

About Session 2: Naming the emotion

Overview

- ☺ Warm-up: bear stickers/cards
- ☺ Home activity review and reflection on the week
- ☺ The context needed for Emotion Coaching
- ☺ Emotion Tuning
- ☺ Meta-emotion exercise (optional)
- ☺ Emotion dismissive and Emotion Coaching responses

Home activities

- ☺ Emotion Talk Time: Spend time with your child discussing events in their lives and their feelings about these events.
- ☺ Attach the Feeling Faces poster to the fridge or another suitable place. Explore the different emotions shown and talk about what might create these feelings and where they might be felt in the body. Encourage your child to use the Feeling Faces poster at times when they are emotional.
- ☺ Practise emotion coaching with lower intensity emotions, such as irritability, frustration, worry, and disappointment.
- ☺ When attempting to emotion coach, the focus should be on trying to reflect your child's feelings and less on problem solving (at this stage in the program).
- ☺ Record your observations in the Emotion Diary.



Children's development

There are a number of important things to know about preschool children's development. Brain growth and thinking abilities are a result of children's age and stage of maturity. Pre-schoolers tend to:

- be self-focused — they view everything from their own perspective. This can mean they believe things happen because of them — such as parents getting angry (even when it is unrelated to them)
- have trouble seeing another person's point of view
- have difficulty consistently understanding the concept of sharing
- often believe what others tell them, for example, they are bad/shy/silly/naughty
- have trouble understanding that some things are permanent — such as death or parents separating
- often misinterpret words due to their limited knowledge and language skills
- have difficulty with the concept of time — they might not be able to monitor what five minutes or an hour mean, and concepts such as next week or next year are often meaningless to them
- worsen in their behaviour when they are tired, sick or hungry.

Parents can sometimes feel that their pre-school child is **manipulating** them. But at this age and stage, children do not yet have the concepts of being able to *make* others do things or the *goal* to change others in this way. Their behaviour is directly related to whether others are meeting their emotional and physical needs.

Children at this stage of development require:

- consistency — especially between different parents/carers
- clear boundaries
- routines — so they can predict what happens at different times
- stability.



Children's development

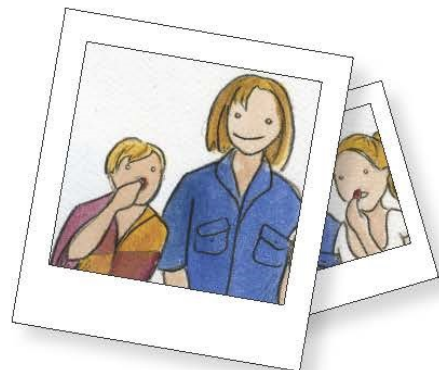
There are a number of important things to know about children's development. Brain growth and thinking abilities are a result of children's age and stage of maturity. Young children tend to:

- be self-focused — they view everything from their own perspective. This can mean they believe things happen *because* of them. They might have difficulty understanding that a parent's emotion — such as anger — is not caused by or directed towards them
- have trouble seeing another person's point of view
- have difficulty consistently understanding the concept of sharing
- often believe what others tell them, for example, that they are bad/shy/silly/naughty
- have trouble understanding that some things are permanent — such as death or parents separating
- often misinterpret words due to their limited knowledge and language skills
- have difficulty with the concept of time — they might not be able to monitor what five minutes or an hour means. Concepts such as next week or next year are often meaningless to them
- use worse behaviour when they are tired, sick or hungry
- are increasing in their desire for and ability to negotiate friendships.

Parents can sometimes feel that their child is **manipulating** them. But at this age and stage, children do not yet understand that they might be able to *make* other people do things. They are simply expressing their emotional and physical needs — sometimes in very vocal or annoying ways!

Children at this stage of development require:

- consistency — especially between different parents/carers
- clear boundaries and family rules – such as no hitting, no hurting, no name calling
- routines — so they can predict what happens at different times
- stability.



Emotion Coaching and praise

Praise that is too general can sound like a judgment. It might not be accepted as the compliment it was intended to be. It can also teach children to depend on compliments from others to feel satisfied with their own achievements.

Descriptive praise is specific and non-judgmental. It teaches children to praise themselves and to be aware of exactly what it is that they are doing well.

- Describe what you see and hear
- Say how it makes you feel, or how you think it has made the other person feel.

Example 1

Traditional praise might sound something like:

What a wonderful boy you are!

A descriptive praise version of this might be:

I love this picture you drew for me. I especially like the many colours you used. They make me feel so happy and cheerful!

Example 2

Instead of saying

You are so generous!

Try:

When you saw that Tim couldn't find his crayons you lent him yours. He seemed very grateful that he could use your crayons to finish his homework.



Emotion Tuning

Emotion Tuning is an important part of Emotion Coaching.

To tune into emotions, you could:

- notice the emotion
- clarify with a question
- reflect the emotion
- locate emotion in the body
- empathise
- explore.



Emotion Tuning explained

There are a number of different ways that you can tune in to your child's emotions

Notice the emotion

Notice how you think your child is feeling.

- What facial expression/body language does your child have?
- What sort of emotions might your child feel because of the situation?
- How might you feel in a comparable adult situation?

Clarify with a question

This helps your child work out how they feel.

- You look pretty worried. Do you want to talk about what is going on?
- Were you scared when you couldn't find me in the supermarket?
- How did you feel when you saw Toby playing with Karl?
- Were you frustrated when your teacher told you to share your favourite book?
- I wonder if you were feeling mad at your sister?

Reflect the emotion

State the emotion you think your child is feeling.

- It looks like you're very happy
- You seem a bit sad
- I can see you're very frustrated
- It seems like you are a bit anxious
- I bet you felt pretty grumpy

Children will generally tell you if you are right or wrong about their feelings, especially if you say it in a gentle way. Often when children are first getting the hang of how to say how they feel, it helps to start by labelling the emotion and getting an idea about whether you have been correct.



Locate emotion in the body

You could ask where the child feels that emotion in their body. It is very important for children to learn that emotions are in their head and in their body.

- Where in your body do you feel angry?
- I wonder if your tummy feels a bit anxious?
- It looks like you might feel your sadness in your shoulders

Empathise

Talk about how you would feel in a similar situation.

- I would have felt angry if my sister had been allowed to go out and I had to stay home
- I feel sad when I'm not included with my friends

Validation and empathy the keys to Emotion Coaching and provide a lovely connection between parent and child. BUT be careful not to put your emotions first, especially when you are just starting to Emotion Coach.

Explore

You might follow this up with a further question or comment to find out more about the situation or explore other emotional reactions.



What is emotion dismissive parenting?

Being warm and concerned does not always mean you are responding to the emotions in your child's story.

There are many ways to dismiss a child's emotions. Some common ways are to:

- offer advice (for example, 'You should have ...')
- ask why your child did or said what they did
- talk only about yourself
- tell your child not to worry
- jump straight into problem solving
- take the side of the other person (for example, teacher, sister) instead of listening to the child's perspective
- offer distractions
- moralise.

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



What is Emotion Coaching parenting?

When you are Emotion Coaching you focus on the emotions your child experiences.

1. The first goal is to notice how you think your child is probably feeling. You might need to think about a comparable situation for yourself.

2. Then help your child to put a verbal label on the feeling.

You might want to respond by asking:

- Did you feel _____ when _____?
- Were you feeling _____ when _____?
- It sounds like you felt _____?

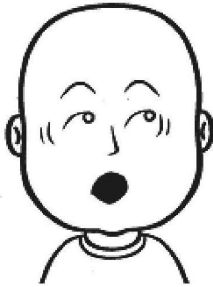
3. You could also respond by reflecting how you would feel in a similar situation:

- I would feel _____ too.
- I feel _____ when _____ happens to me.

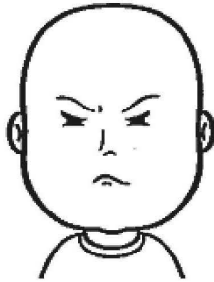
4. You might follow this up with a further question or comment to find out more about the situation or explore other emotional reactions.



Feeling faces



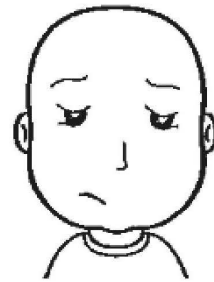
Scared



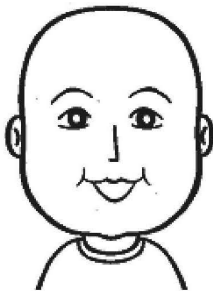
Jealous



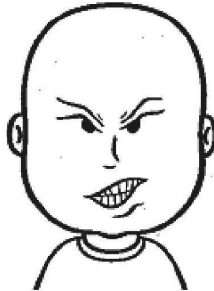
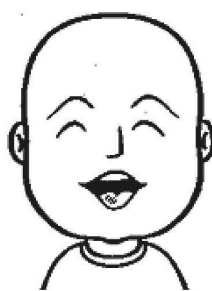
Sad



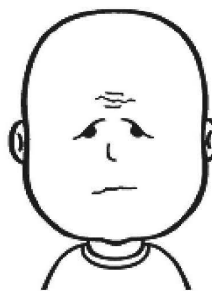
Shy



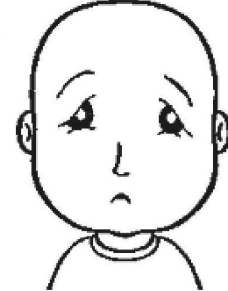
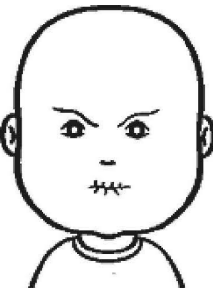
Happy

Mad/
angry

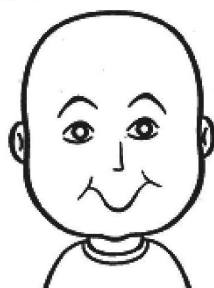
Excited



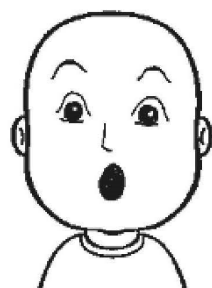
Worried

Lonely/
left out

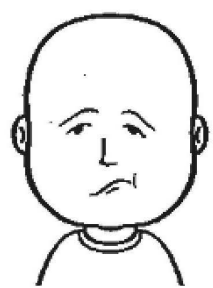
Frustrated



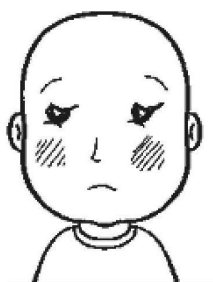
Proud



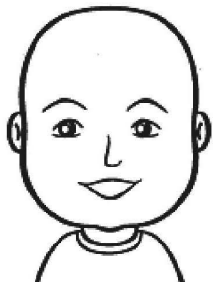
Surprised



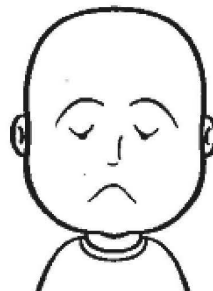
Disappointed



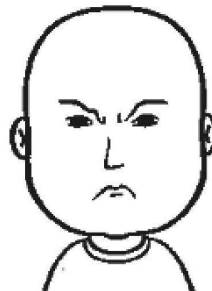
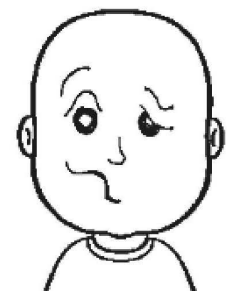
Embarrassed



Calm



Guilty

Grumpy/
cross

Confused

Adapted from Domitrovich, Greenberg, Kusché and Cortes (2004). PATHS Preschool. Channing-Bete Company, Inc. South Deerfield MA.

TUNING IN TO KIDS™ Emotionally Intelligent Parenting

THE JOURNEY TO WELLNESS JUMBO FEELINGS CHART

