

Family Engagement Activities

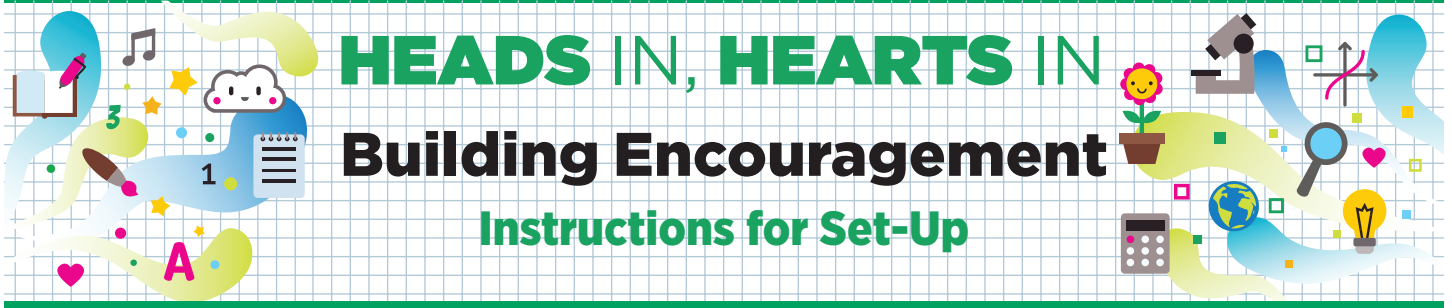
The Heads In, Hearts In family engagement program encourages families to use their minds (putting their “heads in”) as a tool to expand their knowledge around a variety of topic areas. By creating a shared educational experience, the family unit will work, grow and learn together, putting their “hearts in” to the process.

This unit contains the following:

- ▶ Building Encouragement
- ▶ Calming Jar
- ▶ Calming Scavenger Hunt
- ▶ Copycats
- ▶ Feelings Fort
- ▶ Feelings Puppet Show
- ▶ The Feelings Song
- ▶ Guess What Feeling
- ▶ Head to Toe
- ▶ Matching Feelings
- ▶ Peekaboo Feelings
- ▶ Reading With Emotions
- ▶ Ready, Set, Go!
- ▶ Sign & Gestures
- ▶ Stop & Go
- ▶ Why I Love You



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HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Building Encouragement

Instructions for Set-Up

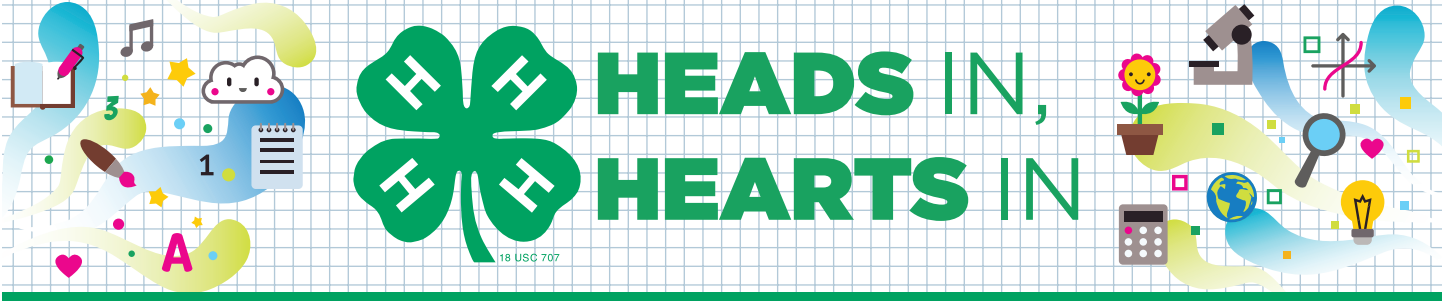
Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- Craft pipe cleaners
- Other building materials (blocks, Legos [or similar], boxes)
- Paper
- Crayons
- “Encouragement” handout
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Encouragement” handout.





Building Encouragement

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, strong emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle them, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission to feel the way they do, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies. Children need adults in their lives who are engaged, tuned in and love them unconditionally.

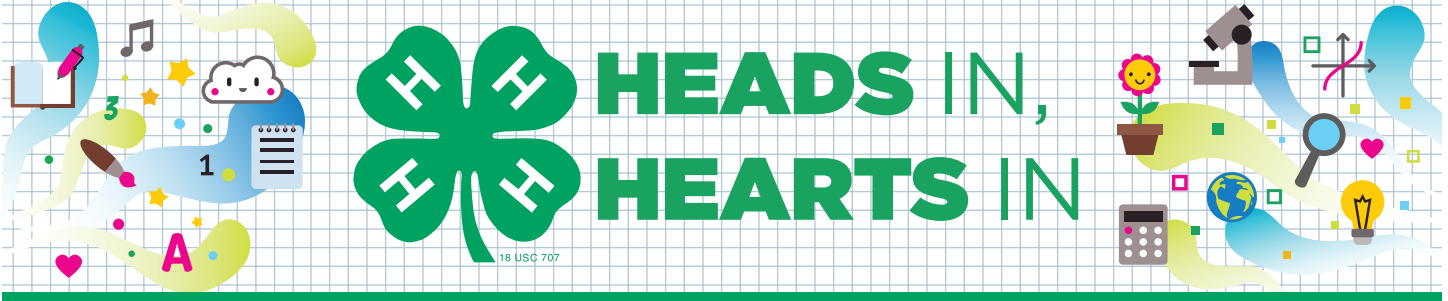
Encouraging children and communicating love to them helps build their **self-concept** (the way they feel about themselves). Encouragement can be a powerful tool for getting children to behave and reinforcing positive behaviors. Think of encouragement as investing in the child; every time you encourage them, you build them up.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will build something with the child and encourage their efforts along the way. Practicing encouraging your child can help you build a strong, supportive relationship with them while developing a positive emotional connection.

Instructions

1. Choose an activity to do with the child (drawing, creating with pipe cleaners, or building with blocks, boxes or some other material that you have).
2. Tell the child you will be building or making something together. Work together with the child to build or make something, making sure that each of you have a chance to add to the creation.
3. As you build, give the child specific positive encouragements. Focus on the process and avoid evaluating or judging. Try phrases such as, "I noticed that you chose the green crayon and you are making big green circles on the paper," or "Wow! You were looking for a place to fit that yellow block and you kept looking until you found one." Use the "Encouragement" handout for ideas on what to say.
4. When you are both done with the creation, talk about the hard work involved and encourage the child by talking about their strengths: "We worked so hard to build this together. I like working together with you. You are so creative."
5. Repeat this encouragement exercise when doing tasks with the child.

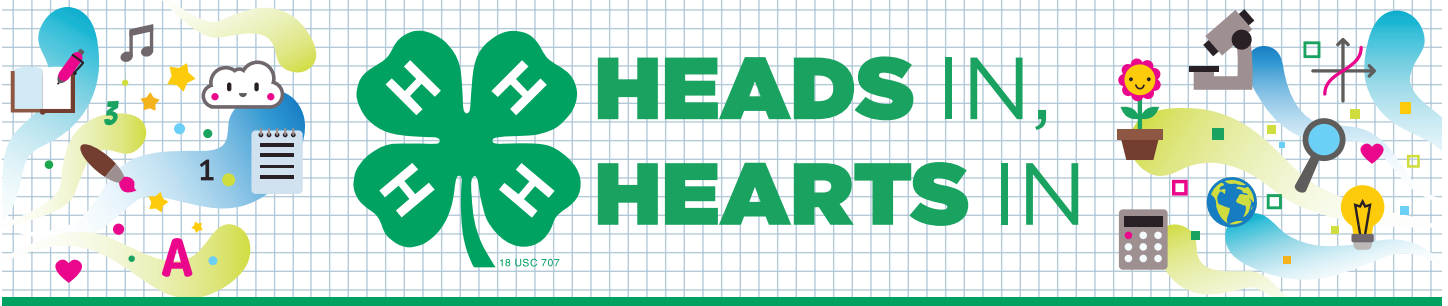


Building Encouragement

Encouragement Handout

Tips for Encouraging Young Children:

- ▶ **Call attention to desired behavior.** It's easy to point out when children are doing something wrong. Even with the best intentions of trying to discourage negative behavior, this method doesn't teach children what they should do. Pay attention to the behavior you want more of. When the child shares, waits their turn or takes a deep breath before they yell in anger, give them lots of positive attention. Children will repeat any behaviors that get attention. Children want lots of positive attention from you, and if they don't get it, they will accept negative attention. Talking about what the child did in a positive and specific way also teaches them what is important. Do it in a way that avoids making them feel guilty or shameful. You are "catching them being good" and commenting on it in a respectful way.
- ▶ **Focus on the process.** Nobody is perfect. If we encouraged only perfection, the child would never be encouraged. Pay attention to the process, their effort and their feelings about it. Instead of a general "Great work!" or "Nice job," talk about what you noticed. "You worked hard to clean up your toys. I see that you found all the cars and put them on the shelf." If you're having trouble getting started, try starting with the phrase, "I notice. . ." Encouraging the child's process will help them appreciate their own hard work and will encourage them to keep trying and practice persistence.
- ▶ **Be specific.** This helps the child know exactly the behavior you are encouraging. When the toddler comes to the dinner table with clean hands, you say, "You washed with soap! That's good!" Avoid general praise like "Terrific!" or "Wonderful!"
- ▶ **Avoid the "but."** It is easy to encourage the child while also trying to teach them a lesson: "You helped your brother find his shoes, but you didn't put your own shoes on like I asked." These messages can be confusing, and the child will often only hear the second part of the sentence, and not the encouragement. Try separating instructions from your encouragement: "You helped your brother find his shoes. Let's see if we can find yours together."
- ▶ **Be genuine.** Make your words match your body language and voice. Smile, make eye contact, give a thumbs-up, say the child's name, and add in some hugs and kisses whenever possible. When children feel seen and appreciated, they feel secure, loved and encouraged.

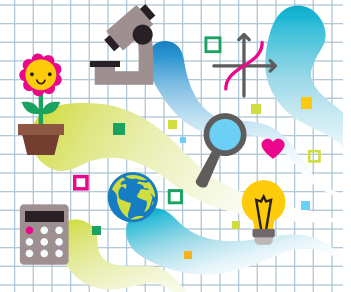


- ▶ **Be a model for self-encouragement.** Encourage yourself out loud in front of the children for something you did. “I was having such a hard time figuring out how to fix the TV, but I kept trying and I figured it out. Go me!” Modeling self-praise will teach the child to value their own work and give them the words to describe their feelings.
- ▶ **Just imagine.** Parents of challenging children can feel overwhelmed and discouraged. That alone can make it difficult to notice their positive behaviors. Come up with a list of things you really like about the child (forgiving, creative, enthusiastic) and think about the behaviors you would like to see less of (hitting, yelling, talking back). Picture in your mind the child doing the exact opposite of those negative behaviors (keeping their hands to themselves, using calm words, listening to you). Now treat the child as if they are already capable of behaving that way



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Calming Jar Instructions for Set-Up



Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- Clear plastic container such as a water bottle, pop bottle, juice bottle or mason jar with a top
- Warm water
- Liquid food coloring
- Clear tacky glue (3 ounces)
- Glitter glue (3 ounces)
- Glitter (ultrafine if possible)
- Strong holding glue (such as Super Glue)
- Paper towels (for cleanup as needed)
- Plastic tablecloth
- Display table

Activity Preparation

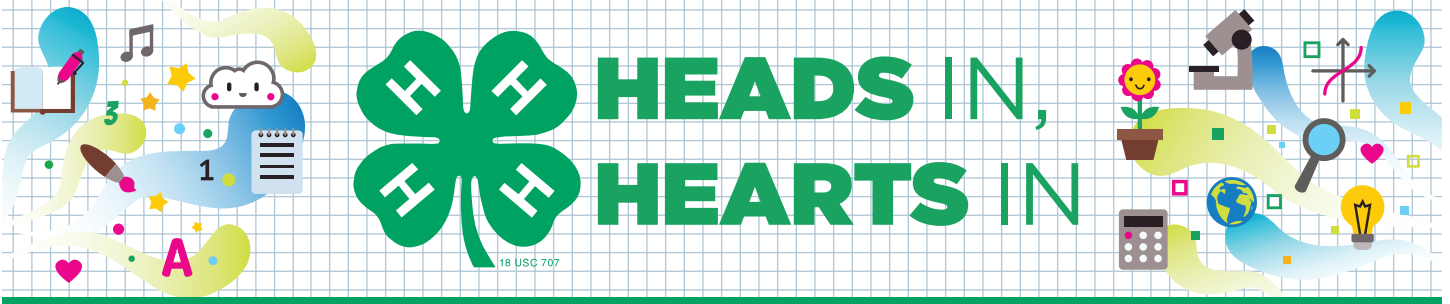
- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Arrange the supplies, making sure to keep strong holding glue out of reach of young children.

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Arrange the supplies, making sure to keep strong holding glue out of reach of young children.



The “Calming Jar” activity also appears in two places on the Michigan State University Extension website as “Calming Jar Instructions” as part of MI Stronger Family and as “Calming Jar Instructions” in the Early Childhood Development section:
<https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/calming-jar-instructions>



Calming Jar

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle their strong emotions, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission for their emotions, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies.

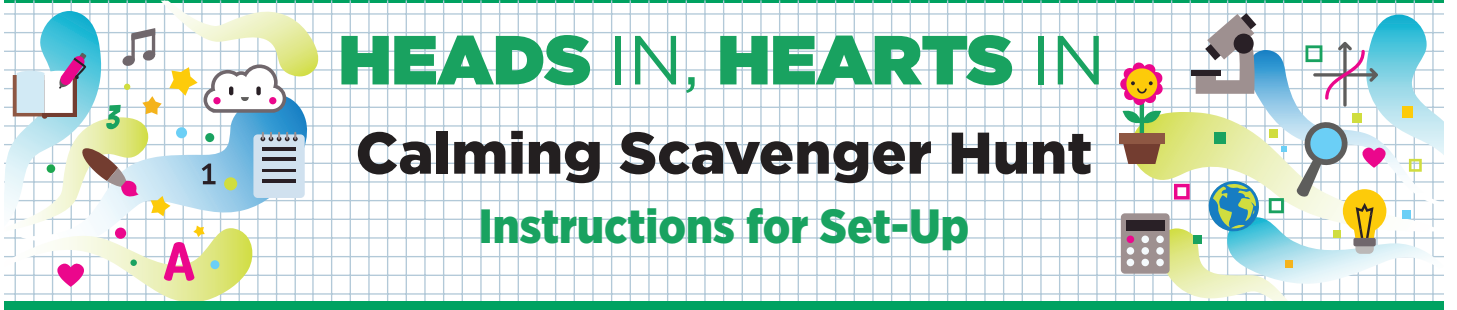
Self-regulation means controlling your own thoughts, feelings and behaviors. A calming jar can help children learn how to control their emotions and to self-regulate. Since young children find it hard to self-regulate, it takes lots of practice and support from you. As the adult, you can help by showing them techniques and methods to get their brains back to cool and calm when they experience strong emotions.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will make a calming jar with the child. As you make the calming jar, let the child choose the colors and add the ingredients. Once the calming jar is made, shake it up and encourage the child to watch the glitter slowly settle to the bottom of the jar. When the child is feeling overwhelmed or experiencing a strong emotion, encourage them to shake up the jar and wait for the glitter to settle to the bottom of the jar. This gives them a few moments to calm down and manage their strong feelings. Have them shake up the calming jar as many times as they need until they feel calmer.

Instructions

1. Clean out the container and remove any labels so you can see through the container.
2. Fill the container $\frac{3}{4}$ full of warm water.
3. Add a few drops of food coloring (add more or less depending on the size of your container). Note: You do not want the water in your jar to be so dark that you cannot see the glitter.
4. Add clear tacky glue, glitter glue and glitter. Place the lid tightly back on the jar and shake it up until the tacky glue, glitter glue and glitter dissolve into the water. Note: Try adding a little bit of each ingredient at a time, putting the lid back on tightly and shaking it up to see how it looks. This way you do not put too much of anything in. Use paper towels as needed for cleanup.
5. Use the strong holding glue to glue the top onto your calming jar.
6. Shake up the jar and enjoy! **Note: Wait a few hours for the holding glue to dry before leaving the child unattended with the jar.**



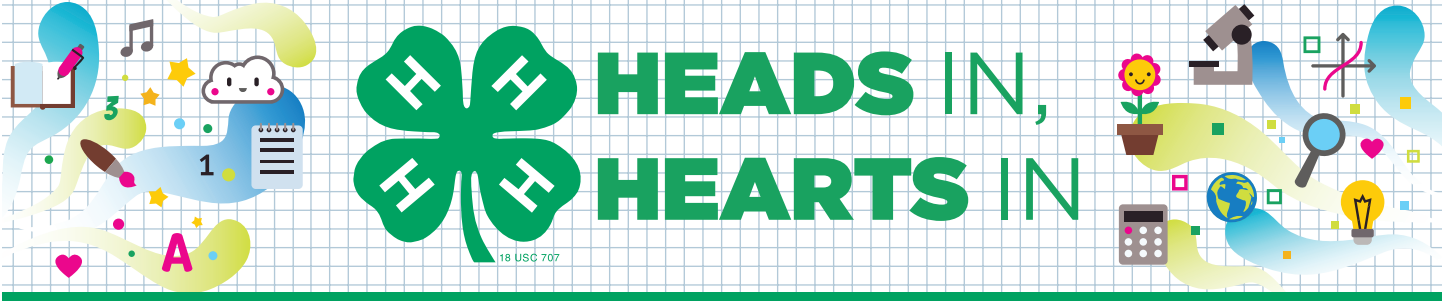
Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- “Calm Cards” handout
- Scissors
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Print and cut out the cards in the “Calm Cards” handouts.
- ▶ Hide the “Calm Cards” throughout the room where the child can find them.





Calming Scavenger Hunt

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

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What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will help the child go on a hunt for calming techniques. Teaching the child lots of ways to help them feel calm and connected when they feel overwhelmed and out of control will help prepare them to handle their big emotions. During the scavenger hunt, you and the child will get to practice five techniques for feeling calm including stretches and breathing techniques.

Instructions

1. After, you have hidden the “Calm Cards,” ask the child to go on a calming scavenger hunt with you. Let them take the lead walking through the room or house trying to find the “Calm Cards.”
2. When you find a card, practice the calming technique mentioned on the card together. Repeat as many times as you want.
3. Then continue the hunt to see if the child can find all of the cards, practicing each technique.
4. Use the cards whenever the child is overwhelmed and needs to find a way to calm down.

Calming Scavenger Hunt

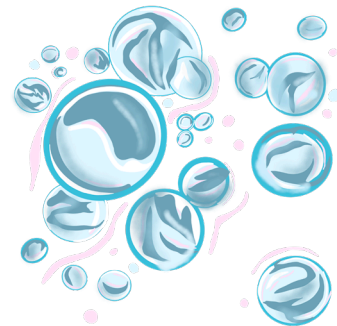
Calm Cards Handout

Card 1: Dragon Breath



Description: Breathe like a dragon! Take a deep breath in through your nose. When you exhale, open your mouth and sigh like you are fogging up a mirror or like you are a dragon breathing fire. When you exhale, see how loud you can breathe your dragon breath. Take two more slow, dragon breaths.

Card 2: Bubble Breathing



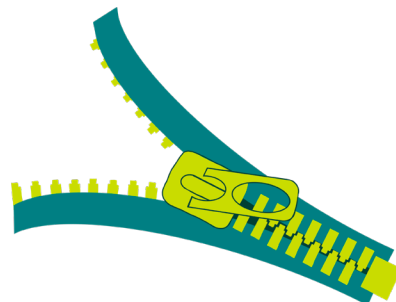
Description: Pretend like you are blowing bubbles! Take a deep breath in through your nose. When you breathe out, purse your lips and gently push the air out of your lungs. Take two more deep, slow bubble breaths.

Card 3: Octopus Arms Stretching



Description: Stretch like an octopus! Lift your left arm up in the air as high as you can, reaching tall. Then, lift your right arm up. Stretch your left arm straight in front of you, reaching forward. Then, lift your right arm forward. Cross your left arm in front of your body, reaching across. Then, cross your right arm in front of you. Stretch your left arm toward your toes, reaching down. Then, stretch your right arm down.

Card 4: Zipper Stretching



Description: Standing up, bend forward over your legs reaching toward the floor. As you take a deep breath in, “zip” your body up stretching your arms high above your head. As you breathe out, “zip” your body back down, slowly folding forward over your legs. Repeat two zipper stretches while breathing deeply.

Calming Scavenger Hunt

Calm Cards Handout, continued

Card 5: Volcano Breathing



Description: Volcanos erupt spewing lava everywhere! Breathe like a volcano! As you breathe in, crouch down pulling your body into a tight ball.

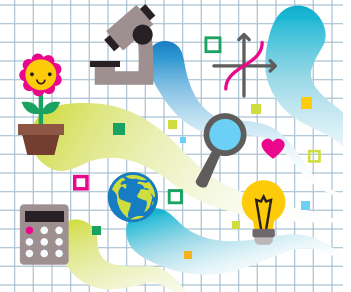
Next, breathe out loudly with your mouth open loudly, standing up and spreading your arms into the air like a volcano spewing lava.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Copycats

Instructions for Set-Up



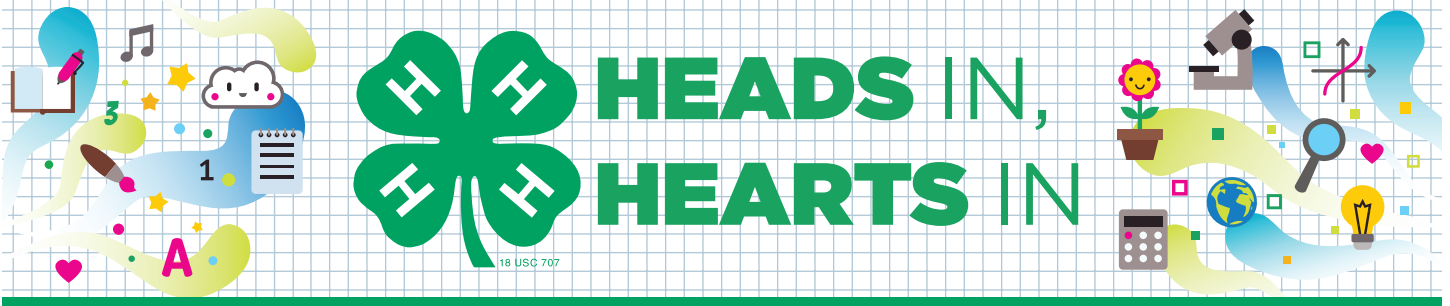
Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- 2 towels or blankets
- Music
- Toys or other household items (blocks, ball, stuffed animal, cup, book, hat, or others)
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Arrange towels or blankets, toys and household items.
- ▶ Arrange display table with instructions.





Copycats

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, strong emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle them, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission to feel the way they do, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies. You can teach them multiple ways to feel calm and then let them decide which technique they want to try.

Young children learn when we try to teach them things, but they also learn through **modeling**, or watching and copying what you do. Children can learn how to handle strong feelings from watching and modeling how adults handle strong feelings.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will practice **modeling** with the child by being copycats. They will practice copying and following you, and you will practice following and copying them as you do various activities. This will help you tune in and pay attention to the child as you copy their behaviors and help the child tune in and pay attention to you.

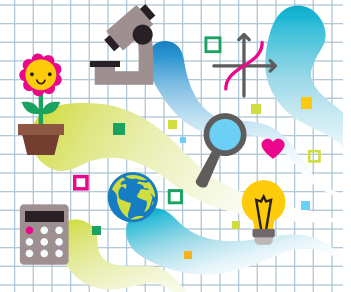
Instructions

1. Tell the child you will be playing a copying game where they have to watch and follow what you do. Make sure the child is calm and ready to play.
2. Start by making a silly face. Say, "Can you make a face just like I am?" Encourage the child when they copy you. Say, "You are making a silly face just like I am!"
3. Next, give the child a towel or blanket and take one for yourself. Hold the towel or blanket above your head and say, "Can you hold your towel (or blanket) as I am doing?" Move your towel or blanket a few times and see if the child can follow you.
4. Turn on some music you and the child enjoy and dance. See if they can move their body like yours. Say, "I am waving my arms above my head? Can you do that?" "I am twisting my hips back and forth! Can you twist your hips like I am?"
5. Continue this activity using any toys or household items you like.
6. Switch roles and tell the child that you will copy them. Follow along, copying their movements and encouraging them. Say, "I am sticking my tongue out just like you are!"
7. If the child loses interest at any time, take a break and try again when they are ready to play.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Feelings Fort Instructions for Set-Up



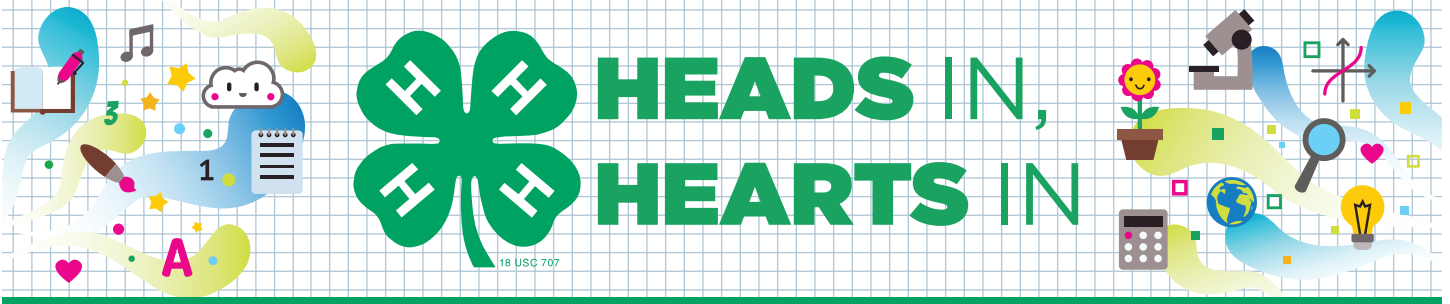
Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- Scissors
- “Calm Cards” handout
- Chairs, couches or other pieces of furniture to help make a fort
- Pillows, blankets, sheets, towels
- Books or other quiet toys
- Crayons and paper
- Stuffed animals or other comfort items
- Calming jar
- “Emotion Cards” handout
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Print and cut out the cards in the “Emotion Cards” and “Calm Cards” handouts.
- ▶ Find a spot appropriate for making a quiet, calm corner.





Feelings Fort

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

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What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will make a feelings fort, a quiet space where a child can calm down when they feel overwhelmed or feel a strong emotion. The child will learn that it is okay to have big feelings and that you will help them feel calm when they experience those big feelings. The child will also learn strategies to help themselves feel calm. They can take some time to get comfortable with blankets and pillows, do a quiet activity such as reading books, use a calming jar or practice other techniques to manage their feelings.

Instructions

1. Tell the child that you will make a feelings fort. A feelings fort is a calm, quiet place where they can calm down when they are feeling overwhelmed. Tell them that all emotions are okay, and it is normal for them to feel many different feelings.
2. Use chairs, couches or other pieces of furniture to build the feelings fort, making sure that it is sturdy enough so it will not fall down on the child.
3. Fill the fort with things that will help the child feel calm including pillows, blankets, sheets, towels, books and other quiet toys, crayons and paper, stuffed animals and other comfort items, and a calming jar.
4. When the child feels overwhelmed or experiences a strong emotion, encourage them to go to their feelings fort to calm down. Tell them that the feelings fort is a safe space for them to feel their big feelings and do some activities that will help them feel calmer. You can use the “Emotion Cards” to talk about the emotions the child is feeling.
5. Use the “Calm Cards” to help the child find strategies to manage their strong feelings. You can either read the cards yourself and become familiar with them so that you have the idea in your mind when it’s time or you can pick a card and read aloud to the child.
6. When the child is feeling calmer, talk about the big emotions they were feeling. Say, “You were feeling so angry. You stomped your feet and yelled. It is okay to feel angry. When you feel angry, you can go to your feelings fort until you are feeling calm.”
7. Encourage the child to go to their feelings fort whenever they need to calm down.

Feelings Fort

Emotion Cards Handout

Angry



Sad



Happy



Worried



Surprised



Afraid



Photos © iStock.com

The "Emotion Cards" handout originally appeared in the *Heads In, Hearts In* activity "Feelings Masks" by Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development, 2017.

Feelings Fort

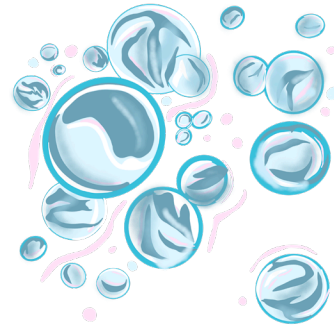
Calm Cards Handout

Card 1: Dragon Breath



Description: Breathe like a dragon! Take a deep breath in through your nose. When you exhale, open your mouth and sigh like you are fogging up a mirror or like you are a dragon breathing fire. When you exhale, see how loud you can breathe your dragon breath. Take two more slow, dragon breaths.

Card 2: Bubble Breathing



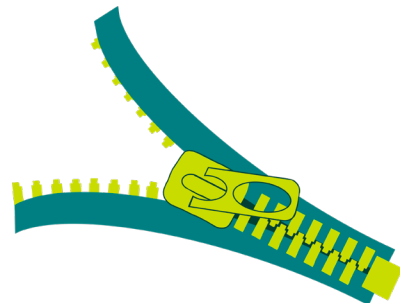
Description: Pretend like you are blowing bubbles! Take a deep breath in through your nose. When you breathe out, purse your lips and gently push the air out of your lungs. Take two more deep, slow bubble breaths.

Card 3: Octopus Arms Stretching



Description: Stretch like an octopus! Lift your left arm up in the air as high as you can, reaching tall. Then, lift your right arm up. Stretch your left arm straight in front of you, reaching forward. Then, lift your right arm forward. Cross your left arm in front of your body, reaching across. Then, cross your right arm in front of you. Stretch your left arm toward your toes, reaching down. Then, stretch your right arm down.

Card 4: Zipper Stretching



Description: Standing up, bend forward over your legs reaching toward the floor. As you take a deep breath in, “zip” your body up stretching your arms high above your head. As you breathe out, “zip” your body back down, slowly folding forward over your legs. Repeat two zipper stretches while breathing deeply.

Feelings Fort

Calm Cards Handout, continued

Card 5: Volcano Breathing



Description: Volcanos erupt spewing lava everywhere! Breathe like a volcano! As you breathe in, crouch down pulling your body into a tight ball.

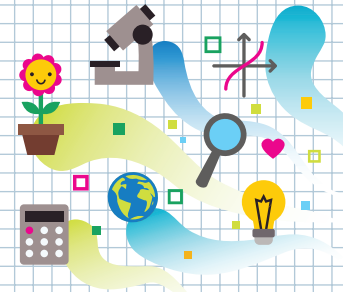
Next, breathe out loudly with your mouth open loudly, standing up and spreading your arms into the air like a volcano spewing lava.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Feelings Puppet Show

Instructions for Set-Up



Supplies

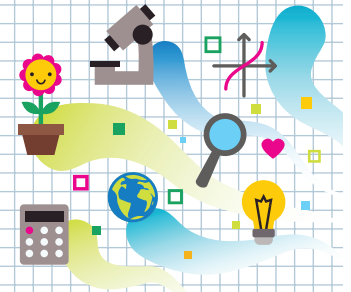
- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- 6 brown paper lunch bags
- “Feelings Chart” handout
- Markers or crayons
- Construction paper (optional)
- Scissors (optional)
- Other craft supplies (glitter, glue, stickers or other) (optional)
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print out “Feelings Chart” handout.
- ▶ Arrange display table with instruction.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN



Feelings Puppet Show

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, strong emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle them, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission to feel the way they do, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies. You can teach them multiple ways to feel calm and then let them decide which technique they want to try.

Emotional literacy, an important life skill, refers to the ability to understand, identify and respond to your own emotions as well as the emotions of other people. Helping children learn to identify and label different emotions will help them build up their emotional literacy.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will create feelings puppets with the child. These feelings puppets will allow the child to practice identifying and acting out emotions. Playing and talking about emotions will help the child understand all the emotions they feel and learn some ways to manage their big feelings.

Instructions

1. Tell the child that you will be making some puppets together.
2. Turn the bag upside down so that the closed end becomes the top and the open end becomes the bottom.
3. Using the “Feelings Chart” handout as a guide, draw a face for each emotion on all six bags: happy, scared, sad, angry, surprised, frustrated.
4. Decorate the bags as much as you want, using additional craft supplies.
5. Encourage the child to pick one of the puppets, and talk about the emotion that they picked: “Your puppet is feeling surprised! Look at her surprised face!”
6. Play with the puppets along with the child and act out the different emotions. Talk about what our faces look like when we feel those feelings. What might we do when we experience those emotions?
7. Leave the puppets where the child can reach them and encourage them to play with the puppets.

Feelings Puppet Show

Feelings Chart Handout

Happy



Scared



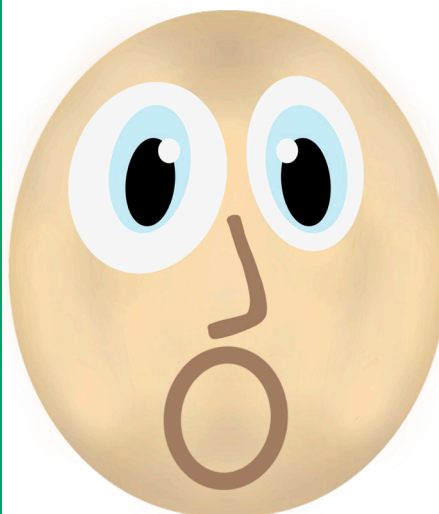
Sad



Angry



Surprised



Frustrated

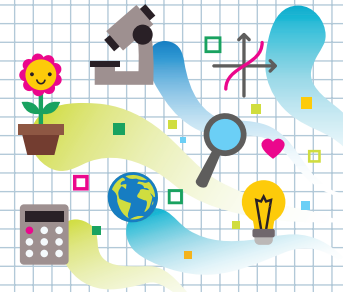




HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

The Feelings Song

Instructions for Set-Up

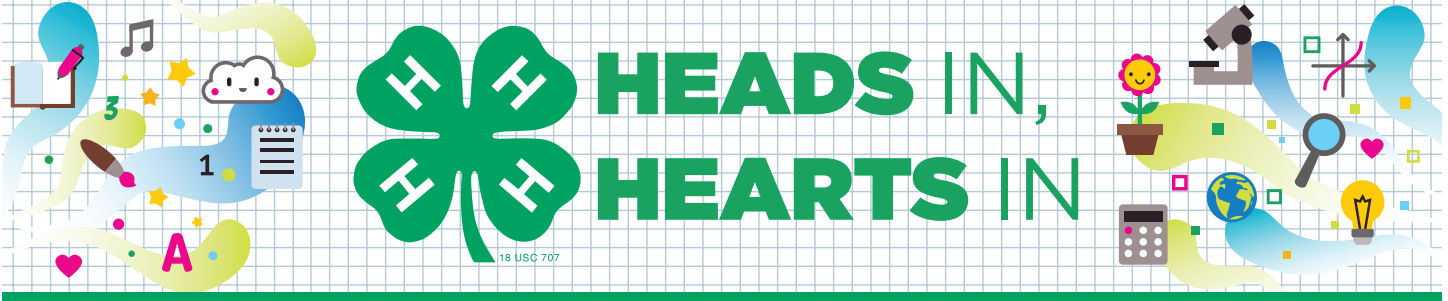


Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- Musical instruments (optional)
- “The Feelings Song” handout
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Print out “The Feelings Song” handout.



The Feelings Song

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, strong emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle them, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission to feel the way they do, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies. You can teach them multiple ways to feel calm and then let them decide which technique they want to try.

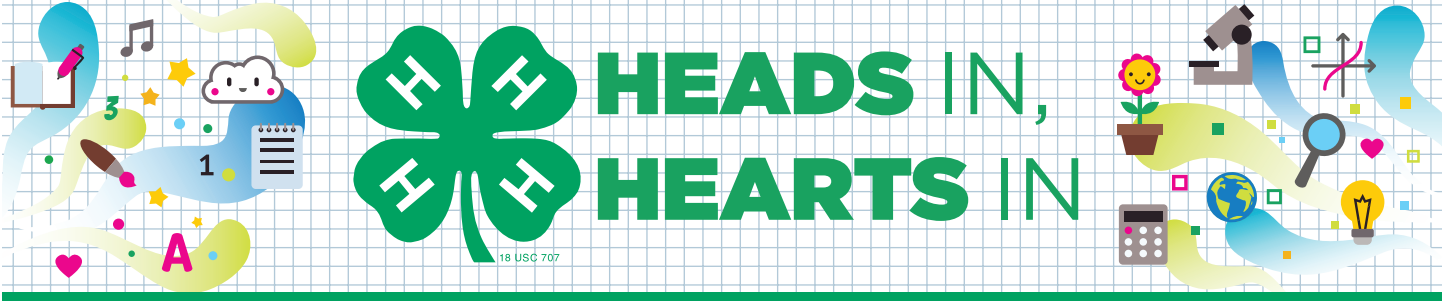
Emotional literacy, an important life skill, refers to the ability to understand, identify and respond to your own emotions as well as the emotions of other people. Helping children learn to identify and label different emotions will help them build up their emotional literacy.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will teach the child a song about feelings. While singing the song, they will practice naming emotions and talk about some strategies for managing those emotions or ways to calm down. You can sing this song with the child whenever they feel a big emotion or if they need help finding ways to calm down when upset.

Instructions

1. Tell the child that you will be learning a new song.
2. Sing “The Feelings Song” to the child, showing them the motions for each verse of the song.
3. Sing the song several times with the child, encouraging them to sing along with you.
4. Sing the song with the child periodically, and remind them that when they feel strong emotions, there is always something they can do to help themselves feel better.



The Feelings Song

The Feelings Song Handout

Sing to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It.”

If you’re angry and you know it take deep breaths. Deep breaths! (Take a deep breath.)

If you’re scared and you know it, cuddle close. Nice and close! (Hug the child close.)

If you’re frustrated and you know it ask for help. Please help! (Reach your hands out as if asking for help.)

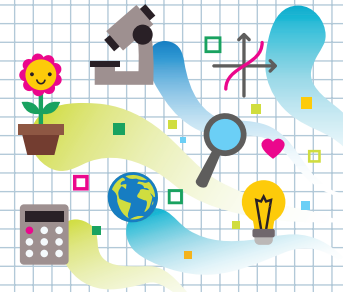
If you’re happy and you know it, smile big. Real big! (Smile.)



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Guess What Feeling

Instructions for Set-Up



Supplies

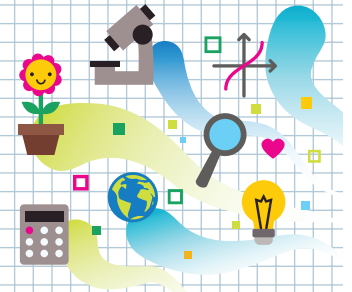
- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- “Feelings Chart” handout
- Miniature snacks such as small bits of cereal, blocks or other small toy or item
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Print out the “Feelings Chart” handout.
- ▶ Arrange display table with instructions.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN



Guess What Feeling

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, strong emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle them, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission to feel the way they do, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies. You can teach them multiple ways to feel calm and then let them decide which technique they want to try.

Emotional literacy, an important life skill, refers to the ability to understand, identify and respond to your own emotions as well as the emotions of other people. Helping children learn to identify and label different emotions will help them build up their emotional literacy.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will use a feelings chart to help the child identify and name their emotions. This is a great opportunity to talk about feelings with the young child and to label or name the feelings that they see. Teaching the child to label their emotions will help them name how they are feeling and learn ways to manage strong emotions. When the child experiences these emotions throughout their day or you notice these emotions while reading books or on television, talk to the child about what emotions you see.

Instructions

1. Tell the child that you will be playing a game called "Guess What Feeling."
2. Pick one of the emotions on the feelings chart and tell the child, "We are going to look and see if we can find the happy face."
3. Give them a miniature snack or small toy and ask them to put it on the happy face.
4. Help them find the correct emotion by describing what that face looks like: "The happy face is smiling."
5. Once they find the correct emotion, talk about what it is like to feel that emotion: "You feel so happy when we have pasta for dinner because it's your favorite. You smile and jump up and down."
6. Repeat the game, helping the child find and label the other emotions.
7. Post the "Feelings Chart" handout somewhere where the child can see it. When the child is feeling an emotion on the chart, point it out. Say, "You are feeling so angry. The angry face looks like this. When you are angry, you can say, 'I am angry.'"

Guess What Feeling

Feelings Chart Handout

Happy



Scared



Sad



Angry



Surprised



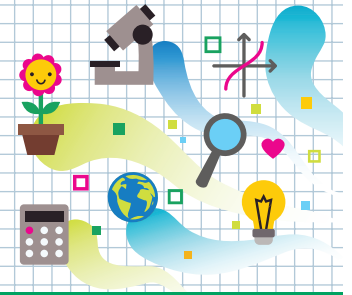
Frustrated





HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Head to Toe Instructions for Set-Up



Supplies

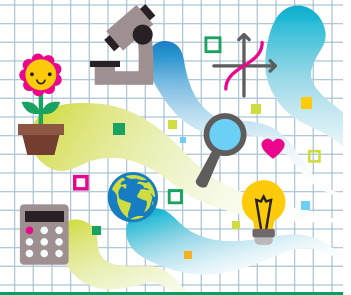
- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- “Head to Toe” handout
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Print out one copy of the “Head to Toe” handout.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN



Head to Toe Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle their strong emotions, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission for their emotions, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies.

You can teach them multiple ways to feel calm and then let them decide which technique they want to try.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will teach the child a technique for feeling calm by doing a head-to-toe body scan. A body scan is like a check-in with your body to see if you are holding tension in your muscles. Paying attention and taking slow, deep breaths can help you lessen any stress the child might be feeling and bring on feelings of calm.

Instructions

1. Tell the child that you are going to practice an activity together called “Head to Toe” in which you will do a check-in to see how their body is feeling.
2. Encourage the child to lay down comfortably or stand if they would prefer.
3. Using the body scan “Head to Toe” handout as a guide, help the child notice and pay attention to their whole body.
4. Starting with toes, ask the child to notice their toes. They can wiggle their toes or squeeze them tightly and then relax them.
5. Pause and encourage the child to take a deep breath.
6. Next, ask the child to notice their feet. They can wiggle their feet or squeeze them tightly and then relax them.
7. Pause and encourage the child to take a deep breath.
8. Continue on in this way until you have covered all of the body parts listed on the handout and the child is calm.

Head to Toe

Head to Toe Handout

Toes

Feet

Belly

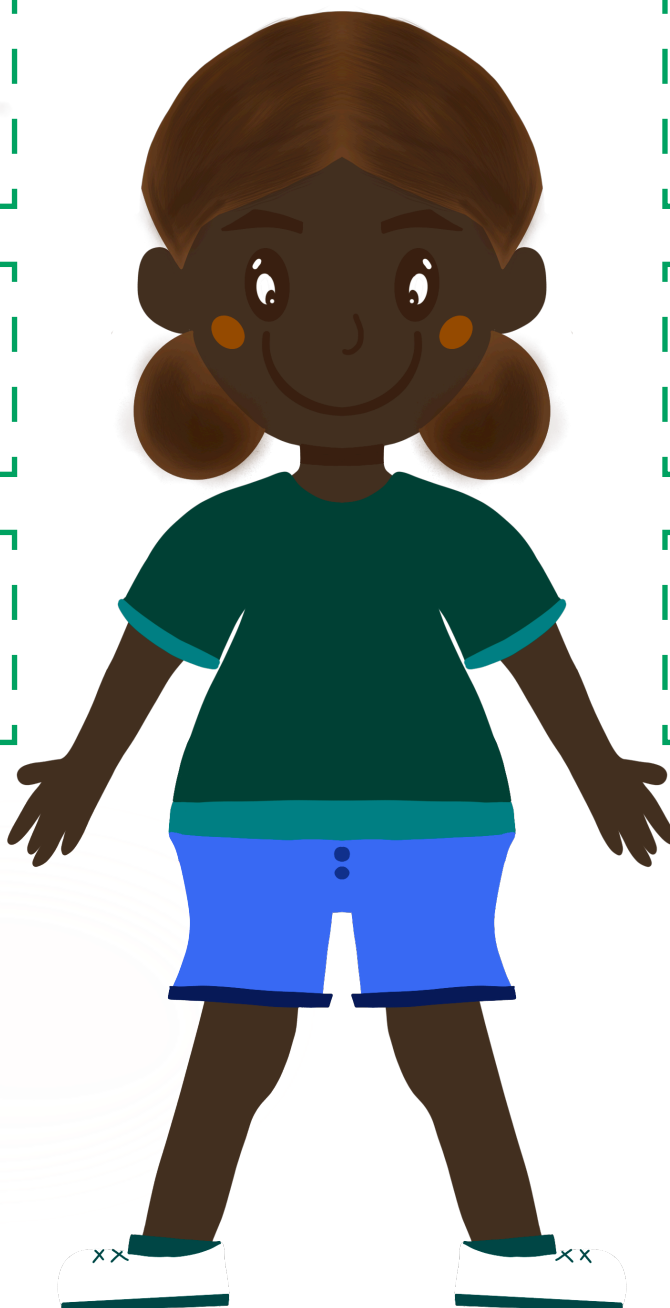
Legs

Shoulder

Arms

Hands

Face



Head to Toe

Head to Toe Handout, continued

Toes

Feet

Belly

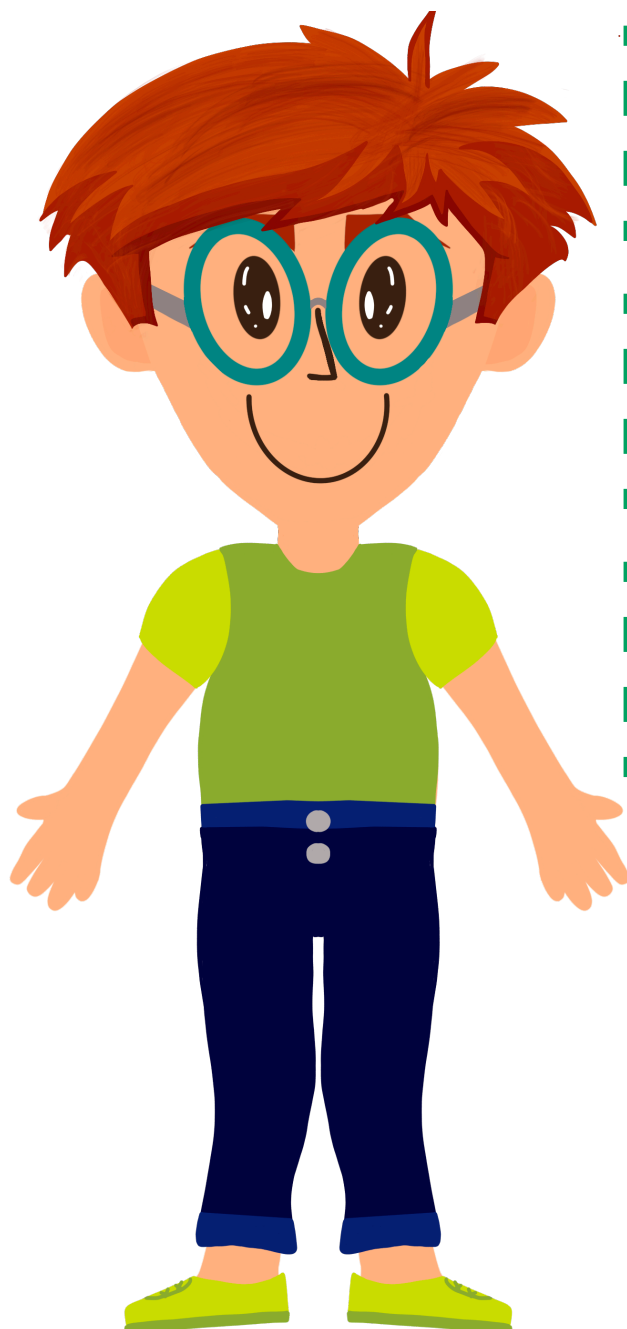
Legs

Shoulder

Arms

Hands

Face

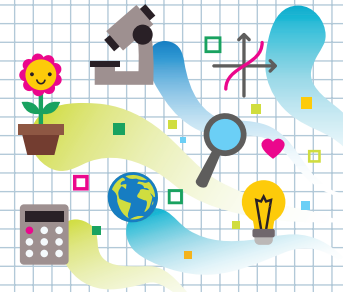




HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Matching Feelings

Instructions for Set-Up

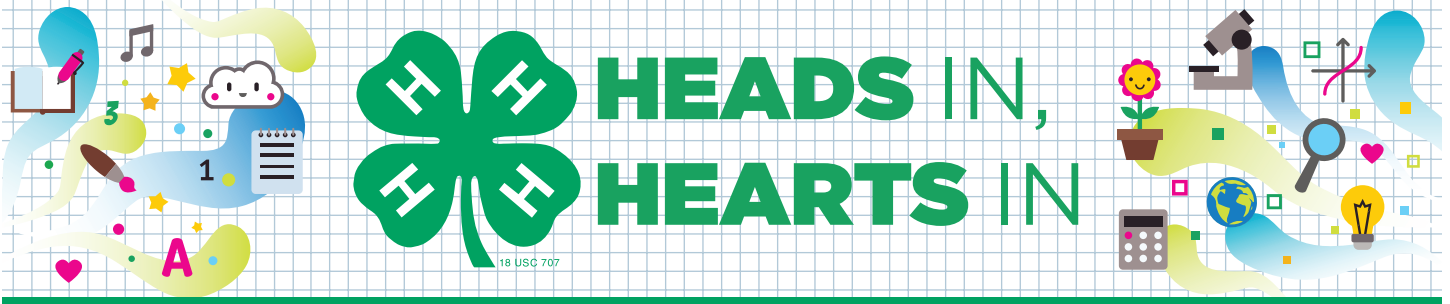


Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- “Emotion Cards” handout (2 copies)
- Scissors
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Print and cut out two sets of the cards from the “Emotion Cards” handout.
- ▶ Take both sets of “Emotion Cards” and mix them up. Place them face down on a table or the floor.



Matching Feelings

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle their strong emotions, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission for their emotions, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies.

Emotional literacy, an important life skill, refers to the ability to understand, identify and respond to your own emotions as well as the emotions of other people. Helping children learn to identify and label different emotions will help them build up their emotional literacy.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will help the child match “Emotion Cards.” This is a great opportunity to talk about feelings and emotions with the young child and to label or name the feelings and emotions that they see. Ask the child to look at what the person’s face looks like and to say the name of the feeling out loud. When the child experiences these emotions throughout their day or you notice these emotions while reading books or on television, talk to the child about what emotions you see.

Instructions

1. Tell the child that you will be playing a matching game together.
2. Ask the child to flip one of the “Emotion Cards” over. Talk about the feeling that you see. For example, say, “This person is feeling angry.”
3. Ask the child to try to find the matching card. As they flip over other cards, name the emotion that you see. Say, “That person is feeling sad. That doesn’t match our angry card.”
4. Keep playing until the child finds a match. Remove those cards from the table or floor.
5. Play again, having the child find all the matching “Emotion Cards.”

Matching Feelings

Emotion Cards Handout

Angry



Sad



Happy



Worried



Surprised



Afraid



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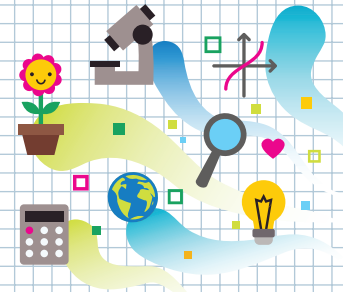
The "Emotion Cards" handout originally appeared in the *Heads In, Hearts In* activity "Feelings Masks" by Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development, 2017.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Peekaboo Feelings

Instructions for Set-Up

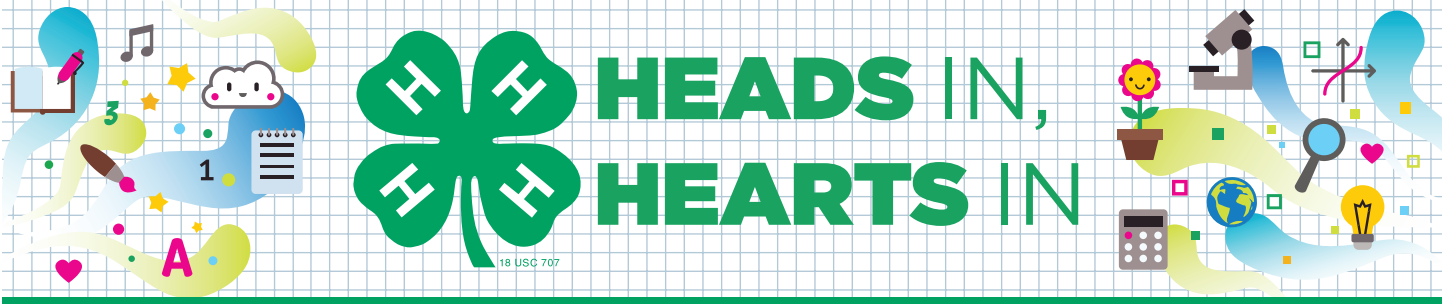


Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- Scissors
- “Emotion Cards” handout
- Towel or blanket
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Arrange display table with instructions
- ▶ Print and cut out the cards in the “Emotion Cards” handout.



Peekaboo Feelings

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, strong emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle them, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission to feel the way they do, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies. You can teach them multiple ways to feel calm and then let them decide which technique they want to try.

Emotional literacy, an important life skill, refers to the ability to understand, identify and respond to your own emotions as well as the emotions of other people. Helping children learn to identify and label different emotions will help them build up their emotional literacy.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will play a game of peekaboo with the child while practicing expressing various emotions. This will give the child the opportunity to learn the names and characteristics of emotions so they can learn and practice their **emotional literacy**. Encourage the child to pretend to feel the different emotions during the game by talking about what it feels like when you have that emotion, and what your face and body look like.

Instructions

1. Tell the child that you will be playing a game of peekaboo and that when you appear you will make an “emotion face” and they will try to guess what emotion you are showing.
2. Cover your face with the towel or blanket. Pick an emotion to show on your face such as happy, sad, worried or surprised. Use the “Emotion Cards” for ideas.
3. Remove the blanket, showing your emotion face and ask your child to guess what emotion you are showing.
4. Encourage them to use the “Emotion Cards” to help them guess if they need help.
5. Label the emotion you show. Say, “My face looks sad (or angry or worried).”
6. Let the child have a turn. Encourage them to pick an emotion, cover their face and remove the blanket, showing that emotion on their face. Then, try to guess what emotion they are showing.
7. Take turns playing peekaboo back and forth.
8. Talk about the different emotions the child experiences and sees everyday using the emotion words on the “Emotion Cards.”

Peekaboo Feelings

Emotion Cards Handout

Angry



Sad



Happy



Worried



Surprised



Afraid



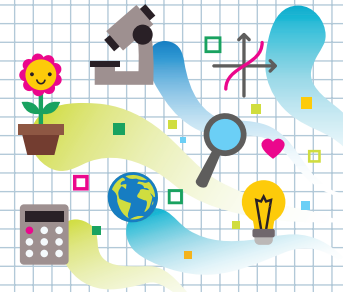
The "Emotion Cards" handout originally appeared in the *Heads In, Hearts In* activity "Feelings Masks" by Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development, 2017.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Reading With Emotions

Instructions for Set-Up

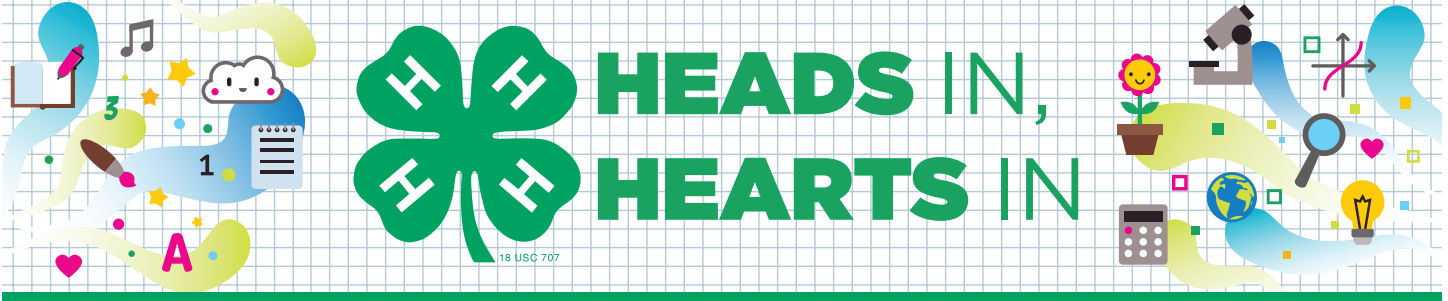


Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- Children’s picture books
- “Emotion Cards” handout
- Scissors
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Print and cut out the cards in the “Emotion Cards” handout.



Reading With Emotions

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, strong emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle them, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission to feel the way they do, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies. You can teach them multiple ways to feel calm and then let them decide which technique they want to try.

Emotional literacy, an important life skill, refers to the ability to understand, identify and respond to your own emotions as well as the emotions of other people. Helping young children learn to identify and label different emotions will help them build up their emotional literacy.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will read a book with the child and practice identifying and naming the emotions you see from the characters in the book. Talk about the emotions in the book and relate them to the emotions that the child experiences: "He is so sad because nobody came to his birthday party. Just like you were sad this morning because it was raining, and we couldn't go outside."

Instructions

1. Tell the child that you will be reading a book together.
2. As you read the book, pay special attention to the emotions you see from the characters in the book. Use the "Emotion Cards" to help you look for emotions to point out to the child.
3. Talk about and name the emotions that you see: "He is so excited because it snowed, and he can build a snowman."
4. As you read the book, talk about the child's feelings too and how they express those emotions: "He is yelling because he is angry. Sometimes you yell when you are angry too."
5. Whenever you read a book to the child, try to talk about the emotions that you see.

Reading With Emotions

Emotions Cards Handout

Angry



Sad



Happy



Worried



Surprised



Afraid



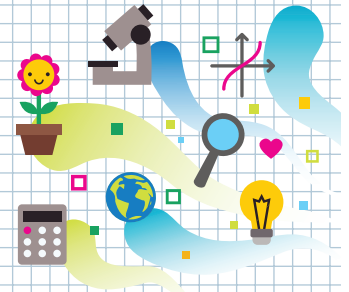
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The "Emotion Cards" handout originally appeared in the *Heads In, Hearts In* activity "Feelings Masks" by Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development, 2017.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Ready, Set, Go! Instructions for Set-Up

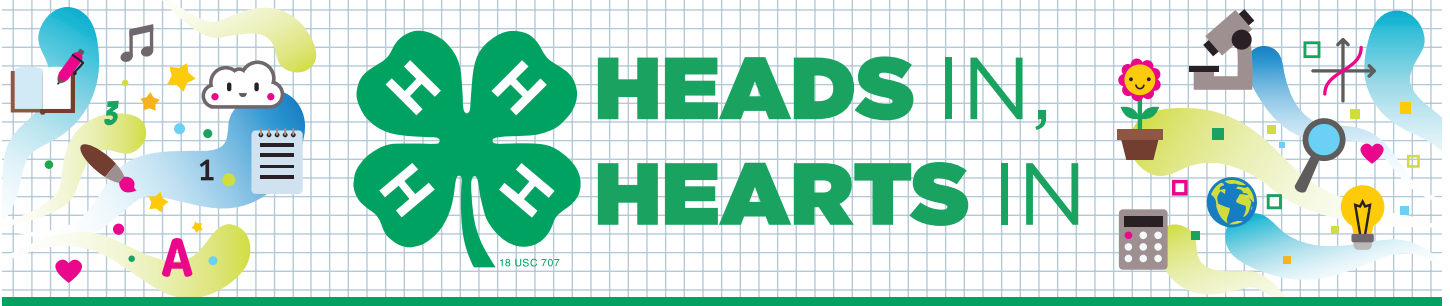


Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- Ball
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Arrange display table.



Ready, Set, Go!

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, strong emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle them, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission to feel the way they do, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies. You can teach them multiple ways to feel calm and then let them decide which technique they want to try.

Self-regulation means controlling your thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Since young children find it hard to self-regulate, it takes lots of practice and support from you. As the adult, you can help by showing them techniques and methods to get their brains back to cool and calm when they experience strong emotions.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, the child will practice taking turns and waiting. While you roll a ball back and forth, the child will practice waiting for their turn in small stretches of time.

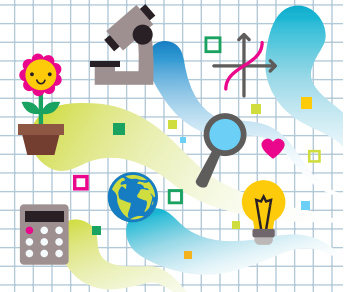
Instructions

1. Tell the child that you will be playing a game called “Ready, Set, Go!”
2. Have the child sit on the floor, and sit down opposite them about 4 feet apart.
3. Give the ball to the child and ask them to roll it to you.
4. When you have the ball, tell the child that when you say, “Ready, Set, Go!” you will roll the ball back.
5. Wait a few moments and say, “Ready, Set, Go!” with lots of excitement and roll the ball back.
6. When the child has the ball, tell them that when they are ready to roll it back, they say, “Ready, Set, Go!” and then roll it back to you.
7. Keep playing the game back and forth, pausing briefly before you roll it back to the child so they can practice waiting.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Signs & Gestures Instructions for Set-Up

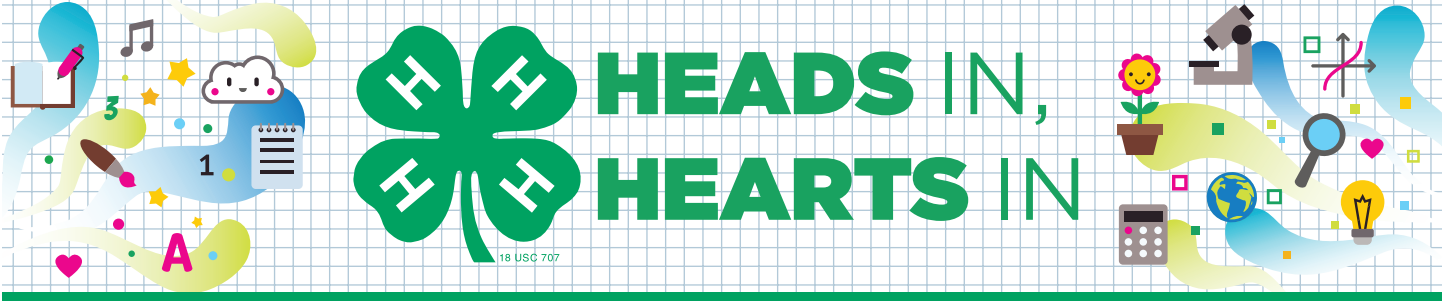


Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- 2 bowls
- “Signs and Gestures” handout
- 12 small pieces of cereal, raisins or small toys
- Laundry basket, plastic tub or box
- 4 balls or rolled-up socks
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Print the “Signs and Gestures ” handout.
- ▶ Arrange display table with instructions.



Signs & Gestures

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, strong emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle them, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission to feel the way they do, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies. You can teach them multiple ways to feel calm and then let them decide which technique they want to try.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will teach the child signs or gestures to communicate. Then you will encourage the child to communicate using those signs. Young children are often frustrated when they can't communicate what they need. Teaching children simple signs or gestures to communicate can help the young child be able to tell you what they need. It will not only help them communicate, but it will also show the child that you are tuned in and responsive to them. When the child communicates a need and you respond, they learn they can trust you with their problems and big emotions.

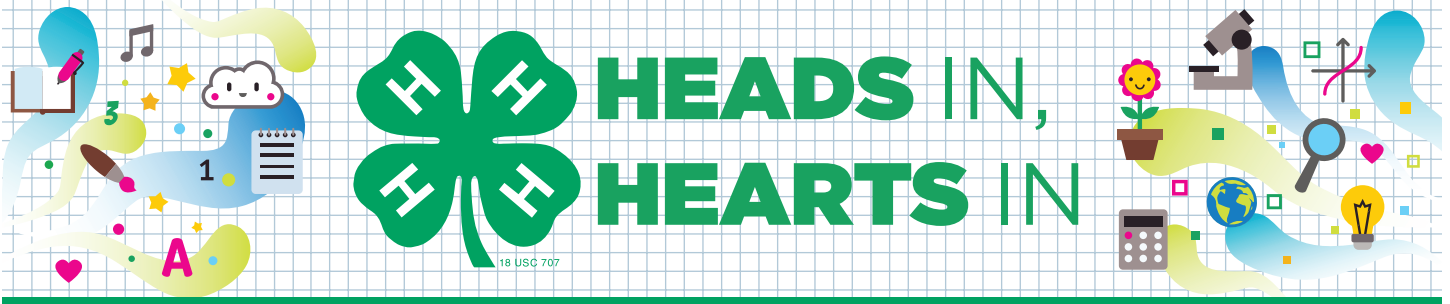
Instructions

Practice with one gesture at a time so the child does not get overwhelmed. After they learn one sign, wait a few days before teaching the next one.

More

1. Teach the child the sign for “more,” using the “Signs and Gestures” handout as a reference. Show the child the sign and encourage them to practice making the motion.
2. Give the child a small piece of cereal, raisin or a small toy and tell them to put it into the bowl.
3. Encourage them to show you the sign for “more” and when they show it to you, give them another item. Continue playing until all the items are in the bowl.

Instructions continue on next page.



Signs & Gestures

Guide for Families

Help

1. Teach the child the sign for “help,” using the “Signs and Gestures” handout as a reference. Show the child the sign and encourage them to practice making the motion.
2. Place a laundry basket, plastic tub or box on the floor.
3. Gather a few balls or rolled-up socks and hold onto them.
4. Give a ball or rolled-up sock to the child and ask them to “make a basket” and put it in the laundry basket, plastic tub or box.
5. Celebrate with them when they get it in.
6. When they are ready for the next ball or rolled-up sock, encourage them to show you the sign for “help.”
7. When they show you the sign, pass them the ball or rolled-up sock and encourage them to make a basket.
8. When they have put all the balls or rolled-up socks in the basket, encourage them.
9. Repeat the game as many times as the child wants.

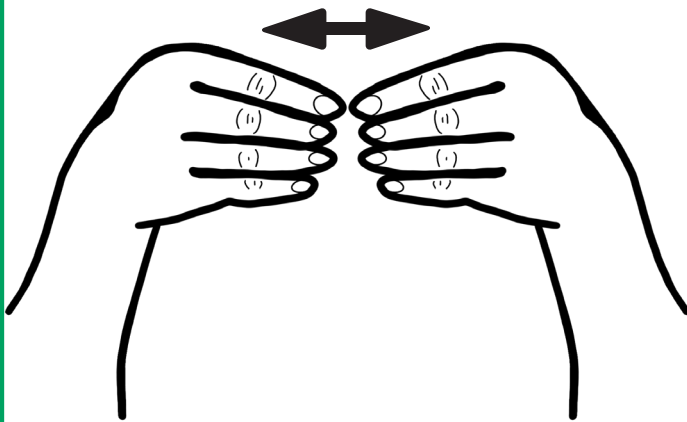
Stop

1. Teach the child the sign for “stop,” using the “Signs and Gestures” handout as a reference. Show the child the sign and encourage them to practice making the motion.
2. Tell the child you will be playing a moving game and that when you show them the sign for “stop,” they have to “freeze,” or stop moving.
3. Ask the child to take big, giant steps. And after a few steps, show them the sign for “stop” and say, “Stop.”
4. Encourage the child to freeze.
5. Take turns with the child. Now you take big, giant steps and encourage the child to show you the sign for “stop” when they want you to freeze.
6. Continue to play the game, picking different ways to move (teeny tiny steps, jumps, hops or other movements).
7. Repeat the game as many times as the child wants. Once the child has learned the sign for “stop,” try showing them the sign without saying “Stop” to see if they can follow the directions.

Signs & Gestures

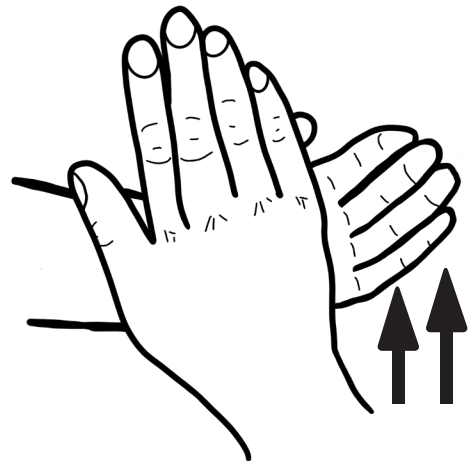
Signs & Gestures Handout

MORE



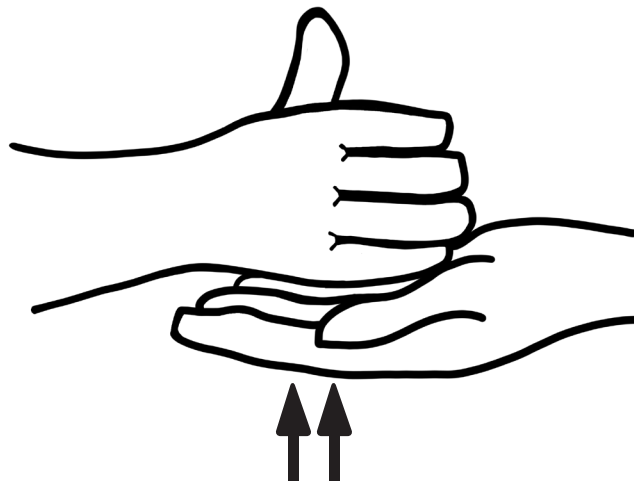
Action: To make the sign for “more,” bring your fingers and thumbs together on both hands, and then tap your fingers together in front of your body.

STOP



Action: To make the sign for “stop,” place one hand in front of your body with your palm facing up. With your other hand, keep your fingers straight and turn your hand so it’s facing up and down, and place it on top of your flat hand. Move your top hand up and down like you are chopping.

HELP



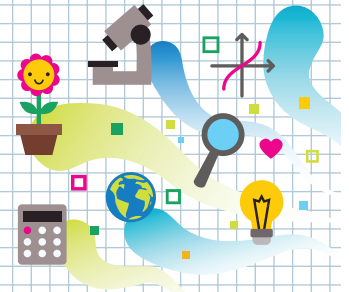
Action: To make the sign for “help,” place one hand in front of your body with your palm facing up. With the other hand, make a thumbs-up sign and place it in your other palm. Keeping your hands together, lift your bottom hand up like it is helping move your top hand.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Stop & Go

Instructions for Set-Up

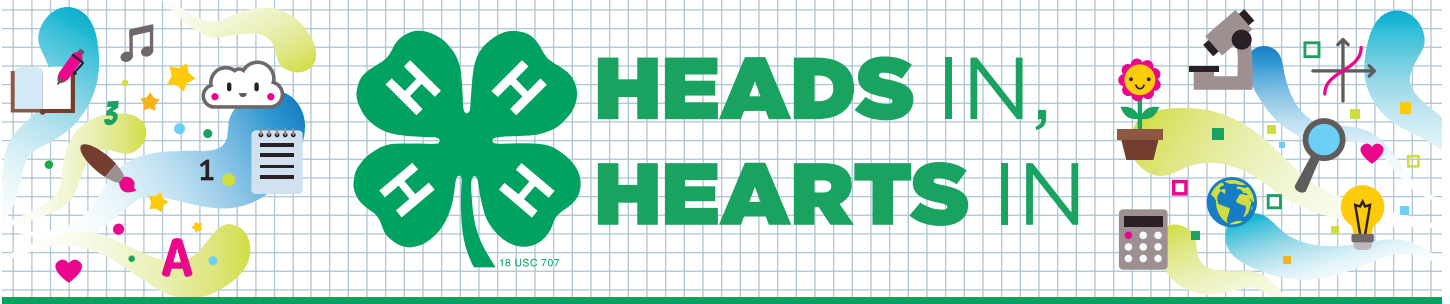


Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- “Movement Cards” handout
- Scissors
- Music (optional)
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Print and cut out the cards in the “Movement Cards” handout (or just use your own movement ideas).
- ▶ Prepare to play music if you choose to do the alternate method of this activity.
- ▶ Arrange display table with instructions.



Stop & Go

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle their strong emotions, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission for their emotions, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies.

Self-regulation means controlling your own thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Young children find it hard to self-regulate. It takes lots of practice and support from you. As the adult, you can help by showing them techniques and methods to get their brains back to cool and calm when they experience strong emotions.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will help the child practice important skills for **self-regulation**, inhibitory control, or stopping and going. Helping the child practice these skills will help them build skills for self-control, which will help them make good decisions and control their thoughts, behaviors and emotions. In this game, you will encourage the child to engage in fun movement activities and practice stopping when you say “stop” and starting when you say “go.”

Instructions

1. Tell the child you are playing a stop-and-go game. When you say “go,” they will start a movement and then when you say “stop,” they have to stop right away until you say “go” again.
2. Have the child pick a “Movement Card” and show them what that movement looks like.
3. Say “Go!” Encourage the child to follow the movement and move along with them.
4. After a few seconds or moments, say “Stop!” Model stopping the movement for the child by stopping as well. Laugh with the child as they try to stop their fun movements.
5. Say “Go!” and encourage the child to begin the movement again. Repeat as many times as you’d like.
6. Select a new movement and play again.
7. Alternatively, you can also play the same game using music. Instead of saying “Stop!” and “Go!” tell your child that when the music plays they will do the movement on the “Movement Card” and when they hear the music stop, they have to stop moving.

Stop & Go

Movement Cards Handout

Toe Touches

Raise your arms high in the air, and then bend forward and touch your toes.

Twisty Turns

Swing your arms back and forth across your body, rotating your hips.

Running in Place

Run in place, lifting your knees and pumping your arms.

Jumping

Jump up and down, standing in the same place.

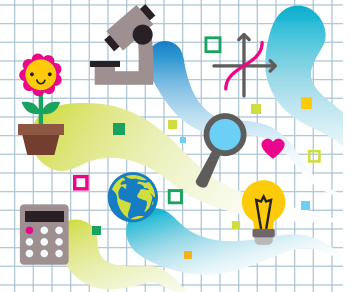
Starfish Stretches

Stand with your legs wide and arms wide out at your side like a starfish. Reach one hand down toward the opposite foot. Stretch back out wide and reach your other hand toward the opposite foot.



HEADS IN, HEARTS IN

Why I Love You Instructions for Set-Up

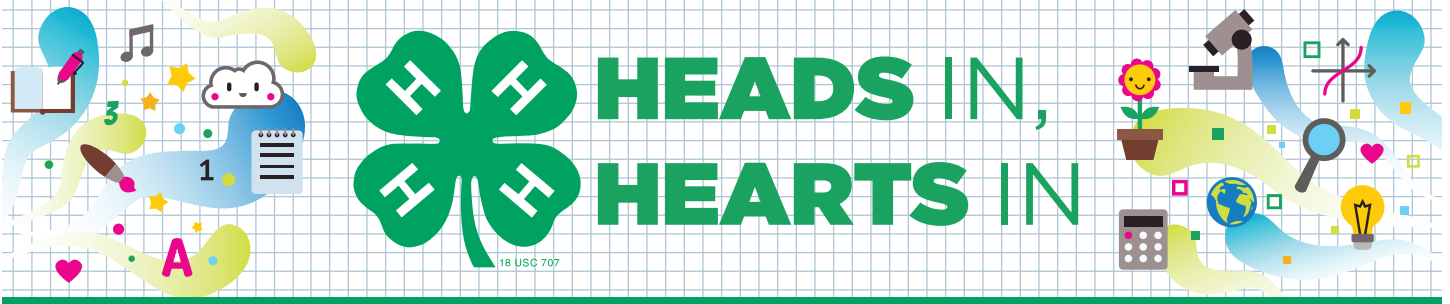


Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- “Heart” handout
- Scissors
- Markers or crayons
- Small box or bag
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Print out the “Heart” handout and cut out hearts.
- ▶ Arrange display table with instructions.



Why I Love You

Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Social emotional health is a critical component of healthy development for young children. Social emotional development includes the ability to identify and label or name emotions, and find appropriate ways to express or manage those emotions. For young children, strong emotions can be overwhelming. Since they do not have the skills to handle them, they might act out, get clingy or withdraw. You can help them manage their emotions by giving them permission to feel the way they do, helping to identify how they feel, supporting them and teaching them emotion regulation strategies. You can teach them multiple ways to feel calm and then let them decide which technique they want to try.

Encouraging children and communicating love to them helps build their **self-concept** (the way they feel about themselves). Encouragement can be a powerful tool for getting children to behave and reinforcing positive behaviors. Think of encouragement as investing in the child; every time you encourage them, you build them up.

What you will do and learn:

In this activity, you will think about all the reasons you love the child and share those reasons with them. Communicating how you feel out loud is a way to show the child that you love them unconditionally and will help the child understand their self-worth. When you build up the child with encouragement, it will help them be able to manage big feelings or hard days.

Instructions

1. Ask the child to decorate a small box or bag.
2. On each heart you have cut from the “Heart” handout, write down one reason you love the child.
3. Place the hearts in the small box or bag.
4. Pull out the hearts and read them to the child. Tell them all the reasons that you love them.
5. When you think of new reasons that you love the child, write them down and place them in the box or bag.
6. Periodically, read those hearts to the child. You can read them during a quiet time such as bedtime or difficult times such as when the child is having a hard day.

Why I Love You

Heart Handout

