

# Family Focus

Building a Foundation for School Success

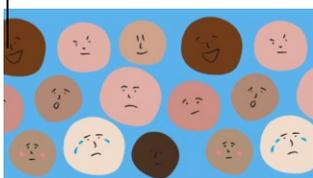
## Getting Ready for School Helping Your Child Learn About Feelings

Young children need to learn how to identify and use language to express their feelings, how to calm themselves down when feeling strong emotions, and how to recognize what others are feeling. Children who learn these social and emotional skills will be more successful in school and life.

### Why is this important for school readiness?

Children start developing their emotional skills from the moment they are born. They develop these skills through relationships with parents, caregivers, and other important people in their lives. Babies learn to recognize basic emotions (sad, happy, mad) in themselves and others.

By preschool, most children can recognize, label and understand a wide range of emotions they are feeling and identify how others are feeling. They can now learn and use words that more accurately describe their feelings, words such as “proud”, “worried”, “excited”, “frustrated” and “bored”. Preschoolers’ increased language skills and growing ability to plan, use self-regulation, and understand how the actions they take affects others are very important developments. These emotional skills will help them develop a positive sense of self, manage their feelings, and interact successfully with others.



Learning about feelings will lead to your child’s positive mental health and wellbeing. It will help your child become a confident, capable, and curious learner.

### What can families do to help?

There are many ways families can help preschoolers develop the skills of recognizing, expressing, and managing their feelings. In other words, you can help your child develop “emotional intelligence”. Here are some ideas:

- ❖ Talk with your child about feelings every day. Whether it be English or a different language, use the language or languages in which you are both most comfortable. You can name the feelings that you have and encourage your child to talk about his or her feelings as well. Listen and acknowledge your child’s feelings. Your support helps your child learn how to manage his or her feelings.
- ❖ Be a role model for your child. When you are having difficult feelings, share that with your child and show him or her how you deal with those feelings. For example, “I am feeling angry right now, so I count to 10 slowly to calm down.”
- ❖ There are many words for different emotions. Use words that really describe what you’re feeling and teach your child these words. A few of these words are: *awful, brave, calm, confused, cheerful, curious, disappointed, disgusted, embarrassed, fearful, friendly, gentle, guilty, ignored, jealous, nervous, overwhelmed, proud, thrilled, worried.*
- ❖ Help your child label his or her feelings. For example, “It looks like you are feeling overwhelmed. Let’s talk about it.”
- ❖ Help your child manage strong feelings by teaching them to think about different ways to respond to these strong feelings.
- ❖ Set limits on behavior so that your child understands having feelings is okay but acting inappropriately because of the feeling is not. For example, “I know you’re upset your sister tore up the picture you drew but yelling or hitting her is not okay.”



## Activities to do with your preschooler:

### ❖ Take a trip to the Library: **Read Books on Feelings**

There are many wonderful children’s books that tell stories about different feelings. Books can help teach your child the words to express his or her feelings, as well as tell stories showing how characters handle their emotions or solving problems. Here are just a few books for you to consider sharing with your child. They are organized by theme:



Being a Friend	
I Can Share by Karen Katz (Ages infant-5) I Can Cooperate! by David Parker (Ages 3-5) I am Generous! by David Parker (Ages 2-5)	Mine! Mine! Mine! by Shelly Becker (Ages 3-5) The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister (Ages 3-8)
Accepting Different Kinds of Friends	
Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes (Ages 4-8) Franklin’s New Friend by Paulette Bourgeois (Ages 5-8)	I Accept You as You Are! by David Parker (Ages 3-5) It’s Okay to Be Different by Todd Parr (Ages 3-8) Horace and Morris But Mostly Dolores by James Howe (Ages 4-8)
General Feelings	
The Feelings Book by Todd Parr (Ages 3-8) Glad Monster, Sad Monster by Ed Emberley & Anne Miranda (Ages 0-5)	My Many Colored Days by Dr. Seuss (Ages 3-8) Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods That Make My Day by Jamie Lee (Ages 3-8) The Way I Feel by Janan Cain (Ages 3-6)
Problem Solving	
Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus & Don’t Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late! by Mo Willems (Ages 2-7) I Did It, I’m Sorry by Caralyn Buehner (Ages 5-8)	It Wasn’t My Fault by Helen Lester (Ages 4-7) Talk and Work it Out by Cheri Meiners (Ages 4-8)
Family Relationships	
Are You My Mother? by P.D. Eastman & Carlos Rivera (Ages infant-5) Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney (0-5)	The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn (Ages 3-8) Owl Babies by Martin Waddell (Ages 3-7) Mama, Do You Love Me?/Me quieres, mama? by Barbara Joesse (Ages 3-6)

Multilingual families can find these titles in languages other than English on the internet. Search the title, author, and language. For example, “Are you My Mother by Eastman and Rivera in Chinese.” To find additional titles in additional languages, search, “children’s books about feelings in [language]. For example, “children’s books about feelings in Arabic.”



❖ **Make Sensory Bottles:** Sensory bottles are easy, potable and fun to make! Sensory bottles are any clear and sealed container that is filled with water and objects, allowing the child to track the objects with their eyes. This motion helps the child calm down by helping them control their breathing and focusing on an object instead of the big feelings. This allows the child to process the big feelings, so they are able to talk about what may have caused the feelings.



**How to make a sensory bottle:** Gather any clear container with a top. This can be a recycled water bottle or a spice jar. The bottle can be filled with water or oil, and other materials such as pom poms, feathers, glitter, or blocks. Food coloring can also be added to the bottles to make them different colors. It may be fun to make multiple bottles and see how fast items sink or float in the bottle. Encourage the child to use the bottle to help regulate their breathing and focus their attention, when emotional.



### ❖ **A poem for learning feeling words:**

When I am sad, I want to cry.  
When I am proud, I want to fly.  
When I am curious, I want to know.  
When I am impatient, I want to go.  
When I am bored, I want to play.  
When I am happy, I smile all day.  
When I am shy, I want to hide.  
When I’m depressed, I stay inside.  
When I am puzzled, I want to shrug.  
When I am loving, I kiss and hug.

From: [CHILDFUN](#)

### **Resources for families:**

- [One Time Through](#)
- [Kiddie Matters](#)
- [Talking with Preschoolers About Emotions](#)
- [ChildFun: Feelings Activities & Fun Ideas for Kids](#)
- [5 Steps to Managing Big Emotions Printable Poster](#)

### **Resources used for this tip sheet:**

- [Childhood 101](#)
- [Thought Co.](#)
- [Nurture and Thrive](#)

