

# 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.”

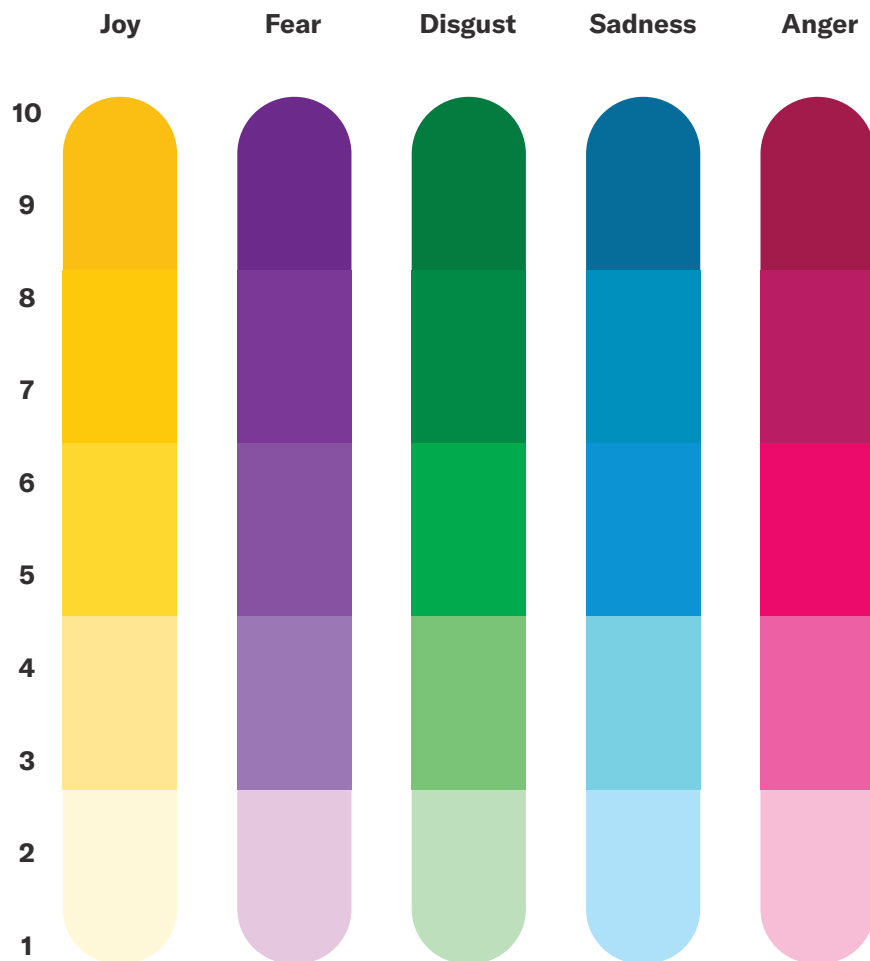
On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your child. Do the activity together to help reinforce and practice the different skills for understanding feelings.

## 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.