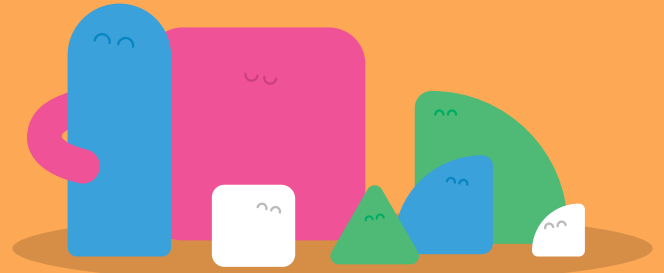


1ST & 2ND CLASS

Parent Support Sheets – Lesson 3: My Feelings



Lesson Summary:

The aim of this lesson is to help children identify the Four Big Feelings (i.e. happiness, sadness, fear, and anger) and where they are felt within their bodies. Children explore the Four Big Feelings and talk about when they have experienced these in their lives. A focus on how the four feelings are felt within the body helps children to identify these feelings better as they happen, as well as exploring degrees of worry using the 'Worry Gauge'.

Try It At Home Activity: 'Big Feelings' & 'Worry Gauge'

Everybody worries sometimes. The 'Worry Gauge' asks children to scale their worried feelings. It is a useful tool for children to use to check in with their worried feelings, to name their worry on a scale of 0 - 10, and to practice how to calm those worries down. Being aware of their own level of feelings and being able to identify their triggers enables children to take control and assess what might be the best way to cope with their worry.

The 'Worry Gauge' shows children that feelings can have different intensities or strengths, which they can share with others like you, their trusted adult, which helps them to understand that not all feelings are equally intense, and they all pass in time.

In class, children were asked to draw their 'Worry Gauge' and to name specific situations where they feel different intensities of worries (levels 0; 3; 6; 10). You may like to explore this with them.

Children also practiced a simple way to calm their worries called 'Dragon Breathing'. They were asked for their number on the Worry Gauge when they were feeling a bit worried, and then encouraged to take a deep dragon breath in and breathe out strong like a dragon breathing fire. When they were finished, they were asked for their new number, which was hopefully a little lower (even going from a 6 to a 5 is a big improvement!).

Dr. Malie's Top Tips:

- It is very important for children to begin to express, process and talk about their feelings. This is what I call the 'language of feelings'. The Four Big Feelings are the most commonly felt feelings and a good start for children to talk about.
- Focusing on where feelings are felt within our bodies helps children to recognise the important link, so they can recognise that calming our bodies can help to them.
- Decades of attachment research shows us that attuning to children's needs and being with them in their big feelings helps them to feel more secure and build trust in you and the world. After all, you are there to 'organise' their feelings. Sometimes children need help organising an internal experience

that is overwhelming. Whatever the cause, children need their parent's help because they are often still too young to do it alone. It is through the repeated process of parents helping their children organise internally that they learn how to manage feelings as they grow.

- I love the meme "When their storm meets our calm, co-regulation occurs". When children are struggling with big feelings, they feel as if they are in a small boat on rough seas trying very hard to navigate away from the rocks. But when their chaotic boat meets the parent's calm boat, the parent is able to calm their child right down
- What is important here is how the parent manages to calm their own sea, which is why parents need to work on nurturing calm from the inside out. Not an easy ask!
- Here is a 'Self-Check' I recommend for parents: When you're in contact with your child during their big feelings, ask yourself:
 - What is happening inside my nervous system (how do I feel)?
 - What tone of voice am I using?
 - What is my body language communicating?
 - Do I feel safe right now?
- Cultivating safety to mirror calm and containment is a tall order. In those incredibly tough moments, use your compassionate voice to answer the following:
 - What do I need right now to feel safe?
 - Do I need to take a deep breath, to take five, or to call someone to help me?
- A really valuable way to actively tune in to your child is to focus on the need behind your child's behaviour: what are they trying to tell you through their behaviour? That is the 'secret message' behind their big feeling. It can be helpful to ask yourself:
 - If my child's distress could speak, I wonder what would it say?
 - If my child's big feelings had a message, what would it be?
- Thinking of our child struggling to handle something difficult encourages us to help them through their big feelings.



Resources:

To learn more about feelings and emotions, check out the following sources:

- Dan Siegel's 'Parenting' video series based on his amazing 'Whole Brain Child Book': <https://dalailamacenter.org/programs/speakers-series/daniel-siegel>
- A child-friendly movie about this topic is 'Inside Out'. It may be worthwhile watching this with your child. Check the link here for more information: <https://www.common sense media.org/movie-reviews/inside-out>
- Instagram page: The Big Life Journal has practical resources and ideas: <https://www.instagram.com/biglifejournal/?hl=en>

For help with managing big feelings:

- A Lust for Life's online article on how to validate children's feelings:
<https://www.alustforlife.com/tools/mental-health/validation-of-childrens-feelings-promotes-positive-mental-health?app=true>
- Mental Health Ireland's video on parenting anxious kids and managing big feelings:
<https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/compassionate-support-for-parenting-anxious-children-and-teens/>

To explore more about your own emotions, check out Brené Brown's podcast 'Unlocking Us' where she explores feelings, vulnerability and emotion with interesting professionals - <https://brenebrown.com/podcast-show/unlocking-us/>