

## Understanding and expressing emotions

Key stage 2

### Learning Intention:

- To be able to communicate both positive and negative emotions in different situations.

### Learning Outcome:

- To identify and recognise in themselves a range of different emotions.
- To understand how our bodies and emotions are linked.
- To understand how their emotions affect their interactions with other people.
- To give examples of their actions which can affect the emotions of other people.
- To appreciate that their emotions can lead them into risky situations.

### Resources:

- Small notebook or pieces of paper for emotional dictionary.
- Pictures of people displaying emotions, taken from online sources, magazines or newspapers (or use the suggested images in Appendix 2).
- Paper printed with body outlines.
- Traffic Light Cards.
- Sticky notes.
- Paper printed with storyboard boxes.
- “When I felt good about myself” blank poster.
- “When I did not feel good about myself” blank poster.
- Paper, pens, crayons.

### Teacher Introduction:

Start by saying: We all experience different emotions throughout the day. Another word for “emotions” is “feelings.” When we get up in the morning, we will all feel different emotions. We might feel excited because we know something nice is going to happen, or grumpy because it’s raining.

It can be hard to understand emotions.

Sometimes we might not even understand what we are feeling ourselves. We might be angry but it feels like being scared. It can be even harder for other people to understand how we are feeling, although our body language, our faces and our words can all give clues.

Because everyone is different, everyone can have different emotions. One person might be scared or upset when another person is not. This means we have to remember that other people might feel

differently about things – for instance they might be upset by something we think is funny. Remembering this is called respecting other people’s feelings and being able to do this is an important part of growing up.

**Activity 1:**

Ask the children what the word ‘emotions’ means. Ask them to name as many emotions as they can think of, and scribe this list.

Ask the children to copy the list into their “emotional dictionary.” Explore the subtleties of emotional language – for instance, is sadness the same as grief? Is happy the same as joy? Ensure that the children can understand the words on the list and use them accurately. Explain that they are building up their emotional vocabulary and that they can use their emotional dictionary to remind them of useful words. Encourage them to add new words to the dictionary as they progress.

**Also useful for: CF, RR**

**Activity 2:**

Split the children into small groups. Give each group one or more of the emotions pictures and ask them to write down what they think each one represents. Ask each group to feed back to the class, correcting any misunderstandings or errors.

As a class, discuss:

- Was the task easy or hard?
- Were some pictures easier than others? Why?
- Were there some faces that could be showing more than one emotion?
- Apart from the faces, were there any other clues that helped you to recognise the emotion?

**Also useful for: CF, RR**

**Activity 3:**

Divide the children into groups and give each group an emotion. Ask the children to mime that emotion to the other groups. The other groups need to guess which emotion it is.

At the end of each role-play, ask the children how they could tell what emotion it was. Ensure that areas such as facial expressions and body language are covered.

**Also useful for: CF, RR**

**Activity 4:**

Split the children into groups and explain that we are going to look at the ways in which our bodies and minds are connected, just like we saw when we talked about body language.

Give each group a printed body outline. Ask the children to imagine that they are about to sing a song to the whole school in assembly, or perform a similar task that they will find a little bit

daunting. Alternatively they can think of a situation in a book or television programme where a character has an experience that is scary or unnerving.

On the body outline, ask them to draw and label the physical symptoms they would associate with this situation.

Scribe their responses, such as butterflies in the tummy, panting, a pounding heart, shaking, having a headache.

Explain that our bodies try to keep us safe from danger. It doesn't matter what that danger is – it could be a hungry tiger or a scary assembly! This is called “fight or flight” and it makes us want to either fight the scary thing or run away from it.

Go through the list of symptoms and explain the physiological “fight or flight” reason for them:

- **butterflies in the tummy** – our bodies stop digesting our food to concentrate on keeping safe
- **panting** – our body tries to get lots of oxygen to our muscles so we can run away or defend ourselves
- **pounding heart** – blood tries to get to our muscles quickly
- **shaking** – our muscles get tense ready to fight or run away
- **headache** – this is caused by tense muscles in our neck and shoulders

Explain that this illustrates how our bodies and emotions are connected, which is important to remember when we are thinking about how people feel. Our bodies can often give lots of clues to how we are feeling, which can help us to understand our emotions and make better choices.

**Also useful for: CF, RR, PH & HE, MW**

### **Activity 5:**

Ask the children to think of a time when they felt really happy and good about themselves, and to think of another time when they did not feel good about themselves. As with activity 4, it is important that children are guided towards “safe” scenarios rather than recalling a trauma such as abuse or bereavement.

Taking the “not feel good” scenario first, ask the children to write how they felt and looked on sticky notes and to put these on the “When I did not feel good about myself” blank poster. Then repeat the exercise with the “When I felt good about myself” poster.

Make sure the notes are anonymous.

Use the sticky notes to lead discussion:

- Has anyone else here ever felt like this?
- Was it for the same reason, or a different reason?
- Why might things affect different people in different ways?

**Also useful for: CF, RR, MW**

**Activity 6:**

Read “Have You Filled a Bucket Today?” by Carol McCloud. Discuss with the children how we can help other people feel good or bad by the way we act. Explore how our own behaviour and actions can be affected by our feelings and how other people can affect ours.

**Also useful for: CF, RR, MW**

**Activity 7:**

Ask the children to name a situations when someone might feel really excited – for example waking up early on Christmas morning, running onto the beach for the first time, a hot afternoon when they had some money and the ice-cream van came around the corner.

Ask the children if they can think of any ways in which being this excited might make someone do something silly (such as tear open all the presents, talk to a stranger playing the same game online, run out into the road). What might the consequences of these actions be?

Tell the children that sometimes, really strong emotions can stop us thinking sensibly – just like “fight and flight” can make us want to argue or run away, even if those are not the best things to do.

Ask the class to name any other strong feelings that could make them act without thinking.

In pairs, ask the children to think of a time when they acted without thinking. Give them the following prompts: what happened? What feelings do they remember? Why did they act as they did? How did other people feel about what they did? How did they feel afterwards?

Then explore what they would have done if they had stopped and thought about it, using the following prompts: would things have turned out differently? How? Would they have felt any differently about what happened?

**Also useful for: CF, RR, OR, BS, MW**

**Activity 8:**

Ask each pair to break down their “stopping and thinking” scenario into six steps, for instance:

1. I heard the ice cream van’s music
2. I remembered I had my pocket money
3. I ran out onto the pavement in excitement
4. I stopped and thought
5. I crossed the road safely instead of running out into the traffic
6. I felt proud of myself for staying safe

Give each pair a storyboard and ask them to illustrate the six steps of their story, with drawings and speech bubbles.

1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.

**Also useful for: CF, OR, BS**

### **Activity 9:**

Ask the children for ideas about how they can remember to stop and think, rather than reacting with their feelings. Scribe a list.

Remind the class about the traffic light system that can help them decide:

- **STOP** – decision to be made;
- **DECIDE** – Discussion and thinking time; and
- **GO** – Final Choice, Decision made.

Give each child three pieces of paper or card and ask them to design their own set of traffic light cards for use at home.

Ask the children to complete the stem sentence, 'I have learnt that before reacting I will...' and illustrate this with a picture of themselves acting out the statement.

**Also useful for: CF, OR, BS**

### **Plenary:**

Remind the children what they have learnt:

- We all show our emotions through verbal language and body language.
- Our emotions can affect other people.
- Our actions can affect the emotions of other people.
- Our emotions can stop us from thinking and as a consequence we may do something that we later regret.

### **Debriefing activity:**

Put the children into pairs. Ask child A to tell child B one way in which child B makes child A feel good. Repeat so each child hears a positive statement about themselves. Give some examples to

start the conversation, such as “you always let me share your pens” or “you picked up my cardigan for me”.

**Differentiation for SEND:**

Autistic children may struggle to recognise emotions from facial expressions. These children may benefit from being helped to compile a list of “clues” such as:

- Smile, laugh = happy
- Frown, shout = angry
- Cry, not want to play = sad
- Say “ugh” and run off = disgust