

# Healthy Living

## Let's talk emotions!



Talking about emotions should be a priority in early years, as our youngest children learn early on how to self-regulate and express themselves.

Child mental health expert, Shahana Knight, suggests 5 great reasons why children need to learn to talk about emotions:

1. Understanding the reason behind the emotion.
2. To help them feel more in control.
3. Negative emotions can lead to negative thoughts.
4. It means they can ask for help.
5. It helps them to be a better friend.

How do you give children a forum for sharing emotional anxieties? Do children have a space where they can just sit, talk, or think?

Use the tasks below to help you explore why, how, and where you can support children's emotions.

## **Task 1**

### Promoting Talking spaces

Involve the children in the planning and setting out a chill out area. Maybe you could have a workshop or activity to make some cushions or bean bags.

Can you also think of ideas for outside areas?

How can children and staff use the space?

## **Task 2**

Labelling feelings activities- how many can you think of? Create a mind map of all your ideas, here are some to get you started.

- Mime an emotion and see if the children can guess what it is.
- Get the children pulling faces to match the feeling you call out.
- Sing 'If You're Happy and You Know it,' but change the emotion for each verse. For example, 'If you're sad and you know it, make a frown.'
- Go on an emotional walk outside, asking the children to express an emotion using their faces and large movements.
- Use puppets to express different emotions.

- As children start the day ask them to put their photograph on an emotion, how are they feeling today?
- Children in pairs mirror their partners faces, guess the emotion.
- Listen to different genres of music and express how it makes you feel.
- Take photos of the children's faces with different emotions and use them as a discussion point.

Can you create or develop any others?

### **Task 3**

Explore these videos. They are a great introduction to feelings and can be used with staff, children, and parents.

Think about how you could use them-

- Clip on emotions- Inside out movie -[inside out all feelings clip - Google Search](#)
- A collection of short films presented by Dr Radha Moghil that explore a whole range of feelings and emotions, as well as providing talking points and tools to feel better- [Feeling Better - BBC Teach](#)-
- The colour monster- [youtube.com/watch?v=PWujGPb6mgo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWujGPb6mgo)

## **Task 4**

Here are some books to promote feelings and emotions that you might like to access.

Try and go through your current books with the focus of feelings. Make a note and create your own library of feelings that will help you and other staff to focus on.

Hug- Jez Alborough

Mine-Rachel Write

When I feel surprised-Paula Bowles

Grumpycorn- Sarah McIntyre

A Little Bit Brave – Nicola Kinnear

Ruby's Worry – Tom Percival

## **Task 5**

Watch the video with your team using the link below and use the questions to reflect on your practice. These deeper dive questions will help you to establish current practice and develop actions to make improvements.

[Emotions - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/education/government/early-years/early-years-providers)

Reflect on the questions below.

Do you support children to name, understand and express emotions? How?

Do you use books with picture of self, family and the staff to share with children? Are these effective? How could you embed them?

Do you have regular talking times opportunities and give time for group talk with children?

Can you think of a time when a child has struggled with an emotion? What did you do to support the child? Could you have done anything better?

Do you give time and space for children to reflect and understand feelings in your setting when resolving conflict? How? Could you do this better?

Are staff emotional available for children and families? How do you know this?

How do you support children to make sense of emotions in your setting? What practical ideas to you have?

Are you attuned to children? How do you know? How do you do this?