

Adapted from



The Innovative Parent:

Raising **CONNECTED, HAPPY, SUCCESSFUL** Kids through Art

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Emojis

GOAL: Help children identify feelings and needs. Increase connection and communication.

INSTRUCTIONS: Pull up a screen of emojis on your smart phone (you can use the texting emoji menu or Google Images). Show your child. Alternatively, ask what animal or character the feeling might be.

SAY: “Which one does it feel like right now?”

A STEP FURTHER: Once your child has selected an emoji draw it, add a thought bubble (“I wonder what he’s thinking?”), or ask about needs (“I wonder what she needs?”). Invite your child to fill in the thought bubble.

Scribble or Shake Out Feelings

GOAL: Stay open to expressions of anger by helping children communicate feelings and release energy in a healthy way.

INSTRUCTIONS: Offer a piece of paper and pencil, a shaker, or a spoon and pot.

SAY: “How big is your anger?” (let the child draw it) or “Let’s hear how mad sounds” (let the child make noise).

A STEP FURTHER: Show empathy by making your own scribble or sounds: “So it was this big? Is that right?” Ask, “What about now? Is it the same?”

Soundtrack to Shift Feelings

GOAL: Evoke positive feelings of love, nostalgia, and connection with your child, even when they are acting their worst.

INSTRUCTIONS: Pick a song that evokes warm feelings for your child. It may be one that you sang to your child as a baby or one that reminds you of a special time. Sing the song out loud or in your mind. Sing it during mundane or challenging moments with your child. How does it change your experience?

A STEP FURTHER: Create a playlist of songs that bring up loving feelings toward your child. Or, create a playlist that starts with music matching your mood (such as tired, angry, or frustrated), followed by songs that gradually shift toward the state you prefer to be in (such as energized, joyful, or relaxed). Listen to your playlist to help you shift your mood anytime during the day.

Talking About Art

Comment on Positive Behavior observed during PROCESS

GOAL: Encourage positive qualities and skills that you want your children to develop.

INSTRUCTIONS: Use nonjudgmental language to reinforce LONG-TERM GOALS for your child: patience, hard work, focus, creativity, trying something new, teamwork, etc.

SAY: “I see” or “I notice.” For example: “I see that you are working hard on that drawing” or “I notice you are trying something new!” If your child is not putting much effort into a project say: “I see that you just got started. I can’t wait to see what else you do.” Or “I notice you’ve drawn a few things. What’s your plan next?”

A STEP FURTHER: Practice throughout the day. Whether to encourage desirable behavior or discourage undesirable behavior, start with “I see,” “I notice,” or “What’s your plan?” For example: “I see that you put on your shoes right away when I said it was time to go.” Or “I notice that your homework folder is still in your backpack. What’s your plan for getting it done?”

Dialogue about PRODUCT

GOAL: Promote open communication. Explore themes and topics of importance to your child.

INSTRUCTIONS: Avoid making assumptions about your child’s art or praising for being “good.” Instead, ask questions about what your child is drawing to encourage open communication and creative thinking.

SAY: “I wonder” or “Tell me about.” For example: “I wonder what that animal is doing?” Or “Tell me about your drawing.”

A STEP FURTHER: If your child wants to know if you “like” her drawing, dance, or song, encourage her first to consider how she likes it. Say: “I’ll tell you in a second. First, I want to know if you like it?” or “I see a smile. Do you feel happy with what you’ve done?”

If the answer is no, then encourage creative problem solving by asking: “How would you like it to be different?” or “How can you change it so that you will be happier with it?”

