

SOCIAL SKILLS ACTIVITY

INTRODUCTION TO THE FEELINGS THERMOMETER



Like adults, any emotion that children feel can sometimes become “too big” and make it hard for them to manage their bodies and behavior (e.g., yelling, stomping, crying). When children are able to recognize that they are starting to feel a “big emotion,” it will help them learn to control it. Adults can help children understand the intensity of their feelings by using the visual of a Feelings Thermometer. Drawing attention to the intensity of an emotion can help keep that emotion from building in the moment, while also modeling the practice of becoming aware of and measuring one’s own emotions.

In this activity, you will introduce children to how the Feelings Thermometer can help measure big emotions through various scripted scenarios.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

	Children will:	Teachers will:
SOCIAL SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Recognize Emotions in Self and Others ◆ Express a Range of Emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prompt Children to Label Their Emotions ◆ Acknowledge/Accept Strong Emotions ◆ Promote Autonomy and Choice ◆ Use a Cue or Visual

GET READY

MATERIALS

- ◆ Social scenarios (included; or create your own)
- ◆ Feelings Thermometer
- ◆ CSEFEL Feelings Chart
- ◆ Stuffed animal, blocks (optional)
- ◆ Hat, bowl, or small basket/bucket

PREPARATION

- ◆ Cut out the social scenario strips, fold or crumple, and place in the hat.

TEACHING TIPS

SET THE STAGE	BIG PICTURE	SET THE STAGE
<p>You will be using both the Feelings Thermometer and the <i>Feelings Chart</i> introduced in the previous activities. <u>After</u> this activity, make sure that both are displayed next to or near each other so that children can easily shift between these visual cues to remember to both identify <i>and</i> measure the intensity of their emotions.</p>	<p>This activity creates an opportunity to show children that it’s okay to a) feel big emotions, and b) react or feel differently than our peers. Draw attention to these messages whenever relevant. This will help create a non-judgmental environment where children feel safe expressing their emotions.</p>	<p>Incorporate as many children as you can to participate for each scenario in Step 3. By having multiple children measure their emotion, you are creating an opportunity to draw attention to how children can feel and express emotions both similarly and differently. Use this to emphasize that there is no “right” way to <i>feel</i> an emotion.</p>

EXPLORE

USEFUL VOCABULARY: big emotion, feel react, intensity, strong, thermometer, emotion words

1. INTRODUCE

- ◆ Show children the stuffed animal and give it a name. Read and act out the social story (provided, or you can create your own) about your animal.

2. EXPLAIN THE THERMOMETER

- ◆ After identifying the animal's emotion, show and explain the different levels of the thermometer.
- ◆ Have children help you measure the stuffed animal's emotion from the story. Make sure that it is clear *how* you know the level of its emotion (e.g., "His anger would be high on the thermometer because he is very, very mad. I can tell because he's stomping his feet and his face is red.").

Use a Cue or Visual

Point to the corresponding areas of the thermometer as you explain the levels of emotions.

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"When your emotion is..."

- "at the **bottom**, you feel the emotion only a little bit."
- "at the very **top**, you feel the emotion a lot!"
- "in the **middle**, you feel it more than just a little bit, but not a *whole* lot."

Acknowledge/Accept Strong Emotions

After recognizing that the stuffed animal 'felt' a very strong emotion, explain that everyone feels big emotions sometimes, and that it's okay when this happens!

3. PRACTICE MEASURING EMOTIONS

- ◆ Have a child pick a social scenario from the hat. Read it aloud to the class.
- ◆ Choose 3-5 children (asking more children increases the likelihood of getting a range of opinions):
 - Ask them to tell you what emotion they would feel in the situation using the *Feelings Chart*.
 - Have them measure where their emotion would be on the Feelings Thermometer.
- ◆ Repeat until each child has had at least 3 chances to participate.

Prompt Children to Label Their Emotions

"(Child), what emotion do you think you would feel if...? Do you think that you would feel a little bit angry, a lot angry, or somewhere in the middle (pointing to thermometer)?"

Promote Autonomy and Choice

Draw attention to whether the emotions and/or the intensity that children chose are similar or different.

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"(Child) said he would be a little bit scared, and (Child) said that she would feel really, really scared! Not everyone reacts the same, and that's okay!"

4. REVIEW

- ◆ Say, "Today, we learned about how we can feel different levels of the same emotion!" Ask children to remember/remind children of examples where different levels of the same emotion were felt.

ADAPT

MORE CHALLENGE: In addition to identifying the emotion on the *Feelings Chart*, encourage children to use other emotion words to describe their feeling (e.g., disappointed, furious, excited).

MORE SUPPORT: If struggling to identify where on the thermometer a child's emotion would be, ask her/him to explain or show how s/he would feel, and walk through which level that would be (e.g., "What would you feel if this happened? ...Hmm, I think that means that you would be *really* happy. Where would that be on the thermometer?").

The Feelings Thermometer will become a part of your regular routine. Below are ways to incorporate using Intentional Teaching Practices for Recognizing and Describing Emotions at different times throughout the day.

Remember to...

- ◆ Prompt children to identify the emotion and its cause (using the *Feelings Chart* when possible).
- ◆ Prompt children to consider *how* they know an emotion is getting “too big” (e.g., crying, yelling, stomping).
- ◆ Look for *all* kinds of “big emotions” – negative and positive (e.g., when excitement gets “too big,” children often yell or cheer loudly).

Use When Children Feel Strong Emotions

Identifying and measuring emotions using the *Feelings Chart* and Feelings Thermometer helps children identify and understand what they are feeling and connect with you by sharing their emotions. Both help them learn to manage their strong emotions.

Prompt Children to Label Their Emotions and Promote Autonomy and Choice

“(Child), I can see that you’re feeling very angry right now. Help me understand how angry you are feeling. Where do you think you would be on the Feelings Thermometer?”

Label Emotions as They Occur

Whenever you have the opportunity, express and identify the intensity of an emotion that **you** are feeling --
 “I can’t wait to play our game! I feel so excited. My excitement is at the tippy top of my Thermometer!”

Acknowledge and Accept Strong Emotions

“You’re crying – you must feel really upset right now. It can be hard to feel a big emotion sometimes, can’t it?”

Use During Storytime or Pretend Play

Build in opportunities to not only identify, but also measure the intensity of others’ emotions through book readings, puppets, and pretend play (even ‘pretend’ emotions can be measured).

Introduce New Feeling Words

“The dog from the story said he is feeling terrified. ‘Terrified’ also means ‘scared.’ It’s when his scared feeling is at the top his Feelings Thermometer?”

Prompt Children to Label Their Emotions

“My doll is nervous for her dance recital, but only a little bit. She’s at the bottom of her Thermometer.”

Acknowledge and Accept Strong Emotions

“Mr. Horse is crying. I think that he is feeling really sad because he lost his favorite toy. He’s feeling a big emotion at the top of his Thermometer. I think he could use a hug from Mr. Pig.”

RESOURCES

- ◆ Social Scenarios

SOCIAL SCENARIOS

STEP 1 INTRODUCTION SCENARIO:

“Yesterday during playtime, (Fluffy) was building in the Block Station. She loves to build with blocks – it’s her favorite thing to do! Do any of you like to build with blocks like Fluffy does?”

(Wait for responses)

“Fluffy spent a loooong time building, and built the TALLEST tower that she’d ever made before! She was so excited! But then, something happened... One of Fluffy’s friends accidentally bumped into her tower and all of the blocks came tumbling down!”

“What emotion do you think Fluffy felt when this happened? Why do you think she felt (emotion)?”

(Wait for responses)

After identifying the possible emotions (e.g., anger, sadness, frustration, disappointment), say, “Well, let me tell you how Fluffy felt: she was angry... very, VERY angry. Her head started to feel very hot, her face turned red, and her body started to tighten up. She starting stomping her feet and she wanted to SCREAM because she was so mad.”

STEP 3 SCENARIOS:

<p>All day you've been telling your friends about how you just learned to hula-hoop. It's finally time to go outside and you grab the hula-hoop. But when you are trying to show your friends, you can't seem to keep the hula-hoop up!</p>	<p>This morning, your parent promised that you could have a playdate with your best buddy today. After school, you ask your parent when your friend will be coming over to your house, but your parent forgot all about it – and now your friend isn't coming over!</p>
<p>You have been trying and trying to tie your shoes but you can't seem to get it to work. All of your other friends have their shoes on and already started playing outside.</p>	<p>You have been looking forward to your trip to the zoo with your friend all week long. When it's time to go, you find out that your friend caught the stomach bug and is too sick to go. Now, you have to stay home.</p>
<p>You can't wait to swing on the swings outside, but when you get there you see that they are all taken.</p>	<p>You are playing on the playground and you hear a rustle in the bushes... Then, a frog hops out!</p> <p>Where would you be on the thermometer if you found out it was a snake? Would you be more scared, less scared, or the same?</p>
<p>It's the end of the day and all of your friends have left to go home. You are still waiting and your parent hasn't arrived yet.</p>	<p>You <i>really</i> want to be chosen as the line leader. You're watching your teacher choose a name from a hat and you're waiting to find out who she picked.</p>

You have been trying and trying to learn how to jump rope. Today, you finally did it and jumped 5 times in a row!

You forgot to bring your favorite stuffed animal to school today for show-and-tell.

You drew a picture today during Craft Time and your teacher smiles and asks you if she can show the class. You say that she can, and she holds it up for everyone to see. Your friends love it!

A friend borrowed your absolute favorite race car without asking. You find out that he not only borrowed it, but he lost it!

It's Choice Time and you want to play Legos with your friend. But he does not want to play Legos with you.

You just got a brand new scooter and want to ride it. You look out the window and see that it is pouring rain and you aren't allowed to go outside.

Blank writing area for the student's response to the first scenario.

Blank writing area for the student's response to the second scenario.

Blank writing area for the student's response to the third scenario.

Blank writing area for the student's response to the fourth scenario.