

## Recognizing Children's Feelings

Statement	Ineffective Response	Effective Response
I'm angry!	You shouldn't feel that way. What's wrong now?	Tell me more
Eric hit me.	Well, what did you do to him?	Yeah?
I don't think he likes me.	So, what does that matter?	Really? What else?
I didn't do anything to him!	You probably asked for it.	Oh?
I want her to like me.	Sure, everybody wants that.	Yeah?
I guess I could ask him over	Well, it will have to be tomorrow	Good idea. Anything else?

### Toolkit for Responding to Children:

#### 1. Instead of Giving Criticism and Advice, You Can:

- **Acknowledge feelings with a word or sound ("Oh" or "Hmm" or "I see")**
  - By responding to a child's distress with an attitude of concern and an occasional nod or sound of understanding, the child is free to focus on their problem, possibly solving it themselves.

#### 2. Instead of Reasons and Explanations, You Can:

- **Give in fantasy what you can't give in reality**
  - When you express a child's wishes in fantasy, you make it easier for them to deal with reality

#### 3. Instead of Denying Feelings, You Can:

- **Put the feelings into words**
  - When negative feelings are identified and accepted, a child feels encouraged to continue to strive

#### 4. Instead of Ignoring Feelings, You Can:

- **Accept feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior**
  - It is easier for children to change their behavior when their feelings have been accepted.
  - Ex 1. Molly, I can see how much you want to paint. Right now it is John's turn to paint. I'll write your name here – in big letters – on the list of children waiting for the easel.
  - Ex 2. Richard, you really like to jump, don't you? The rule is, no jumping off chairs. Later in the playground you can show me how high and how far you can jump.

*Instead of criticism, questions & advice, accept and reflect feelings & wishes*



## Children's Feelings & Empathy

### 1. Books:

- *Today I Feel Silly: And Other Moods That Make My Day* by Jamie Lee Curtis
- *The Feelings Book* by Todd Parr
- *When You're Happy and You Know It* by Elizabeth Crary (other books with Mad, Shy, Silly)
- *When I Feel Angry* by Cornelia Spelman

### 2. Activity: Sing a Song of Feelings

- Ask the children to use their voices, as well as body language, to dramatize the suggested feeling in the song.
- *I Have Feelings* (sung to the tune of "Frere Jacques")  
*I have feelings; I have feelings. Look at me, and you'll see.*  
*Sometimes I feel [mad]; Really, really [mad].*  
*Look at me, and you'll see.*
- Repeat the song, substituting a different feeling each time.

### 3. Activity: Paper Plate Faces

- Make several paper plate faces reflecting emotions.
- Paste two opposite faces back to back (ex. happy and sad face)
- Glue popsicle stick between the 2 plates.
- Have children hold mask and pantomime expression and tell what makes them feel that way.
- Now switch to other side of mask and do the same.

### 4. Activity: Feelings Chart

- Create a page with various faces showing emotions
  - Happy, afraid, angry, sad, excited, tired (proud, grumpy, surprised, etc)
- Create a 2<sup>nd</sup> page with how the children's bodies feel
  - Sick, tired, healthy, OK (could also add hot, cold, hurt)
- Have the children state how they feel each day by putting their clothespin on the appropriate emotion
- Acknowledge all feelings and encourage the children to say why they are feeling a certain way if they can
- Throughout the day, the children can return to the board to change their feelings. The board gives them a way to verbalize their feelings and hopefully diffuse the situation.

### 5. Activity: I Feel and I Need Blocks

- Create a block that has 6 different emotions on it and a 2<sup>nd</sup> block that has 6 things to help with those emotions. (Ex. Hug, cry, be alone, etc)
- When the children are having problems expressing their feelings, they can use the blocks to show how they feel and what they need to help them with those feelings

## Teaching Friendship

### Friend Song:

Friend I like to be with you (*hold hands and swing them back and forth*)  
Play with you (*roll hands*); Share with you (*pat hands up high*)  
Friend when we are far apart (*back away from each other*)  
I'll still be friends with you, yes I will (*come together and give a hug*)

- **Practice Saying Kind Things:**
  - Have children call on a toy phone and practice saying nice things
  - Have a compliment circle where everyone gives compliments to each other
  - Have a stuffed animal they can talk to and practice giving compliments to
- **Keep Your Cool & Think it Through:**
  - Read 'Chicken Little' (or Henny Penny) and talk about what Chicken Little could have done to show self-control - Have children pretend to be chicken little; as they walk along, drop a large brown pom-pom (acorn) on their head
  - Talk about scenarios that make children lose their cool (not sharing, not taking turns, hitting, etc) and have children name ways to show self-control
  - Create a cool-off station in the classroom with pillows and a basket of stress balls where children can go to cool off
    - One, two, think it through; Three, four, think some more
    - Five, six, the clock ticks; Seven, eight, still I wait
    - Nine, ten, now I'm ready again!
- **Sharing**
  - Place at the art center a supply of paper, 2 scissors, 2 glue sticks and 1 magazine
  - Have a small group of students join you and have them cut out pictures from the magazine and glue them onto a sheet of paper to make a collage
  - Have the children talk about ways to share the materials so each child can finish the project. Provide suggestions as needed and praise their efforts to share
- **Working Together**
  - Seeds of Cooperation
    - Gather 5 children & give each child ONE of the following: Watering can, pot, soil, seed packet, trowel. Ask if they have everything they need to plant a seed
    - Talk to them about how they each have only 1 of the items needing for planting, but as a group they have all the necessary items
    - Have the children work together to plant the seeds in the pot.
- **Being a Good Friend:**
  - Use paper plates or cut-outs and have the children make a happy face on one side and a sad face on the other
  - Read various scenarios to the children and have them 'vote' on whether that was an example of being a good friend or not
    - If they hold up the happy face side, it is a good friend
    - If they hold up the sad face side, it is not being a good friend