

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

Today, let's do a mindfulness exercise that helps us explore our feelings and show those feelings through facial expressions and body postures. Then we can know ourselves better and also tune into the feelings of others. Find a comfortable seated position, sit up straight, and place your hands on your thighs. If you want to stand or lie down, find a posture that will be comfortable for several minutes. Close your eyes if you like or gaze softly downward. Begin to bring your attention to your breath. (pause)

Start to notice the rhythm of your breath as you breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Once you are aware of that rhythm, begin to breathe more deeply, bringing the air all the way into your belly on the inhale and releasing the air out on the exhale, allowing your belly to go back toward your spine. (pause)

As you breath, do you notice any feelings in your body? Just notice and try to name one if you can. (pause)

Mindfulness Activity

Think about a time when you had a strong feeling. What did it feel like in your body? How was your face reacting? As you think about this, you may notice that your body and face are reacting right now. We typically have a physical reaction to our feelings, and those feelings affect our facial expressions and our bodies.

Let's see if you can show me some feelings with your body and your face. 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 your body. For example, if I say happy, show me with your face and body what that might look like right now. Maybe a big smile and hands in the air.



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FAMILY
G3-G5

Read the following words and allow your child time to respond with facial expressions and body postures: happy, sad, scared, angry, impatient, proud, worried, frustrated, puzzled, thrilled, exhausted. Allow your child time to respond with facial expressions and body postures. You may want to participate.

You really had a lot of facial expressions and gestures to show all of those feelings! Take two deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth to finish the activity. If your eyes are closed, slowly 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 about the connection between feelings and your face and body?
- So What?** Complete the sentence: I am feeling ____ today, and I feel it mostly in my _____. Put a name to the feeling you had and where you felt it.
- Now What?** How can the expressions and postures of others help you know what they feel?



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