

Waltham Forest Early Years Guidance

Supporting children's emotions and feelings

The activities below will help you in supporting children to understand their emotions and feelings.

Pass The Smile

This is a circle game which is great for eye contact, turn-taking and thinking about emotions.

The adult begins by smiling at the first child. They 'pass' the smile to the child next to them, by looking at them and smiling. Then the children pass the smile all the way around the circle. You may need to give the occasional child a bit of a reminder to look or pass it on. You can also pass a frown, a wink, a nod or some other facial expression. Great for thinking about emotions, and what our faces do when we are feeling different ways.



Pass The Puppet



This is a great activity that can be adapted in many ways. Have a puppet. And make up a story around the puppet. For example, the puppet is happy because his friend has shared their toys. The puppet might be sad for a reason, or worried, or any other emotion. Pass the puppet round, and everyone says one thing that makes them happy, or sad, or appreciative of a friend, or whatever the theme is. You can only speak when you're holding the puppet!

Act The Emotion

Have three emotion cards in the middle of the circle – happy, sad, angry. You can just draw a happy face, sad face and angry face on pieces of paper. The adult goes first to show them what to do. They stand up and act out being one of these emotions. For example, if it is sad, they bow their head, hunch their shoulders, mooch around and do a sad face. The children point to which emotion they think you are feeling. Then it is their turn. One at a time a child will stand up and act out one of the emotions. The others try to guess which one it is. Talk about the body language and facial expressions and maybe ask the child why they are feeling this way. It will also encourage language and communication development. Story making sessions is a good way to carry out this activity.

If You're Happy and You Know It Song

If you are happy, and you know it clap your hands
If you are happy, and you know it clap your hands
If you are happy, and you know it, then your face will surely show it
If you are happy, and you know it, clap your hands.

Now replace happy with different emotions:

Cross – cross your arms.

Frustrated – stomp your feet.

Excited – jump up and down.

Sad – make a frown

Scared – hide your face.



Emotion Stones

Round up some rocks and give each one a facial feature. For example, eyes, noses, & mouths in different expressions and then set them out so children can use them to express their feelings through play.

Yoga – Self Esteem Boosters

Yoga is a calming and soothing way in which children can de-stress and build up their self-confidence through physical action without using the verbal word.



Feeling Dice Game

Create a “feeling dice” using clear acrylic photo cubes—slide drawings of faces showing different emotions on each side. (You could also use photos or cut-outs from magazines instead of drawings.) In a small group, give each child a chance to roll the dice. When the dice lands, ask the child to identify the feeling and describe a time when they felt that way.

Mirror Emotions

Give children a child-friendly hand-held mirror or stand in front of a large mirror. Ask them to explore their emotions in their reflections. Ask them to make different faces. Start with easier emotions to identify, such as sad, happy and angry. Ask how their faces change as their emotions change.