



Mindful Self-Awareness Exercise: Identifying Feelings

One of the most important skills for mental health and well-being is being able to identify what you feel and how feelings are expressed in the body. This exercise will help you and your child explore what you are feeling at any moment and how that feeling shows up through facial expressions and body postures.

- Each exercise takes 10 minutes or less.
- Familiarize yourself with the exercise before using with your child.
- Use the script to guide the exercise. Adjust language as needed.
- All exercises begin with **Breath Awareness** followed by a **Mindfulness Activity** that teaches a practical mindfulness skill.
- Each exercise ends with **Reflecting Questions** to discuss with your child. Invite your child to stay in mindful silence until the Reflecting Questions.

Breath Awareness

Let's take a few minutes together to get peaceful inside and then we will look at something called feelings. Do you know what I mean by feelings? (pause)

Feelings are things like happy, sad, mad, scared, and lots more. Do you know how we show our feelings? (pause)

We show them in our face and body. In a couple of minutes, we will have some fun together and use our faces and bodies to show some feelings we have every day.

First, let's get comfortable. Sit with your back as straight as you can. Place your hands on your legs. You can close your eyes if you like or gaze softly toward the floor. Take a really big, slow, quiet breath and hold it for a couple of seconds. Let's see if we can do this very quietly. (pause)

Now, let out your breath in the same way, slowly and quietly. (pause)

Begin to breathe even more deeply, bringing the air all the way into your belly when you inhale through your nose and releasing the air all the way out of your mouth when you exhale, like a big balloon. Let's do this three more times. (pause)

How does this feel? (pause)

Mindfulness Activity

Continue to breathe slowly and deeply. I am going to call out a feeling word, one at a time. When you hear the feeling word, show me that feeling with your face and body without talking. For example, if I say happy, show me with your face and body what that might look like right now. (pause)





Notice where you feel it in your body as you make the expression. (pause)

Slowly choose several feeling words from the following list and pause after each one to give your child time to make the expression: mad, sad, happy, angry, fearful, glad, cheerful, ready, eager, anxious, excited, nervous, peaceful. Allow your child time to respond with facial expressions. You may want to make expressions, too.

Take two deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth to finish the activity. Slowly, if your eyes are closed, open them.

Reflecting

Take this opportunity to have a conversation about your shared experience using the following reflecting questions:

Reflecting Questions

- What?** What did you notice as you took your deep breaths today?
- So What?** What is helpful about knowing how you show your feelings in your face and body?
- Now What?** How can you use what we did today to understand the feelings of others?

