

Developing children's emotional awareness and understanding

Strategies/ Interventions

Learning to recognise, understand, label, express and manage feelings is a complex but really important part of emotional development, intelligence and regulation for young children. At some stage all children will require a certain amount of adult support, input and guidance.

The first feelings children generally learn are 'happy', 'sad', 'angry' and 'scared'. When these have been mastered extend to consider other words for describing 'happy' or 'sad' for example

What to do:

Help the child recognise facial expressions relating to different feelings; start by limiting this to 'happy' and 'sad' before moving on to harder concepts such as angry, worried etc

Use books/TV - Point to, learn about and identify 'happy'/'sad' faces, share and discuss stories linked to different emotion themes

Use songs and rhymes – Songs like *'If you're happy and you know it...'* can be used to link actions, facial expressions and feelings

Teach and Question – Teach/ model and emphasise different facial expressions, ask the child how they can tell if it is a happy or sad face (*i.e. mouth upturned and smiling or mouth downturned etc*)

Provide names/ labels matching expressions and talk about feelings *e.g. "I am happy sharing this book with you"*

Mirror work - Practice showing different facial expressions e.g. *"Show me a happy face, sad face...angry face"*

Play games with emotions (facial expressions or words) - e.g. "Simon says make a happy face", matching pairs lotto/emotions board game

Take photographs - Make an emotions display with photographs of the children/ adults showing different expressions or make a series of books for the book corner *'A happy book', 'A sad book'*

Create an 'Emotion station' (Quiet area/ corner) - Include books, posters, photos, puppets, role play opportunities, emotions cards/labels, emotions visuals, mirrors, calming resources, emotions fans



Examples of emotions vocabulary to teach may include:

Happy (excited)

Sad (upset)

Angry (cross, annoyed)

Scared (worried, nervous, anxious)

