Tools for Teaching EMOTIONS

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Dear parents and educators,

Learning, identifying, and demonstrating emotions are important skills for early elementary aged students. Take a peek at these steps to help your child/student.

1 The student needs to know what the WORDS are that we adults use to describe emotions and feelings before he/she can be expected to use them appropriately. What is happy? What is sad? What does the emotion physically look like on a person's face? What situations make a person feel that way?

SO, HOW DO I TEACH *THAT?*

- Look at PICTURE BOOKS, TV shows, or Movies. Ask questions like "how does he feel?", "how can you tell he feels___?" If the child doesn't recognize the emotion, or tells in accurate emotion, provide a script similar to "I notice her mouth is wide open and she's looking at a birthday present. I think she's surprised she got a present!"

- OBSERVE others in public. Practicing with real people is super because it's more realistic than a drawn picture. Although I don't advise to point out angry people in public, there is a point of conversation that can happen after the child witnesses an emotion in public. When you're in the car, or away from the person, comment such as "I noticed he felt angry when ___", or "how did that boy feel when his ice cream fell?", "what did his face look like/how can you tell he was sad/what did you see on his face that showed you he was sad?"

  NOTE: Target the main emotions of happy, sad, mad, excited, scared, surprised. When the child recognizes these, add on more abstract emotions such as nervous, embarrassed, bored.

2 Now that the student knows the basic emotions and can recognize them when looking at them in a book or on another's face, it is time for the student to GENERALIZE it to using them him/herself. Continue to teach this in a structured, predictable setting to ensure he/she is using the emotion(s) correctly.

HOW CAN I DO THAT?

- Mirrors, photographs of the child (great way to use selfies), and video are great tools to teach this skill.

- Start by finding out what emotions your child can demonstrate (just the emotion in isolation). For each emotion, have your child make a face. Note which ones are accurate and which are not. For those he/she does correctly, take a picture (or take pictures of all of them, and delete those that are not clear emotions).

- Use a MIRROR to make the face yourself, and have the child copy you. If he/she is unable to, use your phone or a camera to take random PICTURES of your child (if you're not the parent, make sure you have permission to do so) as he/she has a conversation with you. Try to capture a variety of emotions. Go back through later and keep those that fit the emotions you need to capture. Once you have a collection of those emotions, refer to them with your child. "How do you feel in this picture?" "What makes you feel this way?" "Show me (emotion) ".

  The end goal of this step is for your child to be able to independently demonstrate the basic emotions when asked.

3 Time for independence! This step gives the child opportunity to apply what he/she learned.

TRY THIS!

- Time to roleplay! Practice made up or real-life situations. Use a script (similar to a line or two from a play) to act out social situations. Start simple and build to more complex situations based on age of the child. For example, "Joey fell and hurt his knee. Pretend you are Joey."
- Time for real situations. Watch the child interact in a structured setting (small group, room with few people and few distractions, with adults that you have pre-taught your goal to). Have the adult set up a situation and watch your child/student react.
- Observe the student with peers. Observe the student in social situations. Fine tune emotions that need more work. Congratulations to the child and to supportive adults!

1 Learn emotion vocabulary.
Teach what each emotion looks like (facial expression).

	Demonstrates understanding of vocabulary (point to "happy", match happy face to word)		Recognizes facial expression of emotion (how do you know he feels …)	
	Enter date and +/-		Enter date and +/-	
Happy				
Sad				
Mad				
Surprised				
Excited				
Scared				
Nervous				
Embarrassed				
Tired				

2 Demonstrate emotion in mirror or photograph.

	Demonstrates emotion "Show me (emotion) ".	
	Enter date and +/-	
Happy		
Sad		
Mad		
Surprised		
Excited		
Scared		
Nervous		
Embarrassed		
Tired		

3 Independence in role play.
Independence in social situation.
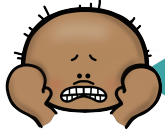
	Independence in role play (structured setting with pre-taught adults)		Independence in social situation with peers	
	Enter date and +/-		Enter date and +/-	
Happy				
Sad				
Mad				
Surprised				
Excited				
Scared				
Nervous				
Embarrassed				
Tired				

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