

Talk with your child about what people around him are feeling.

Naming the emotions your child sees helps him begin to recognize and understand them.



Why this is important

Children notice people around them expressing feelings, but they do not have the experience to fully understand what they see. By pointing out and naming emotions when they occur in peers, you help your child recognize what others are feeling. He will have more success interacting with others when he begins to pay attention to the feelings of the people around him. Recognizing another person's emotion is one step in the difficult task of understanding another person's point of view.

What you do

- Point out the feelings of siblings or other children in the neighborhood.. Draw your child's attention to another child's strong emotional expression: *I think Matt looks very happy now.*
- Talk more about what has made the other child feel that way: *Holding that balloon really put a smile on Matt's face.*
- Move on to a new topic if your child shows no interest. From time to time, continue to point out feelings and to name them.
- Offer encouragement when your child notices someone's feelings on his own. *You're paying attention to other people's feelings. You noticed Sara was sad.*
- Comment on feelings that may frighten your child: *Chris is so angry right now. I'm glad his Nana is there to help him. I think he will feel better soon.*
- Encourage your child to help someone who feels sad: *Harry looks sad—with tears in his eyes. I wonder if it's because he dropped his cupcake? I think I'll see if he needs some help. Would you like to come with me?*

Another idea

Encourage your child to name the emotions he sees, beginning with happy, angry, and sad. The names of other emotions, such as suspicious, frustrated, and excited, may take longer for your child to recognize and say.