

Emotion Identification & Regulation Activity for Kids



Children experience a variety of emotions on a daily basis. Adults have the unique opportunity to teach children about emotions including how to identify and cope with emotions.

Making space to talk about emotions and discussing how to work through emotions helps children develop important life skills including emotion regulation, healthy coping skills, and the ability to empathize with people.

During difficult life experiences, children may act on their emotions in unhealthy ways such as temper tantrums, yelling, hitting, or sulking.

This activity encourages families to talk with their children about emotions and brainstorm ideas of how to manage emotions.



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Activity Instructions:

- Gather the family together in an open space and have paper and markers, crayons, or colored pencils available.
- Introduce the activity to your kids:
 - “We are going to play a fun game together in which we either act out or draw an animal that represents how we feel.” *By giving your child the choice to draw or act out the animal, they feel as though they have some sense of control during a time when many of us feel a lack of control.*
 - “We all experience many different emotions. Some of these emotions include happy, sad, angry, confused, disappointed, worried, hopeful, and peaceful. Can you think of any other emotions I did not name?” *Allow your kids to brainstorm and name aloud other emotions.*
 - “We are going to take turns either acting out or drawing an animal that represents how we feel. For example, if I am feeling excited, I would draw a monkey because they move around from place to place and make happy noises.
 - “You can either tell us the animal you drew or acted out, or you can let us guess the animal.”
 - “Okay, now who wants to go first?”

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How to Respond When Your Child Shares:

- **Acknowledge the emotion.**
 - "I hear that you are feeling scared."
- **Validate the emotion.**
 - "It's ok to feel scared. I remember times when I have felt scared, too."
- **Normalize the emotion.**
 - Have your child say aloud, "I feel scared and that is okay."
- **Encourage emotion regulation.**
 - Ask your child, "What can you do when you feel scared?" If they have trouble coming up with an idea of their own, you can provide them with ideas such as hugging mom or dad, taking deep breaths, or loving on a favorite pet, stuffed animal or blanket.
- **Do something different.**
 - Once you have processed and made space for the emotion, you can encourage the child to do something different and redirect their attention on something that brings them joy so they can work through the difficult emotion (I.e., watch a silly show, do a funny dance, or go on a bike ride).

