

UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

Skill Sheet for Caregivers

Children experience all the same complicated, wonderful, confusing, and big emotions that adults do. It's okay to feel all emotions, including feelings that are pleasant and uncomfortable.

As your child learned from our hedgehog friends, emotions are important because they provide us with information about ourselves and our environment, and they help us connect with one another. Learning how to notice, label, and express their feelings helps children feel more in control of their emotional experience.

Summary of the **KEY SKILLS** from the video:

- Label and name feelings to increase emotional vocabulary AND reinforce that you can feel more than one emotion at a time.
- Notice body sensations that are attached to different emotions and provide clues for what we are feeling. Sometimes it's easier to notice physical symptoms first.
- Rate the feeling of emotions on a scale of 1 to 10 to capture that we feel emotions in different amounts or intensities.

Practice skills

- Use check-in moments as part of your daily routine to ask how your child is feeling and how much of that emotion they are feeling on a rating scale.
- Listen to and validate your child's emotions (do this before jumping to problem-solving or fixing what is wrong). For example:



"I see that you're feeling sad, and that's okay."

"I hear you feel angry and sad at the same time. That happens."

"It makes sense to feel excited and nervous!"

- Use specific positive feedback frequently, immediately, and consistently when your child identifies how they are feeling or recognizes someone else's feelings. For example:



"Great job recognizing that you feel nervous, and thank you for letting me know."

"_____, very nice job noticing you are feeling frustrated. I will take deep breaths with you to calm down our bodies."

- Use activities such as reading together to help your child identify where they feel emotions in their bodies. For example:



“How do you think Jaila is feeling in this picture?”

“What is Jaila doing that makes you think she is feeling mad?”

“Where do you feel mad in your body?”

- Discuss how you feel and how your body reacts to that feeling. It is a great way to normalize uncomfortable feelings and model what to do.

Start with this →

- Emotional validation is a foundational skill that caregivers can try at home that will help their child to increase emotional awareness.
- Listening, reflecting and connecting helps to increase your child’s awareness of their emotional experience and helps them to know that it’s okay to feel all emotions.
- Be mindful of the do’s and don’ts below when it comes to validation as you encourage your child to tell you how they’re feeling.

DO

Listen

Give your full attention.

Reflect

Say back what the emotion was that they shared. For example: “I hear that it was super frustrating.”

Connect

Tell them you understand. For example: “I can understand why you would feel that way.”

DON'T

Minimize Feelings

Avoid telling your child they shouldn’t feel a certain way. For example: “Don’t worry about it! It will be fine!”

Shame

Avoid using language that can lead to embarrassment for feeling a certain way. For example: “Why do you feel sad about that? You know better.”

Fix right away

Avoid jumping in with solutions. For example: “I’ll handle the issue with that other child. Don’t worry.”

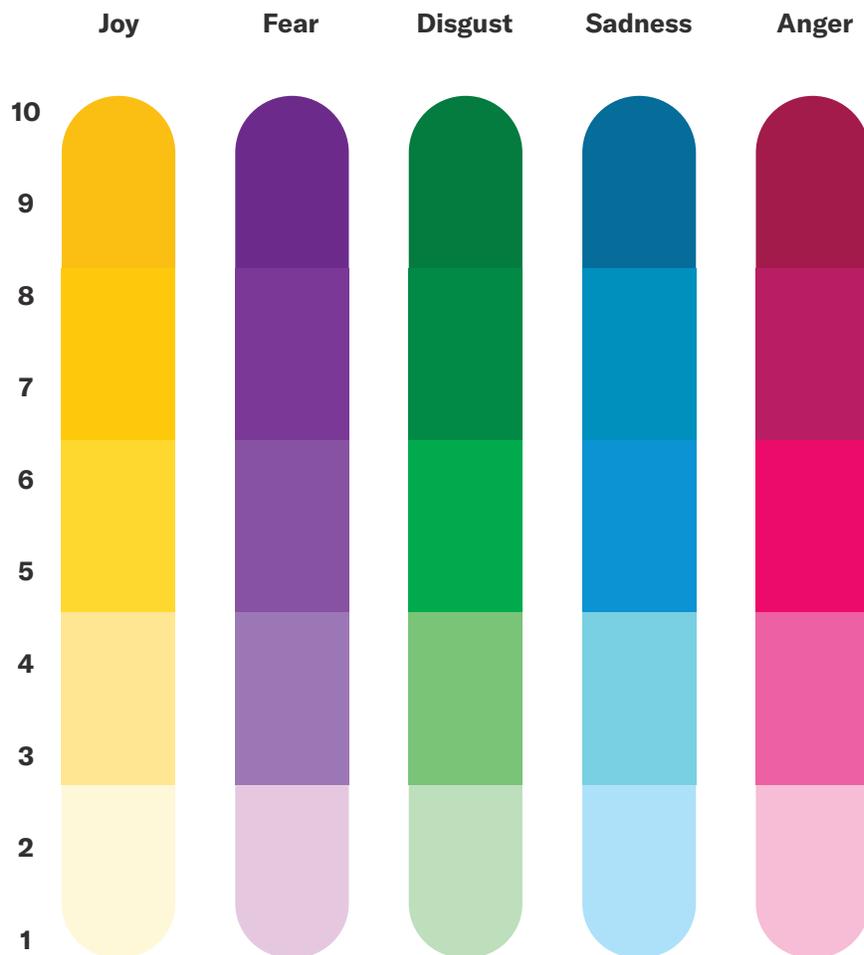
On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your child. Do the activity together to help reinforce and practice the different skills for understanding feelings.

Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

Directions

Look at the scales below and pick a shade for each feeling that best matches how much you felt that feeling today. A light shade means feeling a little of that feeling and a dark shade means feeling a lot of that feeling.



Follow-Up

When you rate your feelings, you're gathering data about your experiences over the past week. If there are emotions that you're hoping to feel more or less, the skills reviewed in the additional videos and worksheets of this curriculum will help. You can use worksheets like this one each week to track your progress and figure out how the skills might be affecting your feelings.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

RELAXATION SKILLS

Skill Sheet for Caregivers

Stress and anxiety are connected to physical sensations in our bodies. The relaxation skill of paced belly breathing helps us turn down these unpleasant physical sensations, which helps us to feel calm and in control.

In the video, our hedgehog friend was feeling nervous during her dance competition. She felt many unpleasant physical sensations in her body. Thanks to her friend the turtle, she used paced belly breathing to calm her body and turn down her nervousness so she could complete the competition.

Summary of the **KEY SKILLS** from the video.

- Paced belly breathing is breathing slowly and deeply at a steady pace. By slowing their inhales and extending their exhales, your child can use their breath to harness control of their emotions.
- Paced belly breathing balances out the carbon dioxide and oxygen in kids' bodies, cutting off their fight, flight, or freeze response. It returns their mind and body to a calmer state.

Practice skills

- Model and practice relaxation strategies with your child proactively. For example:



“I’m feeling nervous right now, so I am going to take five belly breaths to calm down. Take five belly breaths with me.”

- Use specific positive feedback frequently, immediately, and consistently when your child utilizes paced belly breathing. For example:



“Nice job taking belly breaths before doing homework!”

“_____, I noticed you used paced belly breathing when you were starting to feel angry. Great choice!”

Start with this →

- Use paced belly breathing to help ground yourself and your child after exciting activities like playtime or sports or for transitions between activities at home.
- You can also practice and model this skill for your child as a way to navigate challenging emotions like feeling scared or angry.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your child or post in your home to reinforce and practice paced belly breathing.

Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

Paced Belly Breathing

Breathing deeply into your belly helps to tell your body that you are safe and calm. Follow the instructions below and practice paced belly breathing when you are feeling calm and when you are feeling stressed or anxious.



1

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor either cross-legged or on your shins.



2

Place one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest.



3

Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 seconds and feel your belly expand.



4

Slowly breathe out for 5 seconds through your mouth, letting the air gently leave your body.



5

Repeat 3-5 times, or for as long as you want.

When can you practice paced belly breathing?



Draw your own

UNDERSTANDING THOUGHTS

Skill Sheet for Caregivers

Our thoughts can be overwhelming at times and can cause us to feel stressed and anxious. Our hedgehog friend in the video taught us that it can be easy to overthink and get stuck thinking unhelpful thoughts that may not be true. That's why it's important to take the time to pause and remember that thoughts are not facts and that we have the power to change them. Changing our thoughts can help us reduce our uncomfortable emotions and navigate challenging situations better.

Summary of the **KEY SKILLS** from the video.

- Thoughts are not always facts and are temporary.
- Thoughts can be either helpful or unhelpful.
- You can practice changing unhelpful thoughts to thoughts that are more realistic or helpful.

Practice skills

- Help your child to practice identifying unhelpful and helpful thoughts and describing how their thoughts make them feel.
- If you recognize that your child is expressing an unhelpful thought, encourage them to replace the thought with a more helpful or realistic thought. Here are some examples where this may be helpful:
 - “ Your child states that their best friend doesn't like them anymore because the best friend was playing with someone else at recess. You can ask your child, “What could be another reason your friend was playing with someone else?”
Your child states, “I'm so stupid” after receiving a low grade on an assessment. You can ask your child, “What is another reason you may have received a low grade on the test?”
- Use positive feedback frequently, immediately, and consistently when your child changes their unhelpful thoughts (whether it is independent or prompted). You might say, “Great job staying calm and thinking of all the possibilities!”

Start with this →

- Ask your child the following questions to get them to be more aware of their thinking:
 - “ What were you thinking in that situation? Or: What is your brain saying?
How is this thought making you feel?
Do you think this thought is helpful or unhelpful?
- Remind your child: “It’s just a thought, and it does not mean it’s important or that it’s true.”
- Remember that recognizing your thinking takes practice.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your child to help practice understanding thoughts.

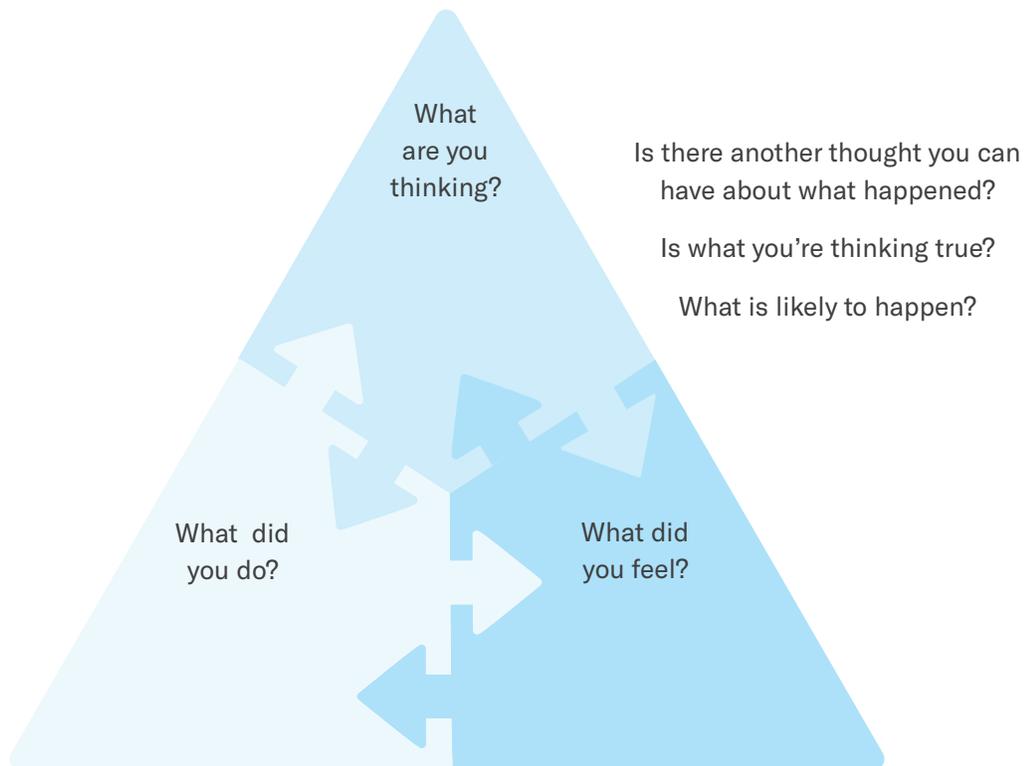
Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

Understanding Thoughts

Recognizing and changing unhelpful thoughts takes practice. You can begin with the below activity to practice noticing the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors associated with a specific event:

What Happened?



Follow Up

When you notice how your thoughts are connected to how you feel, you're gathering data about yourself. If you notice that certain ways of thinking are not all that helpful or lead to uncomfortable feelings, remember that you have the power to slow down and consider when there might be other ways of thinking about the situation. The skills reviewed in the additional videos and worksheets of this curriculum can also help!

MANAGING INTENSE EMOTIONS

Skill Sheet for Caregivers

Every emotion we experience can become intense at times, which makes us want to act in certain ways. Our hedgehog friend in the video was feeling a lot of anger and sadness, he ran away and started crying. However, he learned that when these big emotions take over, the best thing we can do is grab something calming, like the items in the hedgehog's self-care backpack, to help us feel better. These calming items can help bring us back to the present moment. After our intense emotions pass we will be better able to choose how to handle challenging moments.

Summary of the **KEY POINTS** from the video.

- Everyone feels big and intense emotions sometimes.
- Everyone has urges to act that are caused by big, intense, and uncomfortable emotions. The key is riding out the urge and waiting for big feelings to lessen.
- You can ride out big feelings by using your five senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell) to ground to the present.

Practice Skills

- Validate your child's emotional experience. Helping them to feel heard and understood is foundational when it comes to tolerating emotions.
- Model opportunities when you utilize a strategy to ride out big feelings. Create your own self-soothe kit that utilizes the five senses that you can show to your child.
- Use specific positive reinforcement frequently, immediately, and consistently when your child utilizes a strategy to ride out a big emotion and impulse. Using specific positive feedback is the best way to shape behaviors you want to see. You might say:



"I see you were feeling overwhelmed, and I love how you're working on riding out those big feelings."

"I love how you're using your stress ball to help with big feelings."

Start with this →

- Before jumping into solving problems for your child to make big feelings go away, start with validation. Listening to and reflecting back what your child is experiencing emotionally helps them to feel heard and reminds them it's okay to feel emotion. It also starts the process of helping to tolerate that emotion.

- When your child is in a calm place, brainstorm some items your child can use to help tolerate big feelings and some activities they can do when feeling overwhelmed to help them ride out that intensity. Having a plan and designated space makes it more likely that your child will use these skills.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your child to create a self-soothe kit that can help when big feelings occur.

Activity

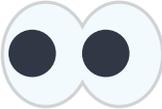
Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

What Is in Your Self-Soothe Kit?

Brainstorm a self-soothe kit. Come up with ideas for what might be soothing in each category and then collect the items from around your house.

Remember that feeling intense emotions is normal and can make us feel like we need to do something. Using the five senses can help us ride out that wave of intensity and help us choose what to do next.

- 1 Find a small, portable bag that can fit in your backpack (for example, a small pouch, pencil case, or Ziploc bag).
- 2 Select one or more favorite items from each of the five senses to put in your kit (or something that is close by and you have easy access to).

5 Senses	One thing that makes me calm and relaxed is:	Stumped on what to pick? Here are some suggestions:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calming colors• A relaxing scene• Small picture of my favorite person, family member, athlete; or place to visit
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to rainstorm or ocean sounds• Recordings of funny jokes or comedians• Happy or soothing music
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good-smelling hand lotion• Small perfume bottle• A scented candle
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pieces of your favorite candy or other treat like gum or a mint
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Satin ribbon or soft fabric• A small pompom or pouf• A small feather• A stress ball• Slime

MINDFULNESS

Skill Sheet for Caregivers

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention on purpose to the present moment, without judging or trying to change your experience. As we learn with our hedgehog friend, the practice of mindfulness can help students to increase their self-awareness, self-control, and attention. It can also reduce their emotional suffering and increase their compassion for themselves and others. Practicing mindfulness allows students to see reality more accurately and without judgement. Regular practice will help to foster an increased sense of well-being for your students.

Summary of **KEY POINTS** in the video.

- Mindfulness is an ongoing practice, just like daily physical exercise.
- There are three mindfulness skills for kids to focus on.
 - Observe: Notice, without words, what is going on in the environment or in their body
 - Describe: Name what they notice using descriptive and non-judgmental language
 - Participate: Throw themselves fully into an activity or experience

Practice Skills:

- Model for your child and schedule daily mindfulness activities for yourself. Invite them to participate with you when possible. Activities can include:
 - Take a mindful walk together. Encourage your child to use all five of their senses to observe their environment and then describe what they experience using non-judgmental language.
 - Practice paced belly breathing together. Every time the mind starts to wander to a thought, consider it an opportunity to practice mindfulness and bring your attention back to the breath.
 - Practice mindful eating at family meals. Rather than eating without thinking about it, encourage your child to slow down and notice the colors, smells, taste, and textures of their food.
 - Put on some music and dance like no one is watching (or like you don't care if they are).
- Engage in mindful parenting. When you notice feeling stress when you are interacting with your child, slow down and be. Be mindful of thoughts, urges, and sensations that arise. Take a deep breath and bring awareness to your breathing body. Observe how the breath naturally brings balance to your body. Proceed as you have shifted to having a more mindful response.

- The mindfulness practice of bringing your attention to gratitude helps to increase compassion for yourself and others. You and your child can spend a mindful minute thinking about what you are grateful for today.

Start with this →

- When it comes to mindfulness practice, everything that is taught has to be lived. Encouraging your child to be mindful starts with you creating your own mindfulness practice.
- Start by creating and holding space for your mindfulness practice, and protect five minutes each day to engage in a mindfulness exercise. Talk about your intention with your child, and share with them your mindfulness practice.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share or even place somewhere in your house as a reminder to engage in mindfulness practice.

Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

Mindfulness Skills & Activities

The more you practice mindfulness the more it will help our mental muscles to have better focus, attention, and awareness. Below are the skills of mindfulness to practice. You can choose from many activities below to practice the skills of mindfulness.



Notice it
(Observe)
Skill



Say Something About It
(Describe)
Skill



Do It
(Participate Fully)
Skill

1-2-3

Counting Breaths



Mindfully eating your favorite treat



Playing a game



Listen to music and paying attention to one instrument



Dancing



Color



Going for a walk and naming what you see



Playing an instrument



Blow bubbles