

Section 8.7

Understanding emotions from facial expressions

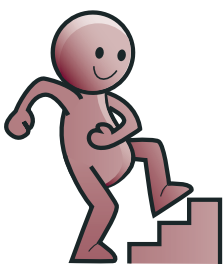


Why is this important?

Facial expressions are the way we understand how others feel. They communicate essential information to the listener and are a fundamental part of social understanding. Being able to read and describe emotions in others helps in the development of emotional intelligence.

What to do

- Collect together pictures from catalogues/magazines or photographs of faces showing emotions (e.g. a baby crying, a scared child, a happy clown, a surprised lady).
- Put out the pictures and talk about the different emotions, e.g.
 - ★ 'Look, the girl is scared. What could she be scared of? Maybe a big dog or a ride at the fair?'
- Demonstrate a 'scared' face and ask the child to copy.
- Try this for all four emotions – 'happy', 'sad', 'scared', 'surprised'.
- Put out the four pictures and ask the child to point to:
 - ★ 'Who's *surprised*?'
 - ★ 'Who's *happy*?'
- As you share books, talk about how people are feeling and why.



Step up

- Introduce an increasing range of emotions.
- Introduce words that represent similar emotions (e.g. 'frightened' vs. 'scared'; 'cross' vs. 'angry').
- Talk about what might be causes of the increasing variety of more subtle emotions.
- Describe how you think someone in a photo or a book is feeling.
- Begin to infer emotion from the context of a picture (e.g. a party + presents = happy!).

Step down

- Start with only one or two emotions (e.g. 'happy' vs. 'scared') and build up to introduce the others when the child understands two.
- Use exaggerated facial expressions and actions to assist understanding.

