

WORKSHEET

CALMING BIG EMOTIONS

What behaviour are you modelling?

Begin this reflection by finding a quiet place you can sit without interruption. Think about an instance where you got overwhelmed with emotions. Pay attention to the bodily sensations you feel as you think about your experience. Next, try to recall how you responded to your emotions. The images you see in your mind may represent both positive and difficult experiences. If you like, you can jot down any notes about what you notice.

Keep in mind that you are modelling how to handle challenging emotions for the children in your home. How well do you control your emotions and body? How much do you work towards empathy and understanding? Make notes here about what you need to do, who can help support you, and what steps you will take to begin.

When a child experiences painful, disappointing, or scary moments, it can be overwhelming with big emotions and bodily sensations flooding their brain. Logic won't work until we have responded to their emotional needs. This emotional connection is called attunement. Attunement happens when we connect deeply with another person and allow them to "feel felt". What children often need, especially when they experience strong emotions, is to have a caring adult help them make sense of what's going on—to name these big and scary feelings so they can deal with them effectively. This is what storytelling does. Storytelling helps the child calm her flooded brain and process experiences. This is the scientific explanation behind why journaling and talking about a difficult event can be so powerful in helping us heal.

There may be times when children won't want to tell the story when we ask them to. We need to respect their desires about how and when to talk. Instead, we can gently encourage them by beginning the story and asking them to fill in the details. If they're not interested, we can give them space and talk later.

As adults, we know that feelings come and go—they are temporary. We know that feelings, no matter how big, will eventually change. Children don't always know this. They need our help to understand that overwhelming feelings such as fear, frustration, and loneliness do not last forever.

No matter how nonsensical and frustrating the child's feelings may seem to us, they are real and important to them. It's important that we treat them as such in our response. All feelings should be taken seriously and given respect. In doing so, you're showing them that it's OK for all feelings to be felt, while also helping them see that feelings ultimately change.

The SIFT Strategy

You can use the SIFT strategy to encourage them to sift through their mind, feelings and emotions. Talking through their experiences strengthens their ability to feel more in control of their emotions.

SIFT stands for sensations, images, feelings and thoughts. SIFTing the mind by examining the sensations, images, feelings, and thoughts helps children gain the tools to understand their inner life. Research shows that, when children SIFT through their mind, they understand, not only themselves, but other people as well.

SIFT	Question	Example
Sensations	<p>What are you feeling in your body?</p> <p>By paying attention to physical sensations, the child will become more aware of what's going on in their body.</p>	Butterflies in their stomach might mean nervousness.
Images	<p>What images are you seeing in your mind?</p> <p>Images can affect the way they see and interact with the world. By asking them about the images they see in their mind, they become aware that they can take control and diminish the power the images have over them.</p>	Images from a bad dream might be a sign of fear.
Feelings	<p>What are you feeling?</p> <p>Acknowledge feelings with words. Good feelings can't come in until the bad feelings are let out. Use the Feelings Chart to help them name their feelings and develop a rich vocabulary of feelings that they can use to fully express themselves and be understood by others.</p>	Help children find a word that describes what they are feeling.
Thoughts	<p>What are you thinking about?</p> <p>Help them learn to pay attention to the thoughts running through their head. This allows you to help them feel unstuck from thinking patterns they have been struggling with.</p>	Help children express their thoughts.

Feelings Chart



NERVOUS



ANGRY



TIRED



SAD



HURT



JEALOUS



LOVED



HAPPY



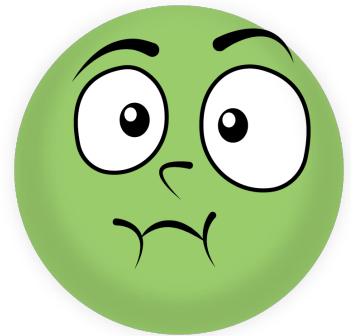
SCARED



EMBARRASSED



GUILTY



SICK

Feelings Words for Kids

Happy



bubbly
cheerful
content
delighted
ecstatic
glad
joyful
pleased
terrific
wonderful

Sad



blue
depressed
disappointed
down
gloomy
heartbroken
hopeless
miserable
unhappy
upset

Powerful



ambitious
bold
brave
certain
courageous
determined
empowered
mighty
strong
superhuman

Confused



doubtful
dumbfounded
indecisive
jumbled
lost
mixed-up
perplexed
tense
uncertain
unsure

Mad



angry
annoyed
crabby
enraged
frustrated
furious
grouchy
grumpy
infuriated
irritated

Other



afraid
ashamed
bored
caring
curious
embarrassed
guilty
jealous
quiet
shy