

About Session 3:

Understanding your child's emotional experience

Overview

- ☺ Warm-up: guided relaxation
- ☺ Home activity review/reflection on the week
- ☺ Spot the Emotion Coaching opportunity — optional
- ☺ Developing empathy: the emotion detective
- ☺ Being an Emotion Coach (this or next session)
- ☺ The language around emotions (can be used at any time in program)
- ☺ Role-plays
- ☺ Feedback about the program and group
- ☺ Additional strategies for Emotion Coaching
- ☺ Home activities

Home activities

- ☺ Focus on your child's low level emotions, reflect the situation and label the emotion.
- ☺ Try to 'step into your child's shoes', to empathise and validate their feelings.
- ☺ Record your observations in the Emotion Diary.
- ☺ Ask your child to draw pictures of different emotions. Explore with them the feelings of the characters in the drawings.



How to reflect feelings: helpful sentence starters

- It looks like you're really happy
- You seem a bit sad
- I can see you're very frustrated
- Are you feeling fed up?
- You look really angry
- It sounds like you were really scared
- What were you feeling?
- It seems like you are a bit anxious
- How did you feel when your toy was taken?
- Maybe you felt frustrated when your teacher told you to share your favourite book?
- I bet you felt pretty grumpy
- I wonder if you feel a little jealous?



List of feeling words

HAPPY

Affectionate
Beautiful
Blissful
Calm
Capable
Cheerful
Contented
Delighted
Ecstatic
Enchanted
Energetic
Excited
Free
Glad
Good
Happy
Helpful
High
Impressed
Infatuated
Inspired
Joyous
Loving
Nice
Peaceful
Pleased
Refreshed
Relaxed
Relieved
Rewarded
Satisfied
Settled
Sure
Vital
Vivacious
Wonderful
Zany

SAD

Abandoned
Agony
Apathetic
Bereaved
Betrayed
Defeated
Despair
Discontented
Disappointed
Distraught
Empty
Envious
Exhausted
Homesick
Horrible
Hurt
Ignored
Lonely
Longing
Low
Maudlin
Melancholy
Miserable
Pained
Pitiful
Rejected
Remorseful
Sad
Solemn
Sorrowful
Stuffed
Suffering
Tentative
Terrible
Tired
Weepy

ANGRY

Adamant
Angry
Annoyed
Astounded
Bitter
Cross
Cruel
Destructive
Determined
Disturbed
Exasperated
Explosive
Frustrated
Furious
Grumpy
Hateful
Imposed upon
Infuriated
Irate
Irritated
Jealous
Mad
Naughty
Obnoxious
Obsessed
Outraged
Quarrelsome
Raging
Restless
Thwarted
Trapped
Violent

AFRAID

Anxious
Awed
Challenged
Confused
Crushed
Different
Dubious
Estranged
Fearful
Flustered
Frantic
Frightened
Guilty
Helpless
Hysterical
Intimidated
Isolated
Jumpy
Left out
Lonely
Nervous
Overwhelmed
Panicky
Persecuted
Petrified
Pressured
Scared
Shocked
Startled
Stunned
Tense
Terrified
Threatened
Troubled
Uneasy
Unsettled



Extra tips for Emotion Coaching

- Avoid excessive criticism, humiliating comments, or mocking the child
- Challenge your own ideas about how you 'should' be as a parent or how your child 'should' be as a child
- Use praise to coach your child
- Create a 'mental map' of your child's daily life — know where they are and what they're doing
- Listen to your child's point of view first
- Don't try to impose your solutions on your child's problems
- Empower your child by giving choices, respecting wishes
- Share in your child's dreams and fantasies
- Be honest with your child
- Read children's books together
- Be patient with the process — children learn over time

Adapted from Gottman, J. M. & DeClair, J. (1997). *The Heart of Parenting: Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*. New York: Simon & Schuster.



Children's drawings



BIRTHDAY CANDLE BREATHING TECHNIQUE



Breathing calms children by slowing them down—deep breaths can literally slow a racing heart and help kids respond to stress in a healthier way (in fact, it works for everyone—adults, too). When hard feelings arise, try this simple exercise to help your little one feel calmer.

How to do it:

1. Simply get the child to hold their pointer finger on either hand and pretend it is a birthday candle, holding it in front of their mouth.
2. Explain that it is important to breathe in deeply through their nose (like smelling a flower) and blow out through their mouth as gently as possible so the flame stays alight. Make this a fun activity so it encourages them to use it when needed.
3. Children from three years up generally can relay their age on their fingers, so ask them to do this the number of times they are old (five breaths are optimal but not essential).

When to do it.

Introduce these ideas when your child is happy and calm (explaining birthday candle mid-meltdown in the grocery store is not a recipe for success). Ideally we want the children to use these or other breathing techniques when we see their lower intensity emotions (just starting to get upset or notice frustration). After this has been practiced and learnt it can be also helpful to use mid melt-down to help a child regulate back to calm.

Practice makes perfect (and keep it fun).

Add the breathing exercise they like best to play time. Maybe you draw cupcakes and blow out crayon candles, explain that it's a lot of fun and that it's also a good thing to do when he/she are feeling bad because it'll help them to calm down.

How to use it in the moment.

When tough feelings come, help them through their favourite breathing exercise with the following steps:

Connect: Get down to her level and connect. Try looking her in the eye or gently touching her shoulder.

Name the feelings: Sometimes big feelings like anger or disappointment can feel scary (even to grown-ups!), so acknowledge her big feelings to help her understand what's happening. Try something like, "You look like you're really upset" or "You seem angry that your brother took your toy."

Find a quiet space: Whether it's a cosy spot in her bedroom or a café corner, a quiet space lets her step away from the situation and gives her a little bit of privacy to gather herself and calm down.

Breathe together: Start doing the breathing exercise together. Help her by talking through each step: "Let's blow out some birthday candles. Breathe in...and...out. Let's do another one."

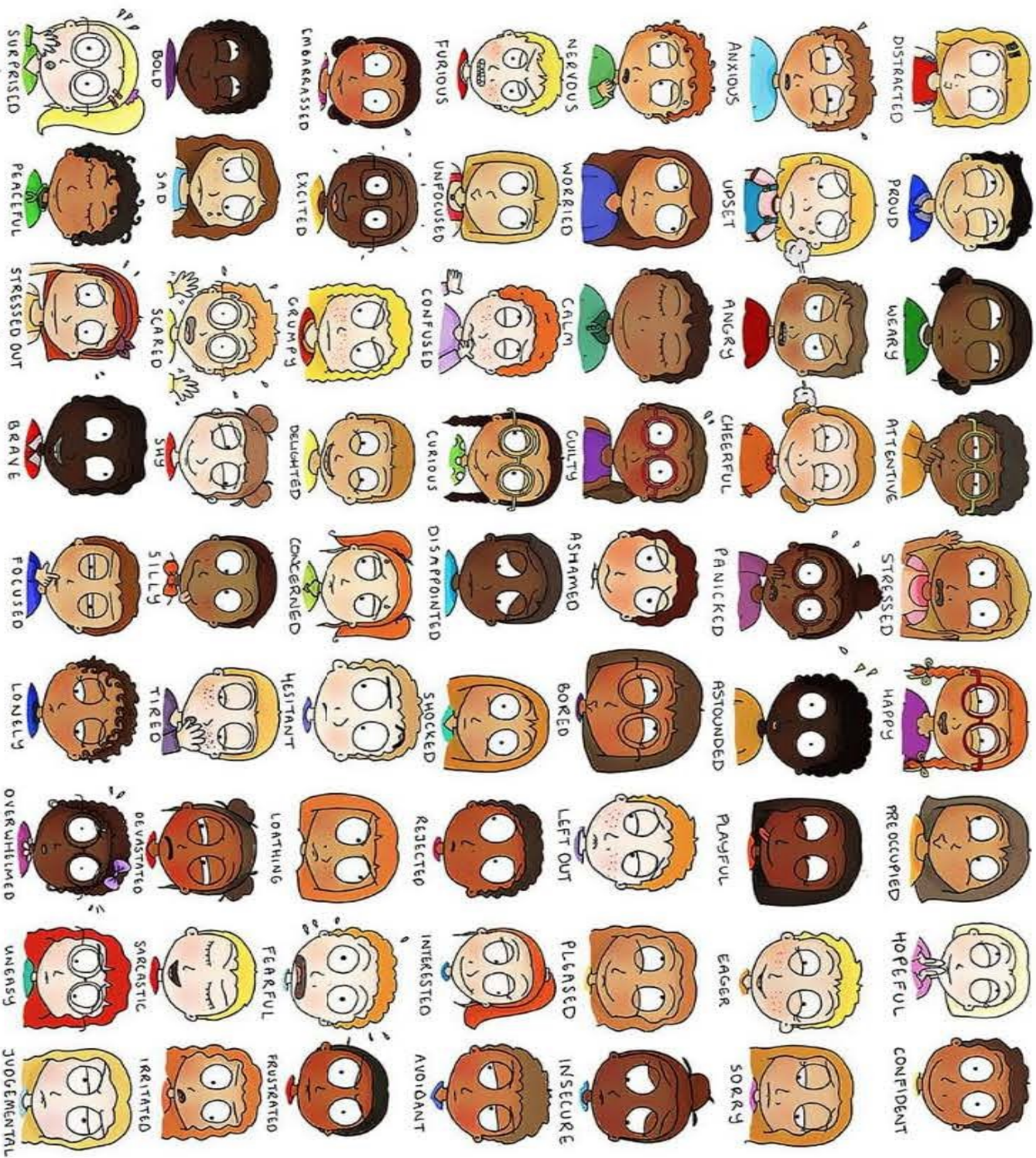
Give her a comforting cuddle (if she's ready): Some kids welcome a hug, but others may need a moment to settle down—follow your child's cues and your own instincts.

Model mindful breathing yourself.

When you get angry or frustrated, try taking deep breaths—or use the technique above. Explain what you're doing simply by saying, "I am feeling really angry right now. I'm going to take some deep breaths to help me calm down before we talk more about this." Your child is a keen observer, and when she sees you using breathing to calm yourself, she'll learn that this is a good way to manage big feelings.

It may take a little time, but eventually he'll be able to do this all by himself—and he may even start reminding you to use your "Birthday Candle" or "Star Fish" when your temper wears thin in traffic!

THE JOURNEY TO WELLNESS JUMBO FEELINGS CHART



CALM DOWN WITH TAKE 5 BREATHING

1. Stretch your hand out like a star.
2. Get your pointer finger ready to trace your fingers up and down.
3. Slide up each finger slowly ~ slide down the other side.
4. Breathe in through your nose ~ out through your mouth.
5. Put it together and breathe in as you slide up and breathe out as you slide down.
Keep going until you have finished tracing your hand.



