

## **I'VE GOT A FEELING**

Social-emotional wellness: the ability to experience and regulate emotions and form secure relationships (<http://www.zerotothree.org/>)

Children are barraged from birth with a cascade of emotions. With an infant in a caring environment, all those emotions-even the negative ones like pain, fear, discomfort-can be expressed freely. No one expects an infant to control their emotions.

By the age of 3 or 4, children are starting to be able to change the way they express their emotions, but their ability to control their impulses is still developing. To make it even harder, they often don't yet have the language to express what they are feeling.

The way kids express their emotions affects the way both adults and children react to them. If a child experiences rejection or punishment when he/she expresses his/her emotions, he begins to fear expressing them. That fear (of failure or rejection) has a negative effect on creativity, problem-solving skills, and thinking processes. It can have a profound impact on a child's developing self-concept; it affects the way he/she looks at any given situation and determines his or her chances of achieving success. (If you expect to fail, you're not going to try very hard, and you will give up easily.) (initiative vs. guilt)

But although we don't want to stifle kids' feelings, we need to show them in a supportive way that they are responsible for the way they express those feelings ("feel what you want, control what you do.") We also need to help them label what they are feeling and be able to identify emotions that others are feeling (empathy.) Here are some suggestions:

1. Show photos of kids expressing emotions in different situations and orally identify the emotion; use laminated "emotion faces" and match the faces to the photos.
2. Have kids role play how you would look if:
  - \* You found a quarter on the sidewalk.
  - \* You got lost in a store
  - \* You saw a pink elephant at the zoo
  - \* You dropped your ice creamUse a mirror for the child who is doing the role play, then take a photo. Discuss body language that accompanies the facial expression (clenched fists, shoulders down, etc.) Laminate the photos and label.
3. Use puppets to act out situations and guess from the tone of voice what they must be feeling ("You knocked down my building!") Ask the kids what the puppet could do, and how they could help.
4. Variation on "If you're happy and you know it"-
  - \* If you're sad and you know it, wipe your eyes
  - \* If you're angry and you know it, stamp your foot
5. When you read a children's book, guess from the character's actions and facial expression what they are feeling. Predict what the character might do, and what the consequence would be. Videotapes are great for this; you can pause and discuss.
6. Find pictures in magazines of different faces showing emotions; identify emotion and describe situation that might have made the person feel that way

7. Make a giant Humpty Dumpty puzzle, then have everybody put one piece up on the flannel board to put him back together. Tell how he felt when he was: on the wall; when he fell; and when he got put back together (from NAEYC article "You Got It!" Teaching Social and Emotional Skills" Young Children. Nov. 2006)
8. Have a child model friendly and unfriendly behavior; others hold up a 2 sided happy/sad face on a popsicle stick to identify the behavior.
9. The following suggestions are excerpted from *Promoting Positive Behavior: Guidance Strategies for Early Childhood Settings*, by S.K. Adams, J. Baronberg
  - \* Help children recognize that people may have different feelings about the same thing; people have different likes and dislikes. "Jason is excited when there is a thunderstorm, but Juanita gets scared." "Timmy likes to climb high on the jungle gym, but Sam doesn't."
  - \* Help children recognize that their feelings about a situation may change. "Alejandra, you are feeling sad now and want to sit by yourself, but later you may feel differently and may want to join the group at circle."
  - \* Create concrete ways for children to demonstrate empathy such as a "helping basket" with tissues, Band-Aids, and other items children can use to help another child feel better.
  - \* Explain the process used to understand another person's feelings and model empathic responses (Slaby, Roedell, Arezzo, & Hendrix, 1995).
    1. Identify the distress of another person. ("Irina is crying-she looks sad.")
    2. Try to figure out what is happening. ("Let's ask Irina why she is sad.")
    3. Figure out what others might feel in the same situation. ("Irina is sad because she tripped on the playground. She hurt her knee. I cry, too, when I hurt myself.")
    4. Assess what the other person needs. ("What would make you feel better, Irina? Do you want a cold cloth on your knee?")
    5. Try to comfort or meet the needs of the distressed person. ("Let's go get a cold cloth and a drink of water for Irina.")
    6. Demonstrate pleasure at the other person's relief or comfort. ("Irina stopped crying. Are you feeling better, Irina? I'm glad you feel better now.")
10. The article "You've Got to Have Friends," from the website Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), describes some behaviors that can help lead to friendship:
  - \* Organizing play "Let's..."
  - \* Sharing
  - \* Assisting others
  - \* Giving compliments
11. When you observe children playing, try to encourage these behaviors, and be specific (instead of "You're playing nicely," say "You're sharing and speaking kindly.") The article also offers the following suggestions for cooperative play:
  - \* Free Choice – Children will play with their "buddy" (assigned or selected) for the first ten minutes of free choice time. If they stick with their buddy the whole time they get special reward (sticker, stamp on hand, etc.).
  - \* Set up the "buddy" table. Children must find a friend to play at the table with in order to gain access to the high preference toys there.
  - \* Compliment circle - children have a chance to give a friend a compliment while passing around the "compliment bear."

### Dealing with Negative Emotions

**Anger:** One of the most common emotions in a classroom is likely to be some variation of anger, from annoyance to rage.

1. Prevention is always preferable--monitor voice levels
2. Explain what you saw (reflect his facial expression; "you look angry; I think you pushed Michael because you wanted the toy") explain consequence (look at Michael's face, he is sad because it hurt)

and show/tell him what to do instead ("you need to ask Michael if you can share his truck")

3. Creative ways to use that "angry energy"-pound clay, pop bubble wrap, crumple or tear paper, kick a paper ball, bang a drum, "throw those angry feelings out the window."

**Frustration:** Preschoolers can get easily overwhelmed and frustrated, and need help breaking down tasks; but they do need to learn to tolerate frustration in small doses, so they won't just expect others to solve their problems. ("Break down the task, build up the child.")

1. Scaffolding-provide just enough help to keep frustration tolerable, but still allow a challenge so they can experience the success of using newly acquired skills, social or physical.
2. Praise the process, not just the result ("Wow, you're really working hard on learning to tie your shoe!")
3. Try some activities that build patience, (baking, gardening) and have both short-term and long-term results. (book *It's Taking Too Long: A Book About Patience* (Cheryl Wagner)
4. Be a good role model for anger management and frustration tolerance; verbalize your feelings when you are frustrated, angry, etc. and then talk about how you're going to handle it.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### BOOKS FOR KIDS

*Hands Are Not for Hitting* by Martine Agassi, Marieka Heinlen (Illustrator)

*Book of Feelings* (aliki)

*Everybody Has Feelings*, By Charles E. Avery.

*When Sophie Gets Angry- Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang

*Mine! Mine! Mine!* by Shelly Becker (Sterling Publishing, 2006)

*The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain (Parenting Press, 2000)

*The Grouchy Ladybug* by Eric Carle

*I Want It* by Elizabeth Crary. Illustrated by Marina Megale. (Parenting Press, 1996) In this book, two friends want the same toy. Using a problem-solving format, children are offered choices of what the main character should do as she grapples with the act of sharing with her friend: hit, cry, find another toy?

*Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods That Make My Day* by Jamie Lee Curtis

*Happy, Sad, Angry, Excited* (Keith Faulkner)

*A to Z Do You Ever Feel Like Me?* (Bonnie Hausman)

*The Toad is Mine* by Barbara Shook Hazen. Illustrated by Jane Manning. (HarperCollins Children's Books, 1998) Two children who usually share everything try to figure out how to share the toad they found together. (shows kids how easy it is to get mad about sharing, and offers alternative options)

*It's My Birthday* by Pat Hutchins. (Greenwillow Books: 1999) Sometimes, sharing can seem like sacrifice. This book explores the idea that some things are more fun when they're shared. Billy figures he doesn't have to share because it's his birthday. Then he gets some gifts that he can't play alone.

*On Monday When It Rained* (Cherry!Kachenmeister)

*How I Feel series (How I Feel Happy, etc. -interactive books* (Marcia Leonard)

*It's Mine!* by leo lionni (Dragonfly Books 1985)

*Share and Take Turns* by Cheri J. Meiners (Free Spirit Publishing, 2003)

*Glad Monster, Sad Monster: A Book About Feelings* by Anne Miranda and Ed Emberley.

*My Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss

*Sharing: How Kindness Grows* by Fran Shaw (Reader's Digest, 2006)

*Feelings to Share from A-Z* by Todd Snow (Maren Green Publishing, 2007)

*Way I Feel Series* (Includes *When I Feel Angry, When I Feel Scared, When I Feel Sad,*

*When I Feel Jealous* and more) by Cornelia Maude Spelman (Albert Whitman & Company, 2004)

*Teeth are Not for Biting* by Elizabeth Verdick, Marieka Heinlen (Illustrator)

*Words Are Not for Hurting* by Elizabeth Verdick, Marieka Heinlen (Illustrator)

*It's Taking Too Long: A Book About Patience* (Cheryl Wagner)

## **TEACHER RESOURCES**

Promoting Positive Behavior: Guidance Strategies for Early Childhood Settings (S.K. Adams, J. Baronberg)

Happy, Sad, Jealous, Mad (Jo Browning-Wroe)

Healing Stories: Picture Books for the Big and Small Changes in a Child's Life (Jacqueline Golding)

## **WEBSITES**

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/13484/How-To-Get-Your-Preschoolers-To-Listen-To-Respect-You> great article written by preschool teacher about actual situation in classroom and how she handled it.

<http://www.archjrc.com/childspace/happy-sad.html> read aloud story with happy sad face; kids raise the correct face to guess what the character is feeling (pause before saying the emotion-"Matthew tripped and he felt---")

<http://www.pbs.org/wholechild/abc/social.html> timetable of social and emotional milestones

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html> for parents

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html> for teachers

[http://www.challengingbehavior.org/do/resources/teaching\\_tools/ttyc.htm](http://www.challengingbehavior.org/do/resources/teaching_tools/ttyc.htm) picture schedule, what to do when you arrive, etc.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DWSEAmZhNI> "Tell Them How You Feel" music video (Princess Katie and Racer Steve)

<http://www.zerotothree.org/>

<http://web.extension.illinois.edu/disaster/teacher/activities.html> (for traumatic experience/disaster)