



Week 1 Toolkit · Family Version

The First Stroke of Emotion – Safe Expression Through Doodling

IAETDAA | International Arts Education & Therapy Development Academic Association

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1. Toolkit Basic Information

Item	Details
Age Range	3-12 years (see age-specific guidance for different ages)
Duration per Session	10-20 minutes
Recommended Frequency	3-4 times per week, or whenever your child experiences obviously emotional fluctuations
Best Time	Before bed, after emotions have settled, quiet weekend afternoons
Materials Needed	White paper (A4 or A3), oil pastels/markers/colored pencils (at least 6 colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, black/gray)

2. Core Principles (Must Read for Parents)

Before you begin, remember these three rules:

No judging – Don't say "does it look right" or "is that the right color"

No interrogating – Don't push with "why did you draw that" or "who made you angry"

Just accompany – Your job is to hand over paper, nod, and say "thank you"

Why?

Because a child's emotional expression is very fragile. A frown or a "what is that supposed to be" can make a child shut down immediately. Our goal is not "to create a beautiful artwork" – it is to let the child feel: **Here, any emotion I have is safe.**

3. Age-Specific Guidance

Ages 3-5 (Preschool)

Characteristics: Limited verbal expression; doodling consists mainly of random lines and color blocks

How to guide:

Don't ask "what did you draw" – ask "what color did you use?"

Parents can draw and talk: "I'm using blue to draw a wave because I feel very calm right now."

Allow drawing outside the paper, on hands – this is not "making trouble," it's exploration

Expected outcome: The child picking up a marker is already a success

Ages 6-8 (Early Elementary)

Characteristics: Begin to develop representational drawing skills, but also more susceptible to pressure about "drawing well"

How to guide:

If the child says "I can't draw," parents can say: "Let's scribble together and see who can make the weirdest lines."

Introduce "emotion-color" discussions: "What color is anger? What color is fear?"

Don't judge "does it look real" – just say "that's an interesting color"

Expected outcome: The child can use colors to distinguish different emotions

Ages 9-12 (Upper Elementary)

Characteristics: Increased self-awareness, may resist "babyish" activities, but internal emotions are more complex

How to guide:

Change the framing: "This isn't drawing – it's making a map of your mood."

Offer black pens or fine-liners – they may prefer these

Respect privacy: "You can show me if you want, or keep it to yourself – either is fine"

Expected outcome: The child is willing to doodle independently, or share a sentence or two afterward

4. Detailed Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1: Set the Atmosphere (2 minutes)

Environment preparation:

Turn off the TV, put your phone aside

Choose a well-lit, quiet corner

Place paper and markers neatly on the table

Opening scripts (choose one):

"Today let's play a color game – no competition, no grading."

"Let's draw something together – anything, any way you want."

"I feel like drawing. Want to join me?"

If the child says "I don't want to draw":

Don't say "why aren't you cooperating"

Say: "Okay, then watch me draw." Then start drawing yourself. The child will often join in after a few minutes.

Step 2: Open the Conversation (2-3 minutes)

With a curious tone, chat with your child about the relationship between emotions and colors (this is not a lesson – just casual talk):

You can ask:

"If happiness had a color, what color would it be?"

"What about anger? What color is anger?"

"What color is fear? What color is sadness?"

Important: Don't correct your child's answers. If they say "anger is pink" or "sadness is rainbow colors" – that's fine.

Parents can also go first:

"I think happiness is yellow, like the sun."

"Sometimes when I'm angry, my heart feels red."

Purpose: Not to teach your child the "correct" emotion-color associations, but to let them know – **emotions can be talked about, and colors can represent feelings.**

Step 3: Free Doodling (5-10 minutes)

Make the invitation:

"Now, can you draw what color 'the you right now' is?"

Or: "Draw a little monster from inside your heart – it can look however you want."

The parent's role during the process:

Do this	Don't do this
Watch quietly	Keep asking "what are you drawing"
Nod occasionally or say "mm-hmm"	Say "you should fill this in"
When the child pauses, ask "want to add more?"	Take photos (unless the child agrees)
At the end, say "thank you for showing me your drawing"	Judge "that's so good / that looks so real"

Special reminders:

If the child draws very quickly (finishes in 1-2 minutes), ask: "Want to add anything else?" If they say no, stop.

If the child draws for a long time (more than 15 minutes), gently say: "Want to take a break? We can continue tomorrow."

Step 4: Sharing and Closing (3-5 minutes)

After drawing, parents can ask (**no more than two questions**):

Gentle questions:

"What does this color/shape make you think of?" (not "what is this")

"When you were drawing, was your hand light or heavy?"

"Is there anywhere in this drawing that feels comfortable – even just a little?"

If the child doesn't want to talk:

Don't say "then what was the point of drawing"

Say: "That's okay – you don't have to say anything. Would you like to give this drawing a name? Or not – either is fine."

Closing statement (must say):

"Thank you for sharing your drawing with me."

Let the child choose what happens to the drawing:

"Do you want to hang this on the wall, put it away, or fold it into a paper airplane?"

Give complete choice to the child. If they say "throw it away," respect that.

5. Common Questions and Responses

What the child does	What parents can do
"I can't draw"	"Let's scribble together and see who can make the weirdest lines." Parent starts by drawing a random line.
Draws a few strokes then stops	Don't criticize. Offer a new sheet: "That's okay – want to try again?" If they refuse three times in a row, pause the activity and try another day.
Only uses black/dark colors	Don't ask "why is it all black." Next time, suggest: "How about we try using the brightest colors today?"
Draws scary things (monsters, blood, explosions)	Don't show shock. Say: "This looks very powerful." Observe your child's behavior and sleep over the next few days. If continuous unusual patterns appear, consult a professional.
Cries and says they don't want to draw anymore	Stop immediately. Give a hug (if the child accepts) or sit quietly with them. Say: "We'll stop. We can try again another time."
After drawing, is very happy and	Listen actively without interrupting. Say: "Thank you for telling me all

What the child does	What parents can do
talks a lot	this. I cherish that you're willing to share."

6. Weekly Checklist

Parents can print this checklist to track the week's activities:

Date	Activity Done (✓)	Child's Emotional State (Before → After)	Observation Notes
Monday			
Wednesday			
Friday			
Weekend			

Success Criteria (keep expectations low):

- ✓ The child picked up a marker (even if just to make a dot)
- ✓ The child drew for more than 1 minute
- ✓ The child said one word (even "done")
- ✓ The child is willing to try again tomorrow

What NOT to expect:

- ✗ A "beautiful" artwork
- ✗ Clear naming of emotions
- ✗ Willingness to draw every single time

7. Extension Activities (Optional)

If your child enjoys doodling, try these:

Activity 1: Emotion Matching Game

Cut a previous doodle into 3-4 pieces

Ask your child to put it back together, asking: "What emotion does this piece feel like?"

Activity 2: Weekly Emotion Diary

Prepare a sheet of paper with 7 circles drawn on it

Each day, ask your child to fill one circle with the color of their "main emotion" that day

No explanation required – just recording

Activity 3: Emotion Bingo

Prepare a 3x3 grid. Write one emotion in each square (happy, angry, sad, scared, calm, surprised, bored, excited, hurt)

Each time your child feels an emotion during the week, they mark that square with a small symbol

At the weekend, see which emotion appeared the most

8. A Final Word for Parents

You are not a therapist. You don't need to "fix" your child's emotions. You only need to do one thing: let your child know that any emotion they have can be held.

This week, start with a marker. Take it slowly.

Toolkit Version: June 2026 · Week 1 · Family Version (Detailed Edition)

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