

Feelings

Flash Cards



Angry



Bored



Calm



Excited



Frustrated



Happy



Proud



Sad



Scared



Silly



Surprised



Worried

By Lawrence E. Shapiro, Ph.D.

Introduction

Helping Children Understand Their Feelings

Imagine a world where people didn't talk about their feelings. If you think that we would act pretty much like animals, then you are right. In fact our ability to think about and talk about our feelings is one of the most important things that distinguishes us from other primates.

Everyone has feelings, and yet some of us seem to be better able to communicate them.

The ability of people to express, control, and understand the emotions of others is an important indicator of good mental health. Many studies have shown that people with good emotional skills, which we now call emotional intelligence, are less prone to emotional problems, have more friends, are more successful at school and in their work, and they are even physically healthier.

When professional counselors work to help children with emotional problems, they typically teach emotional skills which will aid them in coping better with their problems. These include

- An awareness of one's own emotions.
- The ability to understand the emotions of others.
- The ability to use an emotional vocabulary.
- The ability to feel and express empathy.
- The ability to cope with difficult emotions.
- The awareness of emotions within relationships.
- The ability to control and change one's emotional state.

But I believe that parents shouldn't wait until children have problems to begin their emotional education. Helping increase a child's emotional intelligence is just as important as teaching him reading or math skills. And like academic skills, the earlier that children learn emotional, social, and behavioral skills the better.

How To Teach Children About Emotions

Emotional skills are taught to children the same way as academic and other skills. For example if you want to teach a four year old basic reading skills, you would read him books to show him the fun of reading; you would point out the letters of the alphabet on signs, you would teach him to write his name, and so on. If you want to teach a child about emotions, you would talk to him about your feelings, you would help him to recognize his own feelings, and you would emphasize the importance of understanding the feelings of others.

Teaching children about emotions seems simple enough, and yet there are significant differences in the way that parents in different cultures address this developmental task. For example one research study asked Japanese and American mothers of 3 and 4 year how they would react to a variety of hypothetical situations regarding the misbehavior of their youngsters. The researchers found significant differences in how the mothers from different cultures instructed their young ones about the importance of good behavior.

For example, when asked how they would respond if their preschooler was misbehaving in a grocery store, the American mothers were most likely to say that they would yell at their children or grab them. But the Japanese mothers were more likely to appeal to their children's feelings with comments like: "How do you think that the store owner or the other shoppers will feel if you misbehave. It will make them upset or mad, and then they will have a bad day. There are other people shopping with us and we must be aware of them, too."

Because it is not ingrained in our culture, American parents and educators need to pay more attention to the way that they talk about emotions with children, stressing the importance of respecting the emotions of others. The Feelings Flash Cards have been designed to give parents and teachers activities to stimulate discussions about emotions with children. The more time you take to talk about emotions with children, the more easily they will be able to do this with their peers.

Sincerely,
Lawrence Shapiro, Ph.D.

The Feelings Flash Cards Instructions

There are 13 Feelings Flash Cards representing 12 feelings and 1 "blank" face for adults or children to add their own feelings. You can make as many copies of the blank card as you like to add additional feelings.

The feelings included are:

1. Angry
2. Happy
3. Sad
4. Scared
5. Surprised
6. Proud
7. Silly
8. Bored
9. Excited
10. Calm
11. Frustrated
12. Worried

Preparing the Cards

1. Print out the 13 cards on standard 8.5 X 11 inch paper.
2. Then fold the bottom of the card up, so that bottom half of each sheet of the paper becomes the back of an 8.5" by 5.5" card.
3. Tape each card at the top and sides.
4. If you want to preserve the cards you can laminate the front and back.
5. Or you can make multiple copies of the card for different activities. (Permission is granted by the copyright holder to make unlimited copies for personal or professional use.)

The Feelings Flash Cards are designed to help children talk about their feelings and also to recognize different feelings in others. Our artist had a certain feeling in mind when she drew each picture, but it is important to keep in mind that there is no right or wrong answer to the question: "What is this child feeling?" Even adults have difficulty determining a feeling from a facial expression alone and will be wrong in determining the feeling nearly 50% of the time. The purpose of the Flash Cards is to help stimulate thoughts and discussions about feelings. Remember that there are really no right or wrong answers when you are teaching children about feelings.

Here are some suggestions on how to use the cards.

Talking About Feelings

Show a child (or group of children) one card at a time. There are questions on the back of each card to guide your discussion. Note: Young children (ages 3-5) may only be able to identify four or five basic feelings—angry, happy, sad, scared—but you can still show them the other cards and teach them about these feelings.

Color Your Feelings

Give a child a Feelings Flash Card and ask him to draw in pictures in the background that may be causing a particular feeling and color it in. You should do this activity with a child, drawing and coloring in on your own cards to model how you talk and think about feelings.

Tell a Story

In the squares beneath each picture, write in a name for each child. Then shuffle the cards, and pick 3 cards from the deck. Have the child make up a story about the three children that he/she has picked.



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Card #1 Angry

What do you think that this boy is feeling?

(The child may say another feeling other than "angry." You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: "The artist who drew this picture thought that he looked angry. Do you think so, too?")

Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself.
Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- What makes you angry?
- What are some ways that people show they are angry?
- How can you tell that this boy is feeling angry?
- Can you make a face like you're angry?
- Can you pose your body (hands, arms, legs, etc.) to show that you are angry?
- What are some times that it is important to say that you are angry?
- What are some times that you need to control your anger?



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Card #2 Happy

What do you think that this girl is feeling?

The child may say another feeling other than "happy." You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: "The artist who drew this pictures thought that he looked happy. Do you think so, too?"

Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself. Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- What makes you happy?
- What are some ways that people show they are happy?
- How can you tell that this girl is feeling happy?
- Can you make a face like you're happy?
- Can you pose your body (hands, arms, legs, etc.) to show how you look when you are happy?
- What are things that always make you happy?
- What are some things you can do to make other people happy?



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Card #3 Sad

What do you think that this girl is feeling?

The child may say another feeling other than "sad." You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: "The artist who drew this pictures thought that he looked sad. Do you think so, too?"

Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself.
Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- What makes you sad?
- What are some ways that people show they are sad?
- How can you tell that this girl is feeling sad?
- Can you make a face like you're sad?
- Can you pose your body (hands, arms, legs, etc.) to show how you look when you are sad?
- What is something you can do to cheer someone up who is sad?



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Card #4 Scared

What do you think that this girl is feeling?

The child may say another feeling other than "scared." You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: "The artist who drew this picture thought that he looked scared. Do you think so, too?"

Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself.
Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- What kinds of things are you scared of?
- What kinds of things are your friends scared of?
- What do you think that this girl is afraid of?
- Can you make a face like you're scared?
- Can you pose your body (hands, arms, legs, etc.) to show that you are scared?
- Have you ever felt that you were scared, but there was really nothing to be afraid of?



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Card #5 Surprised

What do you think that this girl is feeling?

The child may say another feeling other than “surprised.” You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: “The artist who drew this pictures thought that he looked surprised. Do you think so, too?”

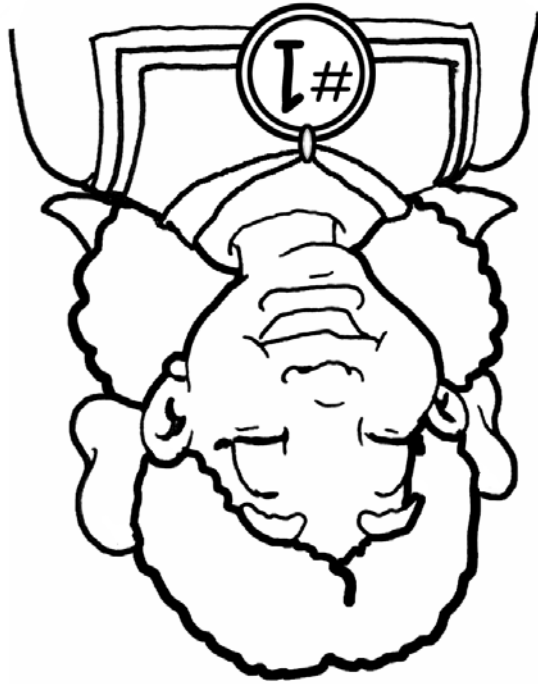
Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself.

Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- Can you think of a time that you were surprised?
- Have you ever surprised someone else?
- Sometimes children get scared when they are surprised. Has that ever happened to you?
- Make a face like you are surprised?
- Can you pose your body (hands, arms, legs, etc.) to look like you are surprised?
- There are different kinds of surprises. There are little surprises and there are big surprises. Can you think of 3 different kinds of surprises?



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Card #6 Proud

What do you think that this girl is feeling?

The child may say another feeling other than "proud." You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: "The artist who drew this pictures thought that he looked proud. Do you think so, too?"

Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself.
Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- Can you think of a time that you were proud of yourself?
- Can you think of a time that you were proud of someone else?
- What do people say when they are proud of you?
- Can you pose your body (hands, arms, legs, etc.) to show that you are proud of yourself?
- If you wanted to feel proud of yourself today, what would you do?



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Card #7 Silly

What do you think that this boy is feeling?

The child may say another feeling other than "silly." You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: "The artist who drew this pictures thought that he looked silly. Do you think so, too?"

Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself.
Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- When do you feel silly?
- What do you do to be silly?
- Make a silly face right now?
- Can you sing a silly song?
- Can you think of a place that you should never be silly?



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Card #8 Bored

What do you think that this boy is feeling?

The child may say another feeling other than "excited." You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: "The artist who drew this pictures thought that he looked excited. Do you think so, too?"

Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself.
Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- When do you get bored?
- What do you do when you feel bored?
- Do you ever complain when you are bored? What happens when you complain?



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Card #9 Excited

What do you think that this boy is feeling?

The child may say another feeling other than "excited." You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: "The artist who drew this pictures thought that he looked excited. Do you think so, too?"

Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself.
Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- What makes you excited?
- What can you do that will make someone else excited?
- Can you think of something coming up soon that will make you excited?
- Have you ever been excited and afraid at the same time?



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Card #10 Calm

What do you think that this boy is feeling?

The child may say another feeling other than "calm." You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: "The artist who drew this pictures thought that he looked calm. Do you think so, too?"

Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself.
Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- Name some things that can make you feel calm.
- How can you tell that this boy is feeling clam?
- Can you pose your body (hands, arms, legs, etc.) to show that you are calm?
- Take 10 slow deep breaths. Now relax your muscles. Do you feel calm?
- Can you think of a situation where you need to learn to be calm?



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Card #11 Frustrated

What do you think that this boy is feeling?

The child may say another feeling other than "frustrated." You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: "The artist who drew this picture thought that he looked frustrated. Do you think so, too?"

Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself.
Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- Being frustrated means that you are having difficulty doing something that you want to do. Can you name 3 things that make you feel frustrated?
- What do you do when you are frustrated?
- Can you think of something that makes grown-ups feel frustrated?
- Can you pose your body (hands, arms, legs, etc.) to show that you are frustrated?
- Can you make yourself feel frustrated and then make yourself feel calmer? Try it.



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Card #12 Worried

What do you think that this girl is feeling?

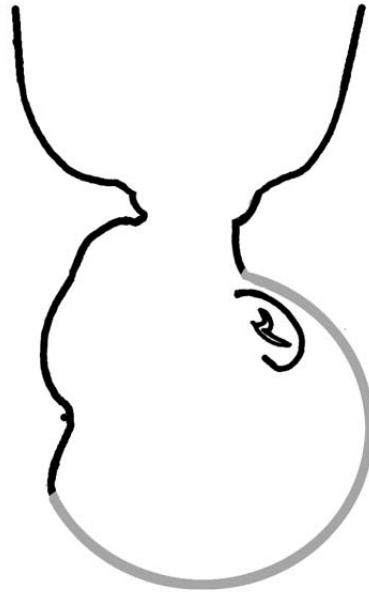
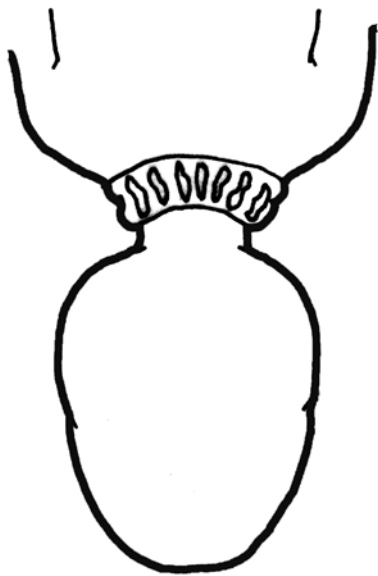
The child may say another feeling other than "worried." You can talk about that feeling, or you can say: "The artist who drew this picture thought that she looked worried. Do you think so, too?"

Then you can ask any the questions below that seem appropriate. The questions are ranked in the order of difficulty. In other words, younger children should be able to answer the first few questions, and older children should also be able to answer all of the questions.

Questions

(Note: If the child does not know the answers, then you can answer them yourself.
Give children concrete examples of your thoughts and experiences with different feelings.)

- What is something that worries you?
- What do you do when you are worried about something?
- Do you sometimes feel that you worry too much about something?
- Who can you talk to when you are worried about something?



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Card #13

You Fill In the Feeling

This card is left blank so that a child or an adult can draw in a feeling that is not included in the Feelings Flash Cards.

Questions

Here are some questions that you might ask about the feeling:

- Why is this feeling important?
- Can you name some times that you have this feeling?
- Who else do you know who has this feeling a lot?