

Creative Expression and Movement

Overview

Feelings don't give a warning sign before they come up, so it's important to help children create a toolbox of activities or expressive outlets to work through different feelings and emotions. Creative expression offers children an opportunity to develop important skills that support positive social emotional health including the ability to name and identify their own feelings, think critically about the world around them and practice self-regulation for positive behavior management.



Creative expression through movement also comes with the added benefit of physical activity - supporting the mind-body connection. The best part? There is no right or wrong answer! Feelings are special and specific to each and every one of us - so how we express them is, too. Use movement to bring the attention back to the body and have fun exploring feelings and emotions.

Take Action

Move to the music. Just turning on some music and allowing your body to move to how it makes you feel is a great way to get your body moving while reflecting on feelings and emotions.

- Make a playlist of songs with different melodies and intensity. Encourage children to move to the music based on how it makes them feel. A slow,

harmonic song might elicit feelings of calm or mellow while an upbeat, bouncy song might bring out feelings such as happy or inspired.

- You can also create your own music. Use household items such as pots and pans, upside down cups, shakers made of rice in a plastic container, etc. Develop a list of feelings and emotions and create the sounds that come to mind with your very own living room band.

Interpret the sounds and sights of nature. Our surroundings can influence how we feel including the sounds of nature. It also offers an outlet for creative thinking and self-reflection.

- Step outside and listen to the surrounding sounds and look around at what you see.
- Draw a picture or write down a list. Think of what feelings or emotions come to mind with each of these sounds and how you might express those feelings through movement.
 - *Snow is quietly falling - It feels calm and sleepy - I move with long stretches and quiet steps.*
 - *Cars are zooming along the street of a busy city - It feels energetic - I spin and move quickly.*
 - *Thunder rumbles - It feels angry - I dance with big movements and loud stomps.*
 - *The sun is shining brightly - It feels happy and excited - I move with hops and jumps.*

Dance through the rainbow. Colors can be interpreted to mean different things and represent different emotions. Create a rainbow ribbon and dance through each color and an associated feeling.

- Create a [rainbow ribbon stick or ring](#) by using different colored ribbon or up-cycling strips of old t-shirts.
- Encourage children to think about each color of the rainbow (you can also add in neutrals like white, grey and brown) and feelings that come to mind.
 - *Orange is bright and energizing - I feel excited and hopeful.*
 - *Green is calming - I feel relaxed.*
 - *Grey is hard to explain - I feel mellow.*

- With their rainbow stick or ring, invite children to dance through each color and express an associated feeling. At the end, ask them to dance to all of the colors of the rainbow they feel today together. This can be done to music or with children speaking their thoughts out loud.

Tips



With whatever activity you choose, create space to reflect and “debrief” afterwards. As children explore feelings and emotions of their own, it’s important to give them an outlet to talk through them when needed. You can also do this through journaling or arts and crafts.



Reinforce positive ways to express feelings - whether through movement, creative play or quite mindfulness activities. Encouraging children to express their feelings in ways that feel the most supportive to them, helps them to develop a routine or “go to” strategy when feelings and emotions are running high.



Avoid discrediting how children connect feelings in some of these activities. Children may interpret sounds, music or colors to mean different things to them. Avoid leading questions that influence them to answer one way or another and instead invite them to share more around their connections and seek to understand their perspective.



Model creative expression by sharing in the activity with children. Children may feel more comfortable to express feelings and emotions if they see the adults around them doing the same. It also affirms that there is no right or wrong answer and invites them to express a little more freely.



Always be sure to invite not request. Sharing in feeling and emotions can be sensitive and take time for children. Building trust and allowing the pace to

unfold at a speed that makes the most sense for them is key to creating an open line of communication.

For more activities and ideas like this one, be sure to [sign up for our news and updates](#). And if you like what you see, please [donate to support our work](#) creating more ways to help build a healthier future for kids.

Resources

[7 Ways to Foster Creativity in Your Kids](#)
([Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley](#)).

[Somatic Activities for Kids: Using Performing Arts to Explore Emotions in the Body](#) ([Mindful Schools](#)).

[Creative Learning through Movement](#)
([Learning in Action](#)).

[Ideas to Teach Children Creative Self-Expression Through Dance](#)
([Education.com](#)).

[Ideas for Teaching Children about Emotions](#) ([Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#)).

[imHealthy Mental Health Lessons](#)
([Michael Phelps Foundation](#)).

Feeling Through Colors

Discover ways to help children of all ages identify and express feelings through a rainbow of colors and art.

Mindfulness: Journaling, Breathing and More!

Practicing mindfulness helps us to reset, refocus and energize for

what's ahead!

Exploring Imagination: Play Based Yoga

Use the imagination to soar off on new adventures while stretching the body and calming the mind!

Sensory Play

Help kids get in touch with their senses by facilitating sensory play using interesting materials to create tactile and visual experiences.