



Purple Playas Power Pointers

Ages: Birth to 8 years old



Feelings are Real Let's Teach Our Children How to Express and Understand Emotions

I know my child gets mad, scared, sad, frustrated...
but what do I do about it?

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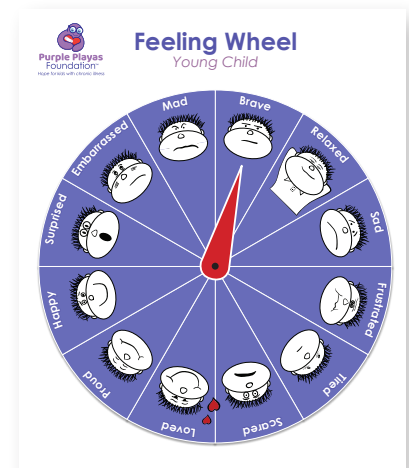
Purple Playas Advisory Team


When children don't feel well or they hurt, their feelings can seem even more intense. As a parent, this is very difficult to watch. We want our children to be happy, and yet their feelings are real and they must process through them. We can help our youngsters learn to express and understand their emotions. When children use and understand words to express their emotions, they cope better and effectively communicate in a socially acceptable manner.

Chronic illness can sometimes lead to challenges that affect both our children's emotions and our own. Coping with diagnoses, treatment, medication side effects, procedures, impact on school/work, and the constant presence of disease can result in a range of feelings for the **entire** family. Here are five simple suggestions to consider when helping your children cope and learn how to express their emotions.


❤️ **Label and model your own feelings.** One way to foster emotional growth is by modeling how we, as parents, cope. We need to label our own feelings. One visual way to do this is through mirror play with your child. Make various expressions in the mirror and label your emotions. Then have your child copy you. Young children's mirror play can be a fun way to practice new skills. In addition, try to label and model emotions during real situations that happen throughout the day.


❤️ **Acknowledge and label your child's feelings.** Help your child learn how to express, understand, and relate to the wide array of emotions. Label what you think your child might be feeling. You might say, "I see you're sad. Do you need a hug?" or "You seem frustrated. Say help." or "I see you're scared. We can do this together." Often times, when you recognize and voice your child's emotion, he/she will calm simply because you acknowledged him/her, helping him/her feel understood.



 **Teach a wide range of feeling words.** It is important to help our children label their difficult emotions. It is equally important to also validate emotions of happiness, excitement, and being proud. Again, it is important to learn a wide range of feeling words. One fun way to teach feelings is to make personalized books or a family feeling book with each page discussing a different emotion. You and your child can make the book with photographs, clip art, magazine pictures, or hand drawn pictures. You can even create feeling books about a particular event, treatment, or any aspect of your child's/family's life.



 **Practice identifying feelings during daily routines, play, and stories.** Our children need many opportunities to practice new skills, like feeling vocabulary, before it becomes second nature for them. Try teaching social-emotional skills throughout daily routines, as these are natural learning opportunities and are a safe way to “practice” building skills around emotions. As your little one becomes more fluent with identifying and expressing emotions, he/she will start to realize that he/she has some power over his/her own emotions. Feelings can change throughout the day and knowing this can help your child cope. Although your child might become quite good at expressing his/her emotions, he/she will continue to have a range of emotions. It is important to continue to support and process these feelings.

 **Celebrate and encourage using feeling words.** Let's face it, even as an adult, we have a hard time with expressing our own emotions. As your child labels his/her own feelings encourage and support him/her. He/she needs to feel it is safe to say how he/she feels, and we should encourage and acknowledge our children's use of feeling words. For example, if your child says, “I'm scared,” you can say, “Thank you for telling me. Let's be brave together. We can hold hands or you can hug Puffy.”

Promoting the use of feeling words can help your child process and cope with emotions.

Visit us on Facebook at Purple Playas and let us know how old your child is and what feeling words your child learned.



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Hope for kids with chronic illness

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