

Understanding Feelings

High school is a time of transition. Teenagers become more independent and turn toward their friends and peers for guidance and support. They also start to explore larger questions like what they want to do in the future. It's an exciting time that also comes with complicated, wonderful, confusing, and big emotions.

Sometimes these emotions may be uncomfortable but feeling them is healthy and important because emotions provide teens with information about themselves and their environment and help them to connect to other people. Learning how to notice, label, and express their feelings helps teens to feel more in control.

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 how body sensations are attached to different emotions and provide clues for what we are feeling. Sometimes it's easier to notice physical symptoms first.
- Rate emotions on a scale of 1 to 10 to capture that we feel emotions in different amounts or intensities.

Practice Skills:

- Make time to check in with your teen and explicitly ask how they are feeling.
- Start by listening and validating your teen's emotions. This might sound like:
 - *"It seems like you're feeling sad today. Is there anything you want to talk about?"*
 - *"You had a really frustrating experience. That sounds really hard."*
 - *"I hear that you're excited, but maybe also feeling nervous about the future."*
- Once your teen has identified how they are feeling, ask them how much of that emotion they are feeling. They can give you more information about how intense their emotions are.
- Encourage your teen to observe where in their body they are experiencing that emotion. This will help them to turn down the intensity of their emotions and make them feel more in control.
- Model expressing and validating your own feelings! Discuss and label how you feel, how your body reacts to that feeling, and how much you feel it. It is a great way to normalize all feelings and send the message that feelings are important.
- If you are not used to discussing emotions directly with your teen, it might be awkward at first. But the more you do it, the easier it will become and the more connected you will feel.

Start with this →

- Validation is a foundational skill you can try at home. It can help teens increase their emotional awareness.
- Listening, reflecting, and connecting helps to increase your teen's awareness of their emotional experience and helps them to know that it's okay to feel all emotions.
- Be mindful of the dos and don'ts below when it comes to validation as you encourage your teen 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 teen 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. Don't worry."

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

Emotion Monitoring

Being able to monitor and track your mood is an effective skill for helping to increase your emotional awareness. It can also help provide information about the things you may need and help you communicate that need. For this week, pick three emotions you will monitor. Track the intensity, physical sensation, and what was happening at the time you felt each emotion.

Emotion:	Emotion:	Emotion:
_____	_____	_____
Rate intensity:	Rate intensity:	Rate intensity:
Physical sensations:	Physical sensations:	Physical sensations:
What was going on:	What was going on:	What was going on:

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.