NCPMI

Teacher's Guide: Labeling Emotions

What is This?

This resource will provide families with helpful tips for teaching their infants and toddlers about emotions.

How Do I Use This?

1. Review the resource:

Read the handout and understand the topic of the handout.

2. Help families reflect and try:

Send the handout home with families (via newsletter, daily note, email, text, or an app). The handout will help families reflect on how they talk about emotions at home and try new strategies.

3. Engage:

Using the poll (attached to this resource), create and post a large visual (e.g., bar graph on a chart paper; using dot markers or stickers to indicate practices) at the entrance of your classroom. Encourage families to participate in the poll during drop-off/pick-up. As families participate in the poll, check in with families about emotions children are famliar with and those thay can learn.

4. Share:

Take a picture of the completed poll and share the poll results with families through the preferred way of communication! Share with families what emotion words you are going to practice in the classroom based on the poll result!

5. Reflect and adjust:

Based on the families' answers to the poll, think about the emotion words that you can try labeling more often in class and specific routines in which you can label and model emotions.

IDEAs that Work
Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education

University of South Florida

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Family Handout: Labeling Emotions

Temperament is a child's unique way of experiencing and reacting to their environment. Understanding your child's emotional patterns can help you better understand why they act the way they do. There are many ways that you can help your child learn about their feelings. We will introduce strategies you can practice at home during everyday interactions and routines.

Try this with your child!

Observe

First, observe your child's facial expressions and gestures (e.g., frowning, pouting, smiling).

Example 1: *Your child is having fun at the neighborhood playground. You tell your child that it is time to leave the playground. How does your child react?*

Example 2: *You bring your child to a child's birthday party. You notice that it is quite crowded with many new faces. What is your child's reaction to this?*

Label

Next, you can describe the child's reaction and label the emotion they may feel.

Example 1: *"I see your face is getting red. Are you feeling angry? I know--it is frustrating because you don't want to leave yet."*

Example 2: *"You're quiet and holding onto me tight. Are you feeling overwhelmed?" OR "I see you looking around and smiling! It is exciting to meet new people, isn't it?"*

Model

You may also talk about your own emotion and model how to express the emotion.

Example 1: *"I get frustrated when I have to leave fun, too. I see you are angry that we have to leave. It is OK to feel angry. When I feel angry, I take a deep breath to calm down."*

Example 2: *"I get overwhelmed when it is too crowded and noisy too. When I am overwhelmed, I find a quiet space to calm down."*

Reflecting on these scenarios, how has your child responded to the similar situations? Understanding your child's temperament (or emotional pattern) can help you respond to your child better!

Feelings Check-in

During daily routines, such as meal times or bed time, try asking your child how they feel ("How are you feeling today?"). Help them identify an emotion word if they cannot express their emotions. You can also ask what they could do to help with the feeling.

It is okay if children do not answer your questions. Try filling in with what you think the answer might be for todders and infants!

In which routine can you practice this activity? Circle one and give it a try today!

Mealtime Playtime Bedtime Bath time Morning routine

Family Engagement Activity: "Emotion Words" Poll

How Many Emotion Words Does Your Child Know?

Place a ★ on the emotion word that your child knows.
You can also place a ● on the word that your child needs to learn!

Disappointed

Excited

Frustrated

Tired

Sad

Overwhelmed

Disgusted

Relaxed

Proud

For the virtually shared poll, you may text,email, or use a communication app to respond.