



My First Emotions: Key Principles

For more information look in the Parent’s Guide in the set. To watch a brief video on how to use My First Emotions see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nnzyppSi-g>. For more on the research behind these techniques see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6KXDWLB9fg>

1. Talking about emotions is good

Whether at home or in a nursery setting, it is good for children’s social development and wellbeing to talk about negative emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear. There is no need to straight away try to “cheer up” a child. Ask them how they feel and listen to how they feel.

2. Validate emotions, don’t invalidate them.

Validation means noticing and comment on a child’s emotions rather than trying to change their emotion. Validation helps the child regulate their emotions better in the long run, and is good for mental health.

Examples of validating phrases

- I can see you are angry
- Oh dear, that’s sad
- It’s understandable you would feel upset
- It’s hard when you lose something
- I know what you mean
- Everyone feels like that sometimes
- It’s annoying when someone takes your toy
- Wow, that’s a lot to deal with
- That’s scary
- I would feel the same way
- You look sad. Tell me about it

Examples of invalidating phrases

- Don’t worry about it
- Stop crying!
- Cheer up!
- There’s no need to be angry
- What you should do is... (premature advice)
- Come over here and look at this... (distraction)
- I think you are worrying over nothing
- Stop moaning
- There’s no need to get upset
- There’s no need to get scared
- Stop whining

3. All feelings are OK, not all behaviour is OK

You can validate all feelings but all behaviour does not need to be validated. You still need to have rules for behaviour. **Validation + Boundaries** is a good combination, so you can use **both together**.

Validation	Boundary
I can see you are very angry Tom took your toy →	Remember the rule: no hitting. Tell him how you feel with words.
You feel very sad that Mummy has to go to work now. Sometimes it’s hard when we leave each other. I get sad too. →	I have to be at work at 9.00, so we need to leave in 10 minutes. I’m looking forward to seeing you in the afternoon.
You are upset because I won’t buy you a choccy – I get that, chocolate is nice. →	Remember our rule—no chocolate before dinner.



My First Emotions: Using the Set

1. Reading the books (talking about emotions, validating, emotion regulation)



There is a separate book, for Happy, Sad, Love, Anger and Fear. Simply read the books to your child. They all contain some validation and emotion regulation. You could ask your child at the end when they have felt that emotion.

2. Using Robbie and the emotion toys (talking about emotions, validating, emotion regulation)



Pretend Robbie has different emotions and ask your child to put the correct emotion in his pouch. For example, if he is sad you can make him cry, or if he is angry he could bang the table. You can ask him why is sad, how it feels, and what he could do to feel better. Or you can help your child play with the emotion toys as different characters.

3. Using the cards (talking about emotions, emotional understanding)



You can do many different games with the cards. You can use them to make up stories about Robbie having different emotions.

You could do a matching game (far left). Can your child match the two happy, sad, angry, and scared faces?

You could do a “what does Robbie feel?” game (near left). E.g. “he got a present. How does he feel? He dropped his ice-cream. How does he feel? Someone knocked over his bricks on purpose. How does he feel?”

4. Using the activity book (talking, validating, regulating, understanding emotions)



There are many different activities in the Activity Book, graded for different ages (0-3).

For example, one activity for 3 year olds is “Look at an emotion” (page 36). You draw an outline of a person and then draw pictures or words on the body to show different aspects of emotion (the child can help with this). E.g. heart beats faster, breathing gets faster, muscles get tense, stomach churns, fists clench. You can have these ready labelled and the child has to stick them on in the right place. Also, explain when you are calm, all these things get slower and more relaxed.