

# After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers

From *What's the Buzz?* A social skills enrichment programme for primary students



## Lesson 6: feelings, identification

In this lesson your child learnt how to recognise their own feelings and the feelings of others with a view to deal with them more constructively. Here is a compilation of ideas to practice these skills with your child at home.

### Our children learn from us

The best way to show our children how to handle their feelings is by handling our own as well as we can. When we lose our temper, storm about in frustration or say hurtful comments they watch and learn to do the same. Also be fair to yourself and accept that mistakes are unavoidable, and when they occur, let your child know that you handled a situation poorly. Allow them to learn from your mistakes as well as from the finer moments you offer them.

### Connect the feeling to the situation

A surprising number of children benefit from direct guidance. So, when your child faces a problem always begin by asking, "How are you feeling?" The first step is for them to identify what feelings they have by naming them. Next ask, "What happened to make you feel like this?" This may lead to, "I feel sad because Eli and Dav wouldn't play with me". Subsequently you may ask, "What do you think they were feeling at the time? This approach provides the best chance to effectively solve problems.

Be conscious of using a style of language that links feelings to the challenging situation your child faces;

*"You sound frustrated. It's annoying when the computer plays up!"*

*"You look sad. I know it hurts not being invited to her party. Come on let's do something to cheer you up."*

*"You look pleased with your spelling test results. It was worth studying last."*

*"You sound really worried about it. It's okay, it's normal to feel stressed over things like this!"*

*"I know you're bothered by it. Come on, I'll help you finish it off. Then you can watch some television."*

*"You have every right to feel angry. That was unfair on you."*

### Be a feelings detective

From the earliest of ages help your child to attach feelings to words. Work at expanding their feelings vocabulary. In conversation use the words that describe feelings; happy, pleased, satisfied, content, sad, angry, excited, embarrassed, huffy, nervy, anxious, shy, jealous, hateful and so on. Discuss the way people in storybooks, magazine pictures, movies and television 'sitcoms' appear and what they are most likely feeling. Discuss facial expressions, voice tone and body language. Help your child to 'socially read between the lines' by getting them to hypothesize about what might have caused those feelings. Guide them to suggest options they might use to deal with them.

### Make a feelings collage with your child

Search through a few magazines, select and cut out a collection of images showing different emotions on the faces and bodies of people. Fasten them to a large poster sheet, and next to each image write the emotion, and something that may have triggered it. You may wish to scribe for your child as the aim of the activity is healthy discussions around identifying feelings and what triggers them.



### **Calm down, talk later**

When your child becomes upset by runaway feelings aim to be a steady, positive influence. To help them calm down, develop a technique they can use to calm themselves. When their feelings are out of control and it's too difficult for them to think rationally, make it a rule not to participate. Teach them that their initial waves of emotion will pass and once they have them in check it is time to talk and problem solve. Sometimes it is helpful to provide children with a journal where they can write or draw their feelings. This simple approach helps them to crystallize thoughts and emotions.

### **Sensitive feelings are beautiful**

Encourage children to express their emotions. Guide your child to understand that all of us have feelings and some of us experience them more often and more deeply. Highlight that having deeply sensitive feelings is not a failing. The only problem is choosing unhelpful ways to manage and express them. Discuss whether they are 'a sponge kid' or a 'Teflon coated kid'. Sponge kids seem to absorb every upset or thoughtless comment that come their way, while the Teflon coated kids have a tough protection that allows unkind and thoughtless comments to slip by. Teaching children to be careful not to wear their heart on their sleeve is another useful expression to use and is a springboard into strategies to help keep sensitive feelings safe.



"A good friend is hard to find, hard to lose, and impossible to forget."

*Anonymous*