

Conversation Starters for Feelings & Emotions

Toddler-Preschool

One of the most effective ways to increase emotional intelligence is to talk about feelings! The tips below offer ways to support children in identifying, acknowledging, and working through their emotions.

1. Talk about the child's feelings.

Actively identify and name feelings to help children better understand their emotional experiences.

"What are some things that make you ____ (happy, sad, proud, excited)?"

"You look so ____ when ____ happens!"

"I see your face is _____. How are you feeling right now?"

3. Talk about other people's feelings.

Recognizing similar emotions in others helps children articulate their own feelings, as well as develop social skills like empathy, sharing, and turn-taking.

"How do you think they are feeling right now?"

"She is crying. She must be sad. What can we do to help?"

2. Talk about your own feelings.

Help children learn to label their emotions by modeling healthy emotional expressions. Show positive behaviors so children can apply those strategies to their own life.

"Oh, no! I just spilled my drink. That is so frustrating! I better clean it up so no one will slip."

"I think you might be feeling lonely. I feel lonely, too, when someone won't play with me."

4. Add words to feelings and emotions.

Label, define, and expand on feelings for children when they do not have the words to express their emotions.

"I am feeling really mad. That is called angry. I am angry because..."

"What she said hurt your feelings. What can you tell her?"

5. Add actions to words.

Explicitly teach children strategies to help manage their emotions. Knowing what to do when unsettling feelings arise is an important step towards self-regulation.

"What are some things that help you calm down?"

"Can you think of a way to help you remember to wait for your turn?"

Talk about emotions and feelings even if children are not yet using words you can understand. It's never too early to lay a healthy foundation of emotional understanding and expression.