

Practicing Better
**Mental
Health**

An Activity Guide for Kids



Welcome

Helping your child talk about their feelings and emotions can be tough, but it feels easier when you have the right tools. In service of our goal to make mental health care accessible to everyone, we've curated this free guide to help kids understand and manage symptoms of anxiety, depression, anger, and more. Start your child's journey to better health with these interactive and engaging activities from the world's leading clinical experts.

We hope you enjoy it!



ACTIVITY 1

JOURNALING ACTIVITY FOR KIDS

INVESTIGATING BIG EMOTIONS

In the following exercise, we're sending you on a mission to investigate big emotions and learn how to handle them. This will equip you with a powerful growth mindset that will help you tackle anything that can and will come up in your life. Are you ready to start your mission?



MISSION 5

INVESTIGATE BIG

EMOTIONS



Understanding
emotions helps
you be calmer
and happier!

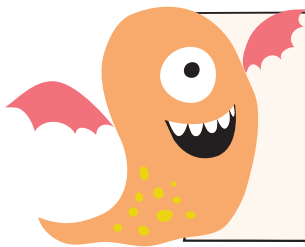
COMPLETE ALL THE ASSIGNMENTS IN MISSION “INVESTIGATE BIG EMOTIONS” TO RECEIVE YOUR NEXT SPECIAL AGENT CERTIFICATE!

MEET THE EMOTIONS

PG-13

ANGER

Anger is a powerful feeling that arises when things aren't going your way. When you're angry, you might feel it in your body. You might clench your fists, or your face might get red and hot. When you are in this mood, you might feel scared, frustrated, jealous, confused, anxious, or annoyed.

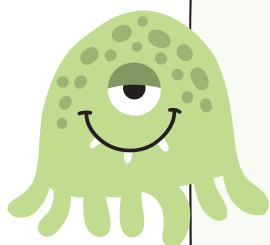
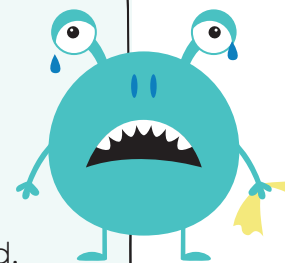


HAPPINESS

Happiness is when you feel pleasure, joy, and satisfaction. When you feel happy, you often feel energized and positive. You might describe this mood as silly, joyful, brave, excited, or optimistic.

SADNESS

Sadness is what you feel when you lose something important, feel helpless, or feel disappointed. When you feel sad, you might have low energy levels, become quiet, or want to be left alone. You might describe this mood in several ways, including tired, bored, lonely, worried, overwhelmed, or disappointed.



CALMNESS

When you feel calm, you often feel relaxed and peaceful. You aren't bothered or upset. You might describe this mood in any number of ways, including kind, loving, grateful, or reflective.

★ ★ ★ How many of these emotions have you felt? ★ ★ ★

"Feelings are just visitors. Let them come and go."

Mooji



MISSION NOTES

Describe the last time you felt so angry you wanted to scream:

Blank space for writing a response to the prompt above.

Describe the last time you felt scared:

Blank space for writing a response to the prompt above.

Circle how you feel right now:



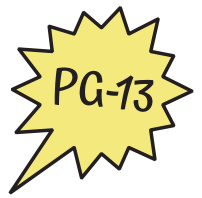
Describe the last time you cried:

Blank space for writing a response to the prompt above.

Describe the last time you felt worried:

Blank space for writing a response to the prompt above.

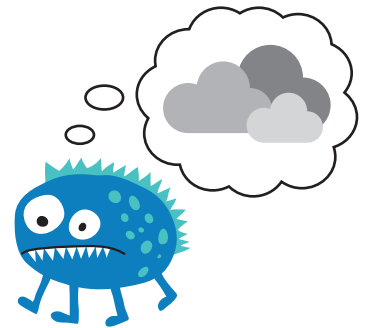
WHY DO I FEEL SO MUCH?



We all feel a wide range of emotions. This is completely normal.

Everyone feels happiness, loneliness, jealousy, anxiety, anger, joy, fear, and more! There are over 25 different human emotions, and **all of them are normal, even the ones that don't feel great.** Allow yourself to feel whatever it is you are feeling. Don't be afraid to talk to a trusted friend or grown-up if your emotions feel too big or overwhelming.

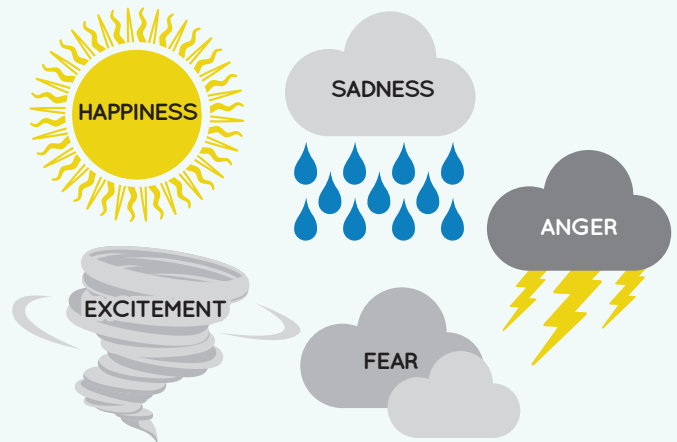
To help you understand your emotions, take a moment to think about the weather. Like the weather, your emotions come and go, and no matter how strong they are, they will pass.



We can't control the weather or change it. It might not be what we want, but we CAN get through it, and it will eventually pass. We can accept the stormy days the same way we welcome the sunny ones.

This is a super-simple exercise where you use the weather to describe your feelings. For example:

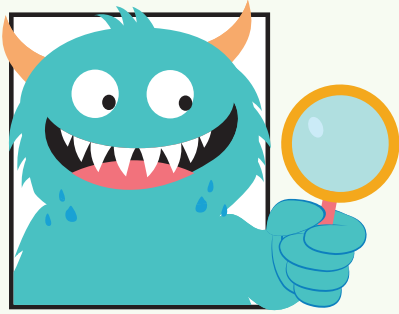
- If you're happy, you might feel like a sunny day.
- If you're sad, you might feel like a rainy day.
- If you're excited, you might feel like a tornado.
- If you're lonely, you might feel like a snowy day.



Try new ways to describe your emotions using the weather!

Pay attention to how you feel. Do you feel happy, sad, bored, tired, jealous, anxious, calm, or something else?

Can you describe what you are feeling using only the weather?



Be a super detective like "Nate the Great."

DETECTIVE

WRITE YOUR
NAME HERE

SPECIAL CASE ASSIGNMENT:

INVESTIGATE BIG EMOTIONS

Have you ever used a magnifying glass? Well, a magnifying glass makes things look larger and helps you see things you've never seen before, like really tiny insects. It lets you discover a whole new world! **Today you will use your magnifying glass to look inside you!** Investigate situations that made you feel the emotions listed in each of the boxes below. Jot down what made you feel that way and why.

★ ★ CALM
★

HAPPY

EXCITED

BORED

ANGRY

PROUD

SAD

LOVED

SURPRISED
★ ★ ★

HOW TO HANDLE BIG EMOTIONS

PG-13

You are the boss of your brain! That means you can learn cool new tricks to use when powerful feelings take over. Remember, it's normal to feel a lot of different emotions, and all emotions are important! Use these steps next time a big emotion comes on.

1

When in doubt, just breathe

Breathe in for 3 seconds and out for 4 seconds. Repeat 10 times.

2

Step back

When big feelings take over, can you step back as if you are watching a movie? If someone in the movie was feeling the way you are, what would you say to them? What would you think?

3

Use a calming strategy

The next time you feel upset, try these strategies to calm down your body and mind.

Use only kind words

Drink a glass of water

Water the plants

Count to 10

Make a fist

Listen

Think before you say your next sentence

Trace the fingers on your hand twice

Freeze for 5 seconds

Go outside and look up at the sky

Hug someone or hug a tree!

Breathe deeply

Take a break

Ask for help or talk to a friend

Play with a fidget toy

Say a silly word

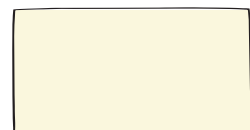
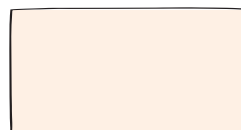
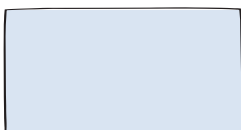
Do 10 jumping jacks

Write down your feelings

Read or journal

Put your hands in your pockets

Create your own calm-down plan....



4

Figure out what pushes your buttons

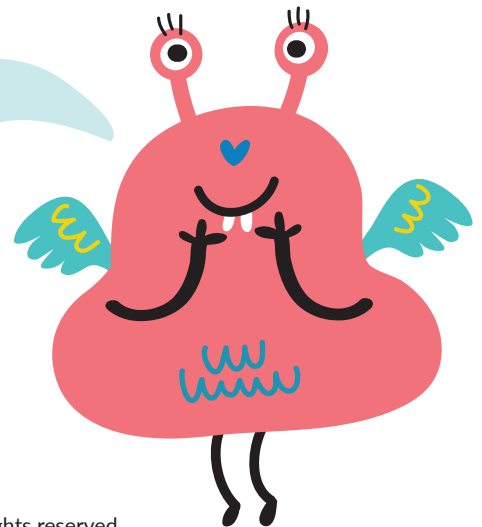
It's helpful to know what makes you upset so you can have your calm-down plan ready to go when you find yourself in one of these situations!

Place a check mark next to the situations that push your buttons:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being in a noisy place | <input type="checkbox"/> Being touched |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needing to sit still | <input type="checkbox"/> Not being in control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worrying something bad might happen | <input type="checkbox"/> When others disagree with you |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting | <input type="checkbox"/> Being in a crowded place |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having too much homework | <input type="checkbox"/> Being interrupted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others not listening to you | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling left out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being told no | <input type="checkbox"/> Not understanding something |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling scared | <input type="checkbox"/> Being criticized |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being teased | <input type="checkbox"/> Needing to ask for help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loud noises | <input type="checkbox"/> Being alone |

What pushes your buttons?

We can't control everything that happens, but we can control how we react to what's happening. We CAN control what we think about things (our attitude) and how we respond to others when we feel big emotions.



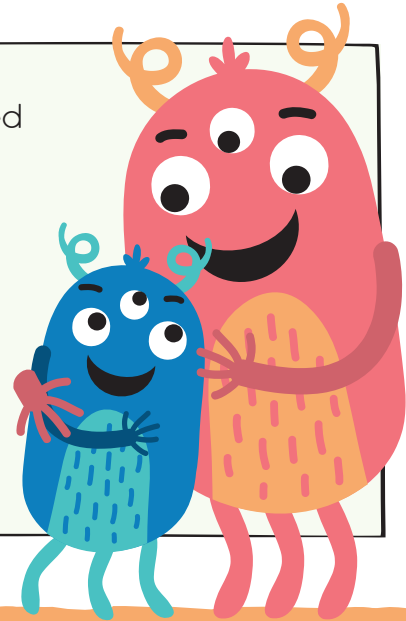
Play this fun game
with your siblings or grown-ups...

BEAR HUG TIME

Whenever you feel yourself getting ramped up, or if you notice someone in your family getting agitated, shout this phrase:

"Bear hug time!"

Everyone must stop what they are doing and hug as tightly as they can for 20 seconds.



Did you know? Hugs make you happier!

3 COOL FACTS ABOUT EMOTIONS

1. Emotions are contagious.
2. Forcing a smile releases a chemical in your brain that can make you happy.
3. The way you feel is always written on your face.

"Feelings are much like waves. We can't stop them from coming, but we can choose which one to surf."

Jonatan Mårtensson

Do you control your emotions or do they control you?

You are in control of your behavior (no matter how you feel!). Even when you're upset, you can still decide whether to make good choices or not-so-good choices.

Good Choices

You keep your promises.

You treat others the way you want to be treated.

You don't talk over people.

You keep trying even when things get hard.

You are honest with yourself and others.

You are kind to yourself and to others.

Not-So-Good Choices

You give up.

You hurt someone.

You judge yourself harshly.

You disappoint someone.

You purposely break something important to you or to someone else.

You lie, cheat, or steal.

You don't listen.

When you make good choices and are in control...

★ You feel calmer.

★ You do better in school.

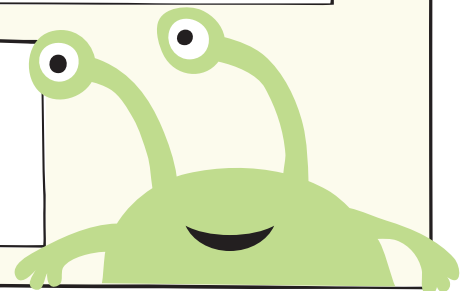
★ You grow stronger and smarter.

★ You feel better about yourself.

★ You make friends more easily.

★ You don't get in as much trouble.

Can you name another good thing about being in control?



MISSION REPORT

FEELINGS JOURNAL

DATE: / /

Today I am feeling:

Because:

But here's how I want to feel:

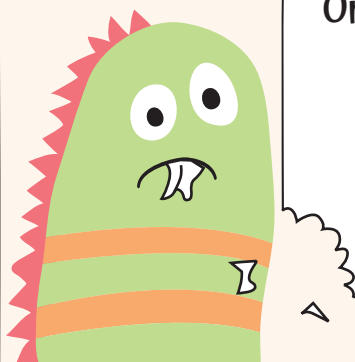
True or **False** (circle one)

I am in control of how I feel and how I react to those feelings.

True or **False** (circle one)

Feelings come and go, just like the weather.

One thing I can do to improve my mood when I'm feeling down:



"WHEN WE CAN
TALK ABOUT OUR
FEELINGS,
THEY BECOME LESS
OVERWHELMING,
LESS UPSETTING,
AND LESS SCARY."

Fred Rogers



Certificate of Completion

This certificate is presented to special agent:

for completing the top-secret training mission:

INVESTIGATE BIG EMOTIONS



Presented by: The Amazing Me Academy

ACTIVITY 2

FINDING YOUR FEELINGS

Some days are trickier than others, and lots of life events can be accompanied by big emotions. Learning mindful breathing practices is one way to help our bodies calm.

In this next activity, we'll practice paying attention to our breath and learn how it affects our feelings.

Think of the following reflections as a trusty companion, a touchstone to carry with you on your journey. Read these reflections more than once. Like a river flowing into the ocean, let them carry you to greater openness and spaciousness of heart and mind.



Finding Your Feelings

Ask yourself:

- ★ “How am I feeling right this moment?”
- ★ “Where does that feeling live inside of my body?”

Circle or draw in the emotion you are feeling right now:



Happy



Calm



Hopeful



Angry



Sad



Scared



Worried

Draw a picture of the parts of your body where the feeling lives:



Now take three slow, deep breaths—in through your nose and out through your mouth (if this is comfortable for you).

Ask yourself again:

★ “How am I feeling right this moment?”

★ “Where does that feeling live inside of my body?”

Do you notice anything different? Do you still feel the same emotion? Or has it changed with your mindful breathing?

It’s okay if you still feel the same; just remember—taking three slow, deep breaths a few times each day can help you become a calm, cool kid!

Practice Breathing on Purpose While You...



Take a
walk



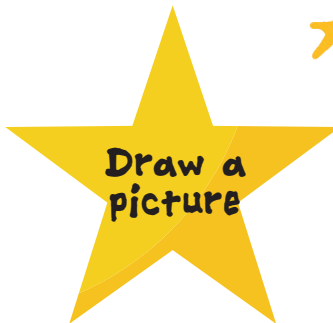
Wait
for the
bus



Listen
to the
birds



Ride
your
bike



Draw a
picture



Watch
the
clouds



Feed
your
pet



Hug your
best
friend



Listen
to the
rain



Go to
sleep



ACTIVITY 3

FACING ANXIETY AND FEAR

Do you ever get scared or anxious? Almost everybody experiences anxiety at some point in their life (including adults!). While our gut instinct with anxiety and fear is to ignore it, it's better for you to face your fear with intention and planning. When facing it head-on, you learn how to handle your fear and anxiety.

In this next activity, learn more about what your fear and anxieties are and what you can do when you feel anxious or scared.

***For parents and caregivers:** The following activity is broken out by age: one each for preschoolers, early elementary, and late elementary. Choose the page that suits your child best.*



For Parents, Teachers, and Therapists

to review with children



What are fear and anxiety?

Fear and anxiety are natural and protective emotions in response to danger. Fear is often about a known danger that is about to happen or is already happening, whereas anxiety is often about an unknown danger or something that might happen in the future. Both may be uncomfortable but neither are something to fear!

- **What are some fears or worries that you and others have?**

Share with your students/children and ask them to share as well.

- **Who experiences fear and anxiety?**

Everyone! There is not a single person who doesn't have fears and anxieties from time to time. You are not alone in what you're thinking and feeling.

- **What coping skills help you the most when you're scared or worried?**

Some kids feel better if they take deep breaths, have a sip of cold water, hug a trusted adult, or read a book! The options are endless!

Name _____ Date _____

What are anxiety and fear?



Draw something that you worry about or are afraid of.



Circle the things that help you feel better when you are worried or scared.



Name _____ Date _____

What are anxiety and fear?

Draw something that you worry about or are afraid of.



Write down the things that help you feel better when you are worried or scared.

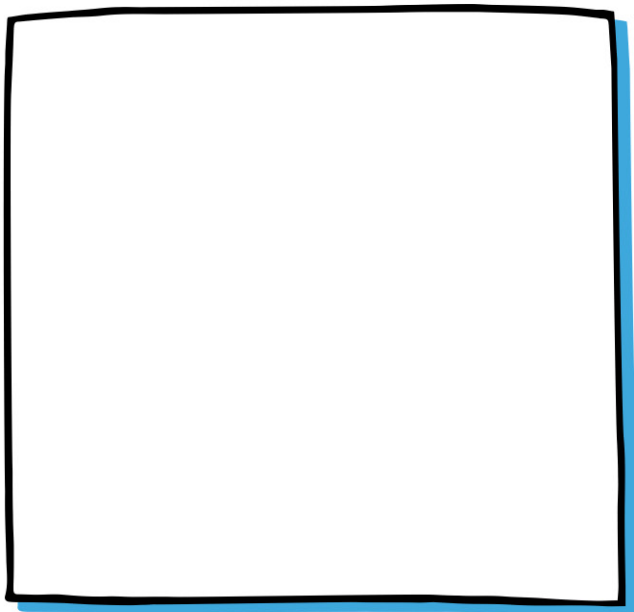
For example: Deep Breaths

Name _____

Date _____

What are anxiety and fear?

Draw something that you worry about or are afraid of.



Write down the things that help you feel better when you are worried or scared.

For example: Deep Breaths

Write down how fear or anxiety might actually be helpful.

For example: The anxiety I feel about a test urges me to study for it.



Resources

Add these titles to your kid's bookshelf!



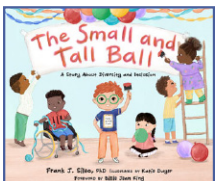
PUB087145

Some Days I Breathe on Purpose: Learning to Be a Calm, Cool Kid

Kellie Doyle Bailey, MA, CCC-SLP, MMT/SELI,
and Hannah Bailey, BA

“Some Days I Breathe on Purpose” follows Maysie as she learns to become more calm, steady, and self-aware by breathing on purpose.

In this delightful rhyming story, kids can discover how to use their own mindful breath to help them stay centered, regulated and ready to handle any emotion that comes their way.



PUB088085

The Small and Tall Ball: A Story About Diversity and Inclusion

Frank Sileo, PhD

In “The Small and Tall Ball,” readers will follow the heartwarming story of Oliver, a child who feels excluded from the yearly “Mother-Son & Father-Daughter Dance” because he has

two dads. While planning for the dance goes on around him, Oliver learns that other kids in his class are also unable to attend because they have diverse families. “This is NOT fair!” cries one student. How can the students come together to plan a dance where all kids and families are welcome? Find out how the class thinks up a clever idea so everyone can enjoy the dance – making it a special night for those small and those tall!

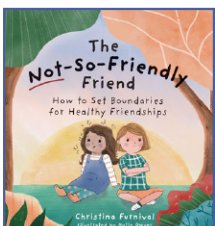


PUB087820

Some Days I Make Mistakes: How to Stay Calm and Cool When Your Day is Not So Great

Kellie Doyle Bailey, MA, CCC-SLP, MMT/SELI,
and Hannah Bailey, BA

Join Kela as she explores the big feelings – and the wonderful possibilities – that can come from making mistakes. In this compassionate and charming story, children will learn effective, simple techniques for staying calm and cool, and discover new ways to learn and grow from their mistakes.



PUB087110

The Not-So-Friendly Friend: How to Set Boundaries for Healthy Friendships

Christina Furnival, MS, LPCC

In “The Not-So-Friendly Friend,” children will learn an easy and practical lesson about how to firmly and assertively – yet kindly – stand up for themselves in the face of a bully. By

teaching children about the importance and value of setting boundaries for healthy friendships, this book provides children with the tools they need to foster their social confidence and emotional well-being.

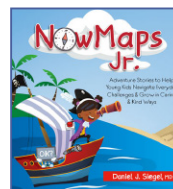


PUB087100

Amazing Me: A Growth Mindset Activity Journal for Kids

Tina Williamson

Filled with colorful illustrations and engaging content, “Amazing Me” explains social-emotional concepts in a child-friendly way by inviting children to become special agents working their way through 10 personal growth missions.

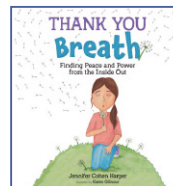


PUB087765

NowMaps Jr.: Adventure Stories to Help Young Kids Navigate Everyday Challenges & Grow in Caring & Kind Ways

Daniel Siegel, MD

Written by Dan Siegel, MD, world-renowned psychotherapist and coauthor of “The Whole-Brain Child,” “NowMaps Jr.” is a delightful rhyming story that introduces kids to the neuroscience of early childhood social-emotional learning in a captivating, interactive way!

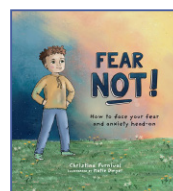


PUB087650

Thank You Breath: Finding Peace and Power from the Inside Out

Jennifer Cohen Harper, MA, E-RYT, RCYT, and
Karen Gilmour

To help our kids harness this power, we have to do more than tell them to “take a deep breath.” In “Thank You Breath,” you’ll find these very tools so kids (and their grown-ups!) can learn how to use breathing to find peace and power, even when BIG emotions take over.

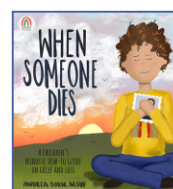


PUB087255

Fear Not: How to Face Your Fear and Anxiety Head On

Christina Furnival, MS, LPCC

In “Fear Not!,” children will learn a practical three-step lesson to manage their worries, regain their cool, and strip fear of its power once and for all.



PUB087260

When Someone Dies: A Children's Mindful How-To Guide on Grief and Loss

Andrea Dorn, MSW, LISW-CP

Written and illustrated by a therapist (and mother), Andrea Dorn, MSW, “When Someone Dies” walks children through the bereavement process in a simple, concrete, and developmentally appropriate way. Through the lens of mindfulness, children will learn how to say goodbye, make space for any emotions that arise, and work through their grief.

Learn more about these books at: therapist.com/me2023

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