

# Emotional Empowerment



## Dear Educator,

Self-awareness, self-control and interpersonal skills are crucial factors for students' success, both in and beyond the classroom. To achieve these important milestones toward maturity requires emotional empowerment—the process through which children learn that experiencing emotions is part of what it means to be human and develop their own strategies to manage difficult emotions.

This free educational program provides standards-based SEL activities for grades 1-3 and 4-6 that focus on emotional empowerment. Developed by the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired in partnership with mental health professionals from The Kids Mental Health Foundation, proudly founded by Nationwide Children's Hospital, the program's activities are designed to help students learn the connection between emotions, feelings and moods, and practice strategies for recognizing, expressing and regulating emotions. The program also includes a take-home letter for families to help promote greater awareness of social and emotional health. The Kids Mental Health Foundation seeks to engage children and families in recognizing and processing emotions as an important practice in mental health.

We hope you will share this program with other teachers, guidance counselors, coaches and school nurses, as well as youth group leaders in your community. Please take a moment to share your thoughts on this program at [ymiclassroom.com/feedback-KMHF](https://ymiclassroom.com/feedback-KMHF). We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dominic Kinsley, PhD  
Editor in Chief  
Young Minds Inspired



Questions? Contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005, or by email at [feedback@ymiclassroom.com](mailto:feedback@ymiclassroom.com).



This program is generously funded by donors to the Christina and Ryan Day Fund for Pediatric and Adolescent Mental Wellness at Nationwide Children's Hospital. The Days are strong advocates for The Kids Mental Health Foundation and champion the mission to start conversations and break stigmas surrounding children's mental health. To learn more, please visit [KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org/support-kmhf/champions/day-family-fund](https://KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org/support-kmhf/champions/day-family-fund).

### Target Audience

Children in grades 1-3 and 4-6, parents, and caregivers

### Program Objectives

- Promote the mental health and well-being of children
- Encourage children to discuss their emotions and feelings with trusted adults

### Program Components

Available at [ymiclassroom.com/KMHF](https://ymiclassroom.com/KMHF):

- This teacher's guide
- Four reproducible activity sheets for grades 1-3 and 4-6 (English and Spanish)
- Classroom poster
- Student certificate of completion (English and Spanish)
- Reproducible take-home letter for families (English and Spanish)
- Standards alignment chart
- An online feedback form

## How to Use This Program

Photocopy the student activity sheets for your grade and display the poster. Each activity should take approximately one class period. Have students share the completed activity sheets with their families, along with a copy of the take-home letter.

The Kids Mental Health Foundation identifies five stages of emotional empowerment for children and recommends teaching children to:

1. Identify emotions and what they mean.
2. Recognize emotions as you are feeling them.
3. Notice and understand emotions in others.
4. Express emotions appropriately, even when experiencing difficult emotions.
5. Regulate strong emotions through individual coping strategies, such as deep breathing, exercise, music, etc.

Review your school's policy on mental health concerns before starting this program, and know whom to contact for additional support if needed. Should any student have a problematic response to these activities, accept and validate the students' feelings even if you don't necessarily understand them. Ask open-ended questions such as: *How can I help? What do you need to feel better?* Ask who their most trusted adult is at school and seek their assistance if needed. Know when to inform the child's parent or caregiver.

### ALL GRADES

## Introduce the Program

Begin by helping students identify the feelings represented by each face on the poster. Then discuss the following:

1. What facial features help identify each feeling or emotion?
2. Ask students to show the facial expression they might make when they feel that way.
3. Ask students to share possible experiences that might trigger each feeling or emotion.
4. Ask students to name some other ways we express feelings and emotions, such as body movements, tone of voice and behaviors.
5. Ask students to name emotions and feelings they have recently experienced. Record student responses on the board or on chart paper. Prompt discussion with examples such as: happy, anxious, angry, sad, uncomfortable, mad, calm, confused, proud, silly and excited. Help students sort physical feelings from emotional feelings that affect our mental health by listing them separately as they come up in the discussion. Physical feelings might include tired, sleepy, etc.
6. Explain that emotions cause feelings, which then lead to moods. Moods can be positive/good, negative/uncomfortable and sometimes in between. Ask students to describe a good/positive mood and a bad/uncomfortable mood.
7. Add that being aware of our emotions and feelings can help us better manage them. Discuss ways to cope with negative feelings and emotions. For example: make statements to describe coping strategies, such as "When I feel \_\_\_\_\_ I can \_\_\_\_\_ to help myself." Or try calming activities like deep breathing, drawing, listening to music or talking with a trusted adult.
8. Ask students how they can be supportive if someone else is experiencing difficult feelings such as feeling sad or upset. Encourage responses that reflect empathy and kindness since we don't know what others are going through.

## Activities for Grades 1-3

### Feelings and Moods

Begin this activity with the list of feelings and emotions you created for Step 5 above. For each word on the list, ask students if it is associated with a good mood or a bad mood. Underline the words associated with a good mood, circle those associated with a bad mood and put a check mark by any that are in-between. Ask students to describe the differences between these moods.

#### Part 1: How Do You Feel?

Now distribute the activity sheet and review the directions. Have students fill in the chart on their own or do the activity as a class.

#### Part 2: Color Breathing

Read the directions and have students complete their color choices. Then lead them through the steps of Color Breathing, explaining that this is a strategy to help manage negative moods. Follow up by brainstorming more ideas for managing feelings and moods. For example: talk with a trusted adult like a teacher or parent, stretch, color, hold a calming object like a stuffed toy, etc.

### It's OK to Feel That Way!

Play "Feelings Charades" with your students. Prepare paper strips, each with a word that names a feeling such as proud, happy, nervous, shy, curious, excited, mad, etc. Have student volunteers choose a paper strip, enact the feeling and have classmates try to identify it. As feelings are named, discuss what physical actions expressed by the volunteer helped students guess. Then ask students to share a time when they experienced that feeling.

#### Part 1: I See How You Feel

Distribute the activity sheet and review the directions with students. After they match the feeling words to their corresponding faces, have students listen as you read the scenarios below and name the feeling listed in Part 1 that they'd feel in each scenario. If appropriate, have students describe a time they experienced that feeling. If the feeling gave them a bad mood, ask them to share the calming strategies they used to feel better. Scenarios:

- ▶ You weren't invited to friend's birthday party. (sad, angry)
- ▶ A family member is sick and in the hospital. (sad, afraid)
- ▶ You got the present you wanted for your birthday. (joyful, surprised)
- ▶ Your sports team won the game. (joyful)

#### Part 2: Feeling with Five Senses

Remind students all feelings are OK because they are part of what makes us human, and emphasize that by recognizing and talking about our feelings, we are taking care of our mental health. Review the directions for Part 2 and help students use the activity sheet framework to create a sensory-based poem about one of the feelings listed in Part 1. Have students create illustrations for their poems and then share their work.

## Activities for Grades 4-6

### The Science of Emotion

Begin this activity by watching "The Hand Model of the Brain," a short animated video on YouTube ([bit.ly/35vp0fw](https://bit.ly/35vp0fw)) that describes the three main parts of the brain: prefrontal cortex, amygdala (a-mig-da-la) and hippocampus (hip-po-cam-pus).

#### Part 1: Meet Your Brain

Distribute the activity sheet and help students review the brain diagram and the description of how the brain processes strong emotions. Ask students to share ideas of calming practices that can assist the pre-frontal cortex in getting the information it needs to manage strong emotions. Ideas may include taking deep breaths, listening to music, engaging in physical exercise, etc.

Next, ask students to share their thoughts on how understanding the brain could help us handle difficult feelings in the following situations: you didn't get invited to a classmate's birthday party; your team lost when you missed the winning shot; a family member is sick; you keep getting low scores on your math test. Help students explain how the brain might process these feelings to produce a positive or negative mood.

#### Part 2: Think About It

Have students write a reflection based on the diagram and one of the feelings discussed for Part 1 or another feeling. Student reflection responses will vary but should incorporate the understanding that emotions are part of what it means to be human and this knowledge of brain/emotion connections can help them to manage emotions in a healthy way.

### Feelings Check-In

Begin by asking students if they know what "mindfulness" means. Explain that mindfulness is being purposefully aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment, and can help us cope with stressful feelings. Provide examples such as keeping a gratitude journal or taking deep breaths. Ask students to share strategies they've successfully used to manage feelings and emotions.

#### Part 1: How Do You Feel?

Distribute the activity sheet and review the directions. Have students complete the feelings prompts independently, then ask for volunteers to share their responses. If students are hesitant to share, suggest they describe how they imagine familiar story or cartoon characters might complete the prompts.

#### Part 2: Feeling with Five Senses

Remind students that all feelings are OK because they are part of what makes us human, and emphasize that when we manage our emotions and feelings by recognizing and talking about them, we are taking care of our mental health. Review the directions for Part 2 and help students use the activity sheet framework to create a sensory-based poem about the feeling they explored in Part 1. Encourage students to incorporate metaphors, similes and other poetic elements in their work. Students may also create illustrations for their poems. Reuse the activity to encourage ongoing conversations about feelings.

#### Certificate and Take-Home Letter

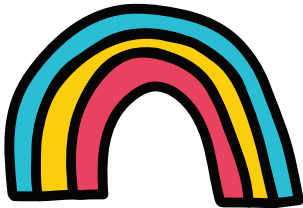
Distribute personalized copies of the certificate to students after completing Activity 2. (Available at [ymiclassroom.com/KMHF](https://ymiclassroom.com/KMHF)) Encourage students to share the certificate with their family, along with the take-home letter. Explain that as Mental Health Ambassadors, students can share what they have learned about recognizing, expressing, and managing emotions and feelings.

## Resources

- ▶ The Kids Mental Health Foundation  
[KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org](https://KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org)
- ▶ Mental Health Resources  
[KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org/mental-health-resources](https://KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org/mental-health-resources)
- ▶ Teaching Kids About Emotions  
[KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org/mental-health-resources/behaviors-and-emotions](https://KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org/mental-health-resources/behaviors-and-emotions)
- ▶ YMI Programs  
[ymiclassroom.com/KMHF](https://ymiclassroom.com/KMHF)



# Feelings and Moods



## Part 1: How Do You Feel?

We all experience different feelings and that is OK! Fill this chart to learn about feelings. Circle the feeling words that can cause a bad mood. Underline the feeling words that cause a good mood. Then choose a synonym for each feeling word from the word bank and write it on the blank line. Use the circles to draw a face showing how each feeling looks.

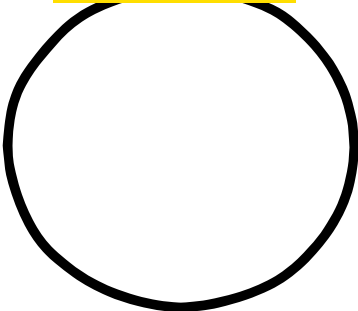
FEELING	SYNONYM	HOW IT LOOKS	WORD BANK
ANGRY			GLUM JOYFUL MAD NERVOUS THRILLED
WORRIED			
HAPPY			
SAD			
EXCITED			

## Part 2: Color Breathing

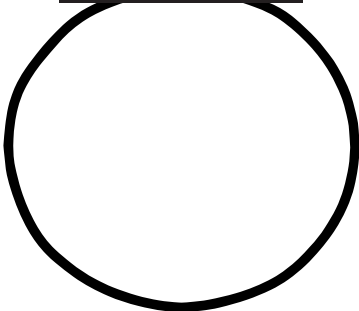
Feeling blue? Try Color Breathing the next time your feelings cause a bad mood.

1. What color makes you think of a happy mood? Color the first circle with that color.
2. What color makes you think of a bad mood? Color the second circle with that color.
3. Close your eyes. Breathe in deeply. Imagine the happy mood color filling your body.
4. As you exhale, imagine the bad mood color leaving your body.
5. Repeat 3-5 times.

GOOD MOOD



BAD MOOD



# It's OK to Feel That Way!



## Part 1: I See How You Feel

Draw a line to match each facial expression to its feeling word.



**ANGRY**

**AFRAID**

**JOYFUL**

**SAD**

**SURPRISED**

## Part 2: Feeling with Five Senses

Choose a feeling from Part 1 and write a poem about it. Fill in the blanks below to describe the feeling as if it were something you could smell, taste, touch, hear, or see.

Choose a feeling: \_\_\_\_\_



Smells like \_\_\_\_\_



Tastes like \_\_\_\_\_



Feels like \_\_\_\_\_



Sounds like \_\_\_\_\_



Looks like \_\_\_\_\_



# The Science of Emotion

## Part 1: Meet Your Brain

Do you know what the connection is between your brain and your feelings? Emotions are chemical responses sent from the brain in reaction to everyday experiences. This results in a range of different feelings. These parts of the brain play a role in how you experience emotions.

### PREFRONTAL CORTEX

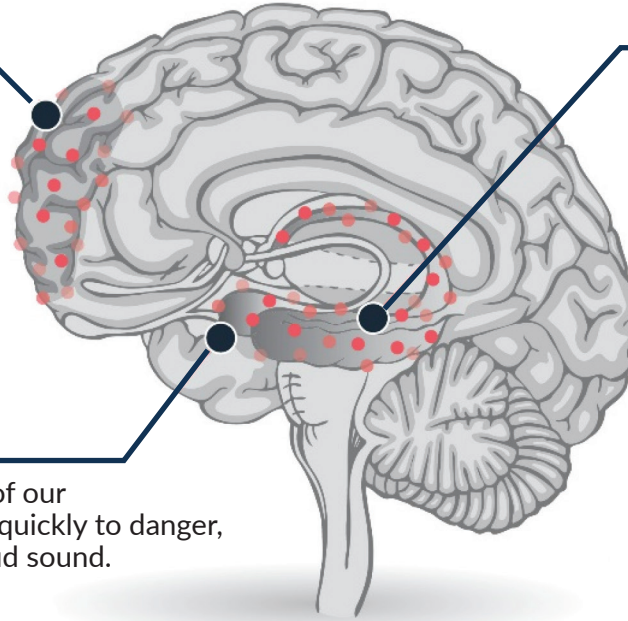
The prefrontal cortex helps us think, learn and process emotions so we can make smart decisions.

### HIPPOCAMPUS

The hippocampus helps us remember. It stores all the things you learn in school plus memories and emotional experiences from your life.

### AMYGDALA

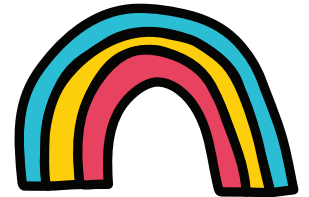
The amygdala is in charge of our emotions. It helps us react quickly to danger, like when you jump at a loud sound.



So what happens when we experience strong emotions? It starts with the amygdala. Sometimes it can't tell the difference between a danger (like a ball coming at you) and everyday stressful events (like an upcoming test). When this happens and the amygdala takes over, the prefrontal cortex does not get the information it needs to do its job. This interferes with how the prefrontal cortex helps you think through a difficult feeling. It also interferes with how the hippocampus processes memories of past experiences where we may have successfully handled a similar feeling in a different situation. Learning strategies to help us manage strong emotions or keep calm can help our brains in these situations.

## Part 2: Think About It

You have learned about the brain and its role in how we process emotions. Why is knowing this important to your mental health? Use the space below to write a reflection.




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# Feelings Check-In



## Part 1: How Do You Feel?

Choose a word from the list below that describes how you are feeling today, or write in your own word. Then use the prompts below to write about your feelings.

EMOTION		RELATED FEELINGS
	<b>ANGER</b>	angry, annoyed, mad, grumpy, irritated
	<b>FEAR</b>	anxious, uncomfortable, worried, nervous, stressed
	<b>SADNESS</b>	sad, frustrated, unhappy, lonely, hurt, upset
	<b>HAPPINESS</b>	happy, proud, excited, calm, confident, comfortable

► Today I'm feeling \_\_\_\_\_.

► I'm feeling this way because \_\_\_\_\_.

► I'll manage this feeling by \_\_\_\_\_.

## Part 2: Feeling with Five Senses

Focus on the feeling you explored in Part 1 and write a poem about it. Fill in the blanks below to describe the feeling as if it were something you could smell, taste, touch, hear, and see. Be creative — use metaphors, similes, and imagery to describe your feeling.

Choose a feeling: \_\_\_\_\_



Smells like \_\_\_\_\_.



Tastes like \_\_\_\_\_.



Feels like \_\_\_\_\_.



Sounds like \_\_\_\_\_.

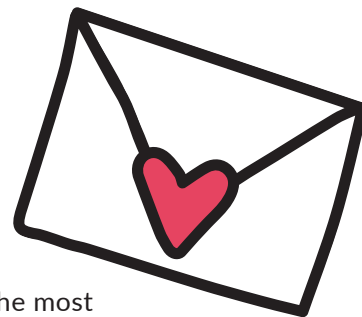


Looks like \_\_\_\_\_.





# Emotional Empowerment



## Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Helping your child manage emotions can be challenging. Yet, teaching children how to identify, express and regulate their emotions — skills that lead to emotional empowerment — is one of the most important lessons a child can learn.

### A Family Guide to the Five Steps of Emotional Empowerment

STEPS	HOW GROWN-UPS CAN HELP
<b>1. Identify emotions and what they mean.</b> <i>Labeling emotions enriches emotional vocabulary and signals that feelings should be discussed.</i>	Say things like “I’m feeling happy that we’re spending time together,” or, “It looks like you’re frustrated with finishing this math problem.”
<b>2. Recognize emotions as you are feeling them.</b> <i>Modeling the ability to recognize feelings in real time helps develop a habit to manage them before they become problematic.</i>	Say things like, “It looks like you are feeling _____ right now. I can tell because _____.”
<b>3. Notice and understand emotions in others.</b> <i>Being aware of other’s emotions helps develop empathy and aids in developing friendships.</i>	Talk with your child about how others in your circle may be feeling, or about the feelings of characters in books, movies, or TV shows. Discuss the range of emotions.
<b>4. Express emotions appropriately.</b> <i>Downplaying difficult emotions such as sadness, loneliness, or disappointment can cause negative feelings to linger. Expressing these emotions is important in helping your child build resilience as teens and adults.</i>	Say, “I know you feel angry but yelling and hitting is not an appropriate way to manage that feeling. What can we do instead?” Avoid dismissive comments like, “You need to calm down.”
<b>5. Regulate strong emotions through individual coping strategies.</b> <i>Regulating stressful emotions helps keep them from taking over in our minds and causing the loss of our sense of control.</i>	Share your own coping strategies and introduce your child to calming techniques they can use, like deep breathing, listening to music, or physical activity.

## Emotional Empowerment at Home

A calming basket can provide a go-to strategy for coping with stressful feelings. With your child’s help (and during a time they’re not under emotional strain), collect materials using the suggestions below and place them in a basket or container that is easily accessible. Explain to your child that items in the calming basket may be used in a “feelings emergency,” when an emotion is hard for them to manage. Encourage your child to come to you when they feel the need to use the calming basket to reinforce the skill of communicating all types of feelings first.

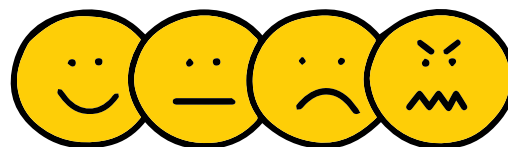
### Suggested calming basket items:

- ▶ Stuffed animals
- ▶ Paper that can be crumpled up
- ▶ Puzzle
- ▶ Coloring book
- ▶ Putty or modeling clay
- ▶ Stress ball
- ▶ A favorite book
- ▶ Crayons

For older kids, provide them with a blank Feelings Journal to write down anything they need to let out whenever emotions feel overwhelming or confusing.

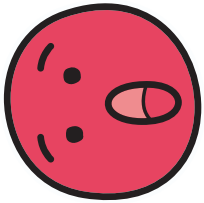
## About The Kids Mental Health Foundation

The Kids Mental Health Foundation is the leading organization promoting mental health for children in the United States. To achieve its vision of building a world where mental health is a vital part of every child’s upbringing, more than 1,000 mental health professionals and researchers at Nationwide Children’s Hospital, in partnership with other trusted experts, provide real-world knowledge and expertise to power the Foundation’s free educational videos, guides and curriculum. For more information, visit [KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org](https://KidsMentalHealthFoundation.org).





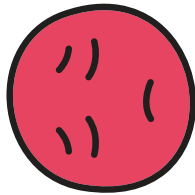
**excited**



**surprised**



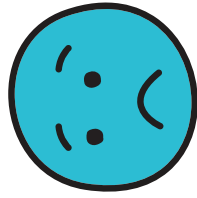
**sad**



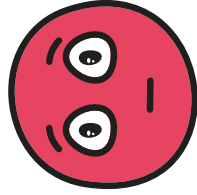
**disappointed**



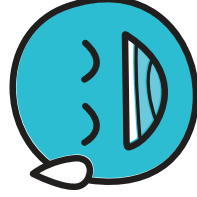
**confused**



**nervous**



**afraid**



**joyful**

# Mental Health Ambassador

By completing The Kids Mental Health Foundation  
Emotional Empowerment learning activities

(Student name)

is a Mental Health Ambassador!

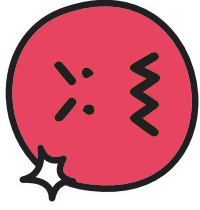
Mental Health Ambassadors know that sharing and talking  
about feelings is important.

Teacher signature

Date



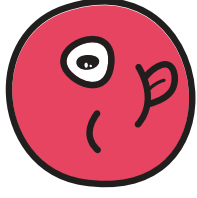
**The Kids  
Mental Health  
Foundation™**



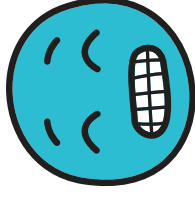
**angry**



**happy**



**silly**



**annoyed**





# Know Your Feelings & Emotions

Being able to recognize and talk about your emotions is an important part of mental health. Which picture best represents how you are feeling today?

ANGRY



CONFUSED



FUNNY



EMBARRASSED



SURPRISED



SAD



BORED



SHY



EXCITED



PROUD



DISAPPOINTED



CURIOUS



HAPPY



WORRIED



SCARED



TIED

