

# Understanding Emotions

## Facial Expression and Body Language

Children who have difficulty with interacting socially may struggle to understand emotions and how to read them. We show emotion with our voices, our faces and with our whole body. Some children will need to be taught how to interpret the way we show emotions, so that they can respond appropriately.

Try these activities...

### Role Play

- ⇒ Present the children with situations using photographs/ words, e.g. 'I just spilt my ice-cream'
- ⇒ Discuss how each situation would make them feel.
- ⇒ Get the group to role-play a variety of situations
- ⇒ Discuss how they would feel.



### Pictures

- ⇒ Cut out pictures of people from magazines or newspapers.
- ⇒ Put the pictures in a bag.
- ⇒ Each child takes turns to take a picture from the bag.
- ⇒ Look closely at people's faces and discuss how they may be feeling and why they might feel that way. eg sad.
- ⇒ Also look closely at their body language.
- ⇒ Discuss what clues tell you the person is sad etc.
- ⇒ The children could act out the emotion in the picture for the group to guess.
- ⇒ Start off with easier emotions such as happy, sad or angry.
- ⇒ Later move onto emotions such as scared, worried, surprised, disappointed, proud etc.

### Telly Addicts!

- ⇒ Watch a clip from a comedy programme.
- ⇒ Focus on one of the emotions being expressed and brainstorm how you know what the character is feeling.
- ⇒ Watch clips and turn the sound down.
- ⇒ Freeze-frame and talk about how people are feeling and how we can work out they feel that way.

### Acting

- ⇒ Act out everyday activities using a different emotion – for example make a cup of tea in a happy way; dry the dishes in a sad way.
- ⇒ Take turns at being the actor and the one who is guessing.

### Drawing

- ⇒ Draw pictures of sad, happy, angry etc. faces.
- ⇒ Compare different pictures of different emotions focusing on the features that change (eg eyes, eyebrows, forehead, mouth and cheeks)

### Body Sculpting

Move another person's body (sculpt them) into the posture of somebody sad, happy etc.



### Group Antics

- ⇒ Send one member of the group out of the room.
- ⇒ Decide together which emotion the group is going to act out.
- ⇒ Ask the child to come in and watch each person in turn acting.
- ⇒ At the end they have to guess the emotion and say who demonstrated it best.
- ⇒ Both the one who guessed and the one who was chosen as the best actor receive points.
- ⇒ The one with the most points at the end is the winner.

### Tone of Voice

Recognising tone of voice is how we understand sarcasm, irony, humour and teasing. For example, when someone says 'I'm fine' we listen to how they say it rather than the words.

Some children cannot understand that how people say something is sometimes more important than what they have said. These children are likely to respond to the words used rather than the tone of voice. You need to help them to interpret tone of voice.

Try these activities...

#### Spot the tone

- ⇒ Hide your face so that your child does not get any visual clues
- ⇒ Say 'neutral' phrases using different tones of voice – happy, sad, angry. For example say: 'Tomorrow is Tuesday', 'He knocked on the door', 'The kitchen is downstairs', 'This is Sarah'.
- ⇒ If your child is finding this difficult, help them by letting them look at your facial expression as well.
- ⇒ Later try more difficult emotions such as scared, surprised, proud

### Mismatch

- ⇒ Once your child can recognise your tone of voice using a 'neutral' phrase you can move onto the next stage where the tone of voice that does not match the message.
- ⇒ Hide your face so your child can't read your body language.
- ⇒ Here are some ideas....

What is said (words used)	How the words are said
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I'm so happy that you won	Say in angry or sad way
I don't like it	Say in a happy way
I'm so sad I want to cry	Say in a happy or angry way
I'd really like that	Say in angry or sad voice
You are so naughty	Say in a happy way

- ⇒ Think up more ideas so the children get used to recognising tone of voice in humour, teasing, sarcasm etc.
- ⇒ When tone of voice conflicts with the words used during everyday life, talk about it at the time and perhaps draw stick people with speech and thought bubbles to illustrate.

### Telly Addicts!

- ⇒ Watch a clip from a comedy programme. Focus on one of the emotions being expressed.
- ⇒ Brainstorm the different ways you can tell how the character is feeling.
- ⇒

*When your child is able to do the above easily, move onto degrees of emotion. Discuss whether someone is, for example, a little disappointed, extremely disappointed or in the middle.*

### Making an Emotions Scrapbook

Making a scrapbook of emotions can help a child to understand their own and others' emotions. Use the suggestions below to guide you, but be imaginative about how best to use the book with the child.

- ⇒ Identify sections in the scrapbook for the 5 basic emotions - happy, sad, angry, afraid and disgusted.
- ⇒ Write the word at the top of the page, e.g. 'happy'.
- ⇒ Now cut out pictures of people from magazines or newspapers which fit this emotion. Start with pictures which are very obvious.



- ⇒ Cut out pictures of things or places or events which make the child feel this emotion and stick them in the scrapbook. Do this for all 5 basic emotions

### Personal Experiences

- ⇒ If possible, find photos of the child when they are showing this feeling and discuss how it felt.
- ⇒ Was it a good feeling or a bad feeling?
- ⇒ What caused it/what had happened?
- ⇒ How did they feel physically? e.g. sweaty with a fast heart beat or did they cry?

### Emotions rating

Try to get the child to 'grade' the strength of the emotion for each item in the scrapbook. For example, ice cream might make the child feel very happy, but going to the cinema might make them just feel pleased.

