next?” or “What should he do?” Do not pause too long on one page and only continue the discussion as long as your child shows an interest.

Make an Emotion Book with your child.

An easy project to do with your child is to make a homemade book. All you need is paper, crayons or markers, and a stapler. You can make a book about one emotion and have your child fill the pages with things that make him feel that way. For example, a “Happy Book” may have pictures that you and your child draw of things that make him happy or it may include pictures cut out of magazines that are glued on the pages. Another approach may be to devote a page to an emotion and have the book be about a variety of feeling words (happy, mad, surprised, scared, irritated, proud, etc.). For children who have a lot to say about their feelings, you might want them to tell you a sentence about what makes them feel an emotion and you write the sentence on the page. Then, your child can cut out a picture and glue on the book or draw a picture to go with the emotion. Warning, this activity will be enjoyable if you do it with your child, but would be difficult for your child to do alone.

Play Make a Face with your child.

You start the game by saying, “I am going to make a face, guess what I am feeling by looking at my face.” Then, make a happy or sad face. When your child guesses the feeling word, respond by saying “That’s right. Do you know what makes me feel that way?” Follow by describing something simple that makes you feel the emotion (e.g., a fluffy kitten makes me happy, I feel sad when it rains and we can’t go to the park). Please note, this is not the time to discuss adult circumstances that are linked to your emotions (e.g., “When your Daddy doesn’t call me, I feel sad”). Then say to your child, “Your turn, you make a face and I will guess what you are feeling.” Don’t be surprised if your child picks the same emotion that you just displayed, it will take time before they can be creative with this game. Once you guess, ask your child to name what makes him have that emotion. Keep taking turns until your child shows you that he or she is not interested in continuing the game.

Play “Mirror, Mirror...what do I see?” with your child.

Using a hand mirror or a mirror on the wall, play this game with your child. Look in the mirror and say “mirror, mirror, what do I see?” Then make an emotion face. Follow by naming the emotion by saying “I see a sad Mommy looking at me”. Turn to your child and say “your turn”. Help your child remember the phrase “mirror, mirror what do I see?” You may have to say it with your child. Then, tell your child to make a face and help them say the next sentence “I see a happy Patrick looking at me.” Don’t be surprised if your child always wants to do the emotion that you just demonstrated. Play the game until your child loses interest.