

## 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 adolescent 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 adolescent.
- 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 adolescent. Invite your adolescent to stay in mindful silence until the Reflecting Questions.

### Breath Awareness

*Today, let's do a mindfulness exercise that helps us experience emotions from the inside out and see how we show our emotions through our facial expressions and body postures. We can also talk about how this can help us better understand others as well. Find a comfortable seated position. Notice your body. Place your hands on your knees. Close your eyes, if that feels comfortable, or gaze softly downward. If you want to stand or lie down, just make sure you are comfortable enough to stay there for several minutes. Bring your attention to your breath. (pause)*

*Start to notice the rhythm of your breath as you breathe in and out. 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)*

### Mindfulness Activity

*In your mind, slowly do a scan through your body, starting with your feet, leading up to your calves, through your knees, and up to your thighs. Notice any emotions. (pause)*

*Continue scanning your belly, chest, and out through your arms, wrists, and fingers. (pause)*

*Then go back to your chest and around your back. (pause)*

*Go up your neck, through your face, going all the way to the top of your head. Be curious about any feelings that you notice. (pause)*



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*Maybe you felt many different emotions in your body after the body scan. One way we can identify emotions is to pay attention to what we're feeling in our body and give that feeling a word description. We then become more self-aware of the connection between emotions, the body, and our expression of those emotions. I am going to call out an emotion one at a time. When you hear the emotion, show me that emotion with your face and with a body posture without talking. For example, if I say happy, show me with your face what that might look like right now and how your body would look. (pause)*

Call out several emotion words and pause between each one to give your adolescent time to demonstrate that emotion. You may want to do this yourself. Examples include: happy, sad, scared, angry, impatient, proud, worried, frustrated, puzzled, thrilled, exhausted.

*Let's take three more deep breaths. If your eyes are closed, slowly open them. (pause)*

## Reflecting

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

### Reflecting Questions

- What?** What did you notice today about the connection between your emotions and the way your face and body express them?
- So What?** Why do you think it is important to identify and name your emotions and know what they look and feel like? Why do you think this might be important for relationships?
- Now What?** What will help you recognize emotions as you feel and express them?



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