

Teddy Bear Feelings

Expressing Emotions

Showing young children how to identify and express emotions helps them to gain a sense of control, share experiences and build healthy relationships.

The way in which adults respond to a child's emotions is crucial. In times of distress and sadness, *a child needs to have their feelings acknowledged and respected*. By validating these big emotions, adults send the message that they care about how the child is feeling. Knowing that their feelings are understood and respected helps the child to develop positive self-esteem and learn how to care about the feelings of others.



Learning to identify feelings is an important first step in expressing emotions. However, it is important to go beyond naming feelings, so that children can begin to understand the connection between how they feel and how they think and act.

Activity: Teddy Bear Feelings Role Play

What does a happy teddy bear look like? What does a happy teddy bear sound like? How about a sad teddy bear, or a mad teddy bear?

Have a discussion with children about what different emotions look and sound like (i.e. someone who is sad may have a frown, they may have tears coming from their eyes and their body may be slouched; you may also hear them sobbing, or whimpering).

Children can then use their teddy bear mask to act out a variety of feelings. Remind them to act out the emotion using their whole body (facial expression, posture, movements and sounds).

Opportunities for exploring various feelings and emotions through dramatic play can provide children with useful tools for expressing their own emotions and for recognizing those emotions in others. These opportunities for play help to build and improve a child's self-esteem and prepare them for healthy relationships with others as they grow older!

Keep in Mind

- ♥ Strong trusting relationships with the important adults in their life enhances children's ability to identify and express emotions
- ♥ How important it is to provide children with encouragement, guidance, practice, and support to express their emotions
- ♥ How these opportunities help build and improve children's self-esteem and prepare them for healthy relationships with others as they grow older.

Adapted from *Handle with Care – Promoting the Mental Health in Young Children*