



Smart Cookie Club
S T A Y • P L A Y • L E A R N

Emotions

Activity Pack

Toddlers and preschoolers are learning so much about themselves and their place in the world. They are often overwhelmed with big emotions, and their seemingly extreme reactions to these emotions (such as tantrums, yelling, hitting, biting) can cause great frustration for parents and caregivers.

How many times have you heard your child scream “No! No! No!” or descend into a meltdown when trying to be independent but a task becomes too challenging? Young children’s brains develop in a way where their receptive language (understanding) exceeds their expressive language (communicating). This can be frustrating for them as they are in the process of learning how to recognize and regulate their emotions.

Young children need to be taught what different emotions and feelings sound and look like. Make sure you model and label the appropriate facial expressions/reactions to your child when they or you experience happiness, excitement, anger, sadness etc. For example, if your child has tasted a new food for the first time, comment: “Mommy is so proud and happy that you tried your broccoli! Look at my big smile!” With repeated modeling and experience, your children will learn to identify their own feelings and be aware while understanding and responding appropriately to others’ emotions.

Learning to master big emotions and the associated social skills of emotional regulation helps children to succeed not just in childhood but throughout their life-time. This collection of play-based activities is perfect for engaging your child in recognizing, thinking and talking about emotions - an important first step in the process of learning to manage and express emotions appropriately.

Click the titles below to follow the circle-time links

[My Emotions Are a Part of Me - Rhyme](#)

[Sorting Emotions - Game](#)

[Grumpy Monkey - by: Suzanne Lang \(Read Aloud Story\)](#)

Introduce the topic with sensory balls!

Materials needed: Balloons, playdough, marker.

Activity instructions:

1. Roll your dough into a sausage shape. (You need dough roughly the size of a cupcake, too much and it makes it very difficult to tie the balloon).
2. Stuff the balloon! Stand the playdough sausage upright, then stretch the balloon open as wide as it will go with both hands and lower it onto the dough. Use your thumbs to push the dough into the balloon.

Only fill the round part of the balloon. Pinch and squeeze out and dough that is in the neck part as it will make tying difficult. Also check for air pockets before tying and work these towards the opening.
3. Tie a knot sealing the playdough inside the balloon.
4. Talk about the different emotions with your child as you label each balloon with an emotional expression using your marker.
5. Invite your child to squish and squeeze the balloons using their hands.



Questions and conversation during this activity:

- “How does it make you feel?”
- “Let’s try to change the face by squeezing it!”
- “What are some different ways we could use our hands to manipulate this new sensory ball?”

Keep in mind your child’s skill level and make sure to set them up for success while challenging their abilities. Younger children may need more guidance.

Try to make up some games using these balls. For example you could roll a die and squeeze the ball the number of times which appears on the die, or toss them into a basket.

Reading Emotions (Literacy)

Materials needed: Cardboard, scissors, markers.

Activity instructions:

1. Use your scissors to cut ovals from the cardboard.
2. Draw an expressive face on each oval, representing different types of emotions (happy, sad, frustrated, excited, surprised, scared, nervous, disappointed, etc) using your markers.
3. Cut each face in half (separating the eyes from the mouth) using your scissors.
4. Invite your child to mix and match the faces as you talk about the different emotions and how they become visible on faces.

Another fun way to play this game is by using plastic eggs. Put a small ball of modelling clay in the bottom half of each egg to help them stand upright during the activity.



Revolving Feelings (Language):

Materials needed: Toilet paper roll (or paper towel roll), paper, scissors, markers, tape.

Activity instructions:

- 1. Use your markers to make a row of faces along the top edge of your paper.
- 2. Draw a person’s body and hair/hat on the roll and use your scissors to cut out a circle for the head.
- 3. Roll your paper (with faces drawn across the top) into a cylinder and slide it inside of the roll.
- 4. Invite your child to twist the paper to make new expressions and faces on their person.



Younger children can focus on recognizing and labelling emotions.

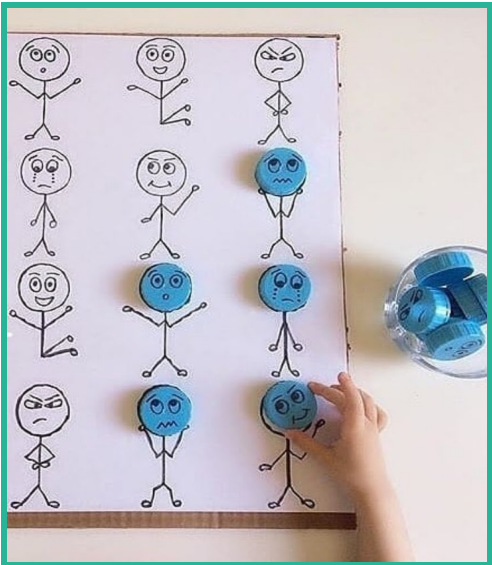
Older children can begin to tell stories about a character who endures a variety of experiences, causing that character to feel a variety of emotions.

Matching Bottle Cap Feely Faces (Math)

Materials needed: Bottle caps (or circles cut from cardboard), paper, permanent marker.

Activity instructions:

- 1. Trace the caps onto your paper.
- 2. Make a stick figure body underneath each cap and an expressive face (eyes and mouth) on each circle.
- 3. Draw corresponding faces on the caps.
- 4. Invite your child to match the feelings.



For younger children, start with only 4-6 caps/emotions. Make this activity more challenging by adding more caps/emotions.

Slim Pickings Match-Up (Fine Motor)

Materials needed: Paper, toilet paper rolls, marker, glue or tape.

Activity instructions:

- 1. Cut your paper into squares (small enough to fit inside to roll without bending).
- 2. Use your marker to make different faces on the rolls and the matching face on the rolls.
- 3. Glue or tape your rolls to a piece of cardboard. (If using glue, let it set before moving to step 4).

(If you don't have enough rolls on hand, use cups or bowls and label with a paper face using tape)

- 4. Invite your child to use their fingers to pick up the small pieces of paper from a flat surface and sort them into the corresponding rolls.



You can make this activity easier by using cardboard or another material to make the squares thicker, or crumple the paper a bit before cutting into squares. The thinner and more flattened to the surface the paper squares are, the more difficult this activity will be for your child.

Did your child master this in no time? Try using tongs or tweezers to pick up the paper squares and sort into the different rolls.

Feely Bag Walk (Sensory)

Materials needed: 3-10 large ziplock bags, sensory materials (eg: water, cornflour, gel, cornstarch, water beads, jello, pom poms, playdough, etc.), strong tape.

Activity instructions:

- 1. Fill your ziplock bags with different sensory materials. For example, you might put pom poms in one bag, corn flour and sparkles in another.
- 2. Seal each bag and tape closed with strong tape (such as packing or duct tape).
- 3. Tape your bags to the floor or a surface where your child will be able to explore them.
- 4. As your child walks across (or explores with their hands) the different textures, talk about how each one feels and how our emotions also make us feel different ways.



Younger toddlers will get the most benefit from experiencing the sensory stimulation through their feet.

Light Box (Science)

Materials needed: Blue or white light (christmas lights, flashlight or even a small lamp), salt or sugar, 2 clear bins or trays (big enough to fit your light), tape, paintbrush (or use your finger).

Activity instructions:

- 1. Place your light on the floor and one of your bins over your light.
- 2. Stack the second bin upright on top of the bin covering the lights.
- 3. Add ½-1 inch of salt or sugar to the bottom of your second bin.
- 4. Invite your child to use their paintbrush to make marks, letters, numbers, or shapes in the salt or sugar.

As your child makes marks, the light shines through, calming sensory input and enhancing neuroplasticity.



Painting with our Feet (Creative)

Materials needed: Paint, shallow tray or plate, large paper or cardboard, tape, damp cloth for cleanup.

Activity instructions:

1. Tape your large paper or cardboard to the floor (or hold in place with rocks if outside).
2. Place your paint into your shallow tray.
3. Invite your child to step their foot into the paint and then walk on the paper to make footprints with the paint.



Changing Faces (Building):

Materials needed: 8 x two-legged round head fasteners, face shape cut outs (1 large circle, 2 small circles, 2 eyes, 2 straight lines, 1 triangle and 1 semicircle), tape.

Activity instructions:

1. Use your scissors to cut out the required shapes from cardboard.
2. Insert the round head fasteners through each eye, eyebrow, nose and mouth. Then insert each figure again onto the face and close the fasteners at the back.
3. Invite your child to twist, turn, spin and manipulate the facial figures to create different expressions.

Various expressions can be recreated: happy, sad, angry, furious, surprised, embarrassed, worried, disappointed, happy, proud, confident, fun, etc.



My House (Pretend or Cooperative Play):

Through pretend play children learn about themselves and the world, develop important complex social and higher order thinking skills while synthesizing knowledge and skills.

Pretend play experiences are some of the first ways children learn about their likes and dislikes, their interests, and their abilities. Dolls or characters often become versions of the child themselves and offer a safe way for them to express new ideas and feelings.

Offering pretend play experiences also cultivates social and emotional intelligence. For example, reading social cues, recognizing and regulating emotions, negotiating and taking turns, and engaging in a long-term activity that is mutually beneficial. How we interact with others is key to our lifelong success and happiness.

Pretending is also a great way to work out confusing, scary, or new life issues. Have you ever witnessed your child pretending to visit the doctor? This is their way of exploring an experience that is common



and sometimes confusing or scary. Through these role plays, children become more comfortable and prepared for life events in a secure manner.

- **Use stories:** Invite your children to recreate a favorite story or take it further and add their own twist. During your pretending game, prompt their ideas by asking questions such as: “What do you think happened next?” or “What if the dog wasn’t able to find his bone?”
- **Provide dolls and puppets:** These don’t have to be store-bought; they can be cut out of paper or made from socks. Make your own multicultural characters using paint samples, popsicle sticks and googly eyes.
- **Add some characters** using recycled bottles: Fill the bottles with different colours to represent the different emotions. For example, mad or angry might be represented in red. Make faces on your bottles and don’t forget to seal the lid with either glue or tape.
- **Create “prop boxes”:** Prop boxes are boxes (or bins, crates, or bags) with themed dramatic play materials in them. It’s like having a creative experience in a box.
- **Make time:** No material, environment, or story can take the place of uninterrupted time to play and explore ideas. Pretend play doesn’t fit nicely into twenty minute segments. Be ok with leaving a post office in the living room for a few days to allow your children to fully explore and enhance their creative explorations.



Yoga or Mindful Movement (Gross Motor - Movement)

Materials Needed: NONE! ([watch this video ahead of time](#)).

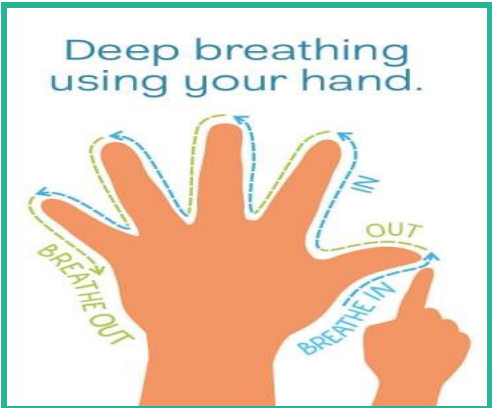
Activity Instructions:

1. [Watch the video](#) ahead of time to learn how to implement these practices with young children. Lisa Thomas Prince, an outreach specialist with the Center for Healthy Minds, shares a practice for young learners to promote well-being.
2. Act out different animals, moving your body as you take deep breaths.



Take Five - A Deep Breathing Exercise

1. Stretch your hand open like a star.
2. Get your pointer finger ready to trace your fingers up and down.
3. Slide up each finger **slowly** as you breathe in through your nose, and then down each finger again breathing out through your mouth.



4. Trace up and down your fingers as you slowly breathe in and out.

By practicing this regularly with your child during calm moments, you are offering a useful tool for your child to use to regulate their own emotions.

Butterfly Guided Meditation Story (by: Mary Wolff):

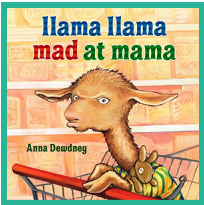
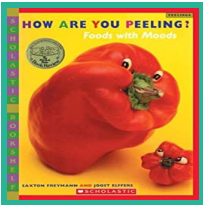
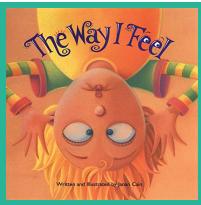
Click here to follow the link to YouTube or visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APBp3NU0OA0>

Book Recommendations: (Click the titles below to follow the Amazon links)

The way I Feel - by: Janan Cain

Llama Llama Mad at Mama - by: Anna Dewdney

How are you peeling? - by: Saxton Freymann & Joost Elffers



We hope you have enjoyed these activities!
Please let us know if you have any comments or suggestions and feel free to share your photos and stories about these activities!

Activity Pack created and produced by Mary Wolff
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LEARNING THROUGH PLAY WITH
Smart Cookie Club
EVERY DAY!