

After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers

From *What's the Buzz?* for Early Learners: A complete social skills foundation course



Lesson 9: Working with feelings

After the Buzz presents ideas for parents, guardians and educators to encourage the generalisation of the social skills and the social thinking the children have started to learn in the lesson. Children rely on us to consolidate these skills by modelling them, and emphasising the language and ideas used in the lesson. Here are a few practical ideas parents can do at home to support the quality of their child's social thinking based on Lesson nine, 'Working with feelings'.

Our children learn from us

Whether we're teaching in the classroom or parenting at home, the best way to show children how to handle their feelings - big or small - is by modelling ours the best way we can!

Be a feelings detective

Children who are able to name what they're feeling respond more thoughtfully to their own needs and to those of others. Emotional vocabulary and intelligence can be built. From the earliest of ages help your child to attach feelings to words. Expand their feelings vocabulary at every opportunity. In conversation use the words that describe feelings; happy, pleased, content, sad, angry, excited, embarrassed, sulky, anxious, shy, jealous, hateful and so on.

Books and video highlight feelings and how to deal with them

Another effective approach is to read stories that highlight emotions. Kids can learn a lot from absorbing the experiences of story book characters. Just looking at the illustrations together is an instructive way for children to see facial expressions and body language that accompany various feelings. Then, take the next step and 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 the story character might use to deal with them.

Books and videos with explicit 'feeling' themes

Always and Forever by A Durant (2004, Corgi)

Alexander and the terrible horrible not so good day by Judith Viorst (1972, Aladdin Paperbacks)

- youtube - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ezbssw11724&list=PLn07PJZJoFLCB9F8mDYhEI3DwQONjJ3Ew>

Badger's Bad Mood by Hiawyn Oram and Susan Varley (1997 Scholastic)

Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears by Emily Gravett (2007, Macmillan Children's Books) - youtube -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWEDFGBCVXk>

The Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside (2004, Hodder Wayland)

The Shopping Basket by John Birmingham (1992, Red Fox) - youtube -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Spa13p2dq4>

The Sulky Vulture by Sally Grindley and Michael Terry (2003, Bloomsbury)

The Three Pigs by David Wiesner (2001, Clarion Books) - youtube -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXcccTEY6h4>

The Ugly Duckling by Hans Christian Andersen/ Jerry Pinkney (1999, Caldecott Honor Books) - youtube -



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3t5BmU3uYQ>

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak (2000 Red Fox) - youtube -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cOEFnppm_A

Create a feelings scrap book

Search through a few magazines with your child (parenting style magazines are often great for this), select and cut out a collection of images that show different emotions on the faces and bodies of people. Fasten them to a large poster sheet and next to each, in categories, write the emotion. Talk about what could have triggered it, and what that person might do next to fix things.

Grab your digital camera and snap, snap, snap!

Next have fun modelling various emotions. Turn it into a friendly competitive game by saying, "I think I can make the angriest face" or "I bet you can't make the shyest face." Print these photos and label them to create a feelings album.

Acknowledge emotions - they are legitimate!

Listen to your children's feelings. They are a healthy expression about what's happening for them. The earlier we develop their ability to talk openly about feelings, as well as understanding the feelings of others, the easier it is to handle conflict and complexities in life. On the other hand, when a parent constantly minimises or ignores their child's emotions the result is a build-up of frustration in the child. This sets the scene for emotions to pop out, quite intensely, at unpredictable times. It also sends the message that we should not experience difficult emotions, yet difficult emotions are truly inevitable.

Empathise - connect the feeling to the situation

Young children always benefit from direct guidance. So, when your child faces a problem ask, "Tell me, you're feeling?" The first step is for them to name the feelings at play. Next ask, "What happened to make you feel like this?" This may lead to, "I feel sad because Jaimie won't let me ride his bike". Subsequently you may ask, "What do you think you could do? This approach provides the best chance to effectively problem solve.

Use language that links feelings to the situation your child faces;

"You sound frustrated. It's annoying when people say no!"

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

"You look proud of your spelling test results. It was worth practicing them last night."

"You sound really worried about it. It's okay to feel a bit stressed over this!"

"I know this is bothering you. Come on, I'll help you finish it off."

"You look cross and you have every right to feel it. That was unfair on you."

When your child becomes upset because they can't have what they want, empathy still plays a vital role. Rather than showing your frustration or criticizing them it's so much better to say, "It is really hard to stop doing something you love, but it's time to get ready now" and "I know you feel disappointed because I won't let you have that toy" and "It's annoying when I say 'no' sometimes, especially when you want something," and so forth.

When children's emotions lead to hurting themselves, others or belongings it is important to maintain clear boundaries about what you will and won't accept while still offering support and comfort.

Encourage your children to explore the feelings of other people

Find opportunities to reflect on how others might feel in certain circumstances. You might discuss, "How do you think they felt when they found out they couldn't have it?" or "How do you think that person felt when they got that gift?" or "Would you like to do something like that? How would that make you feel?" And, when your child has been in a conflict this is a wonderful opportunity to explore not just their feelings, but the feelings of the other person too. Learning to understand and accept other people's feelings, especially when they are different to ours, is an important social skill that strengthens relationships and conciliation.

Photocopiable and Online Resources

These resources can also be downloaded from www.whatsthebuzz.net.au