

NOT JUST HAPPY, SAD, MAD: NAMING A RAINBOW OF EMOTIONS

RestorativeTeachingTools.com

OBJECTIVE

Help young children to develop the key skills of identifying a wide range of emotions and cultivating empathy for the experiences of others.

MATERIALS

A story (this could be a published short story or something you write yourself that may reflect themes relevant to your community).

Faces that express different emotions (see the example attached). Make large versions of the faces with emotion words written beneath them and pin them up around the room. For older groups, use more different (and more complex) emotions. You may also wish to have the children draw these faces themselves as an activity prior to playing this game.

INSTRUCTIONS

Explain that the group will be listening to a story and identifying how different characters feel at different points in the story. You can either have the whole group follow the emotional journey of one character in the story or you can divide participants into smaller groups and assign each group a character whose emotions they will be following as a team.

Go around the room and show all the faces that are pinned up on the walls, introducing the emotion word that goes with each face and asking for an example of a time that you might feel “sad,” “excited,” “nervous,” etc. You can invite the participants to make a face or gesture that expresses each emotion as you demonstrate.

Begin reading the story out loud. At key emotional moments, pause reading and ask participants to move to stand next to the face that best represents how their character is likely feeling in that moment. Facilitate a short discussion about why the participants think the character may be feeling that way. If two participants representing the same character go to two different emotions, use that as an opportunity to spark a conversation about how the same thing can happen to two different people and they can have two different emotional responses. Ask the group why they think that is.

After identifying the emotion(s), keep reading the story until you reach another key emotional moment, then pause reading and again ask participants to move to stand next to the face that best represents how their character is feeling.

By the end of the activity, the participants will have gone on an “emotional journey” around the room through empathizing with the feelings of their character in the story.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to “try on” the feelings of the character?

What was easy about naming the feelings and what was more difficult?

Do we all feel the same way when the same thing happens to us?

(If having the children name the emotion in groups) Were there times that your group disagreed?

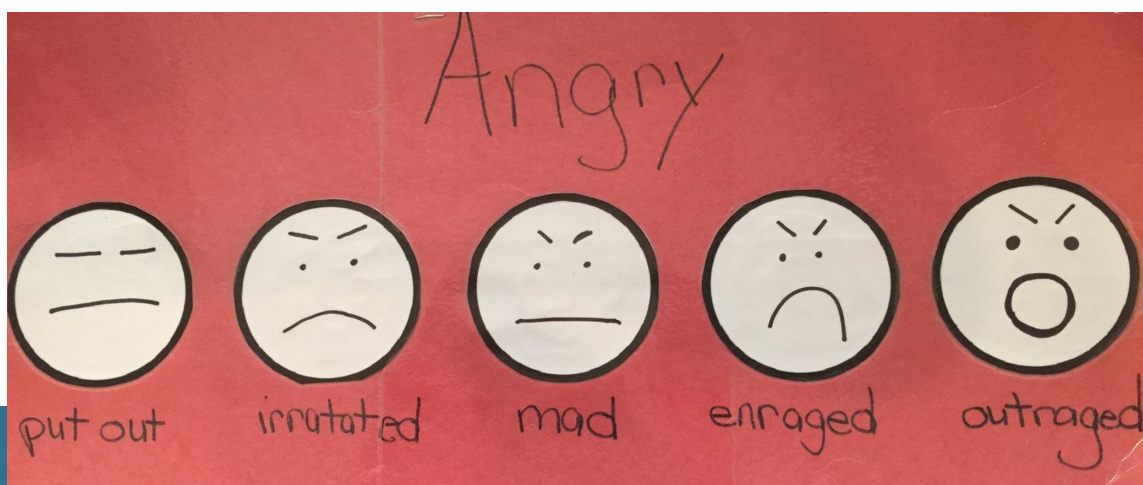
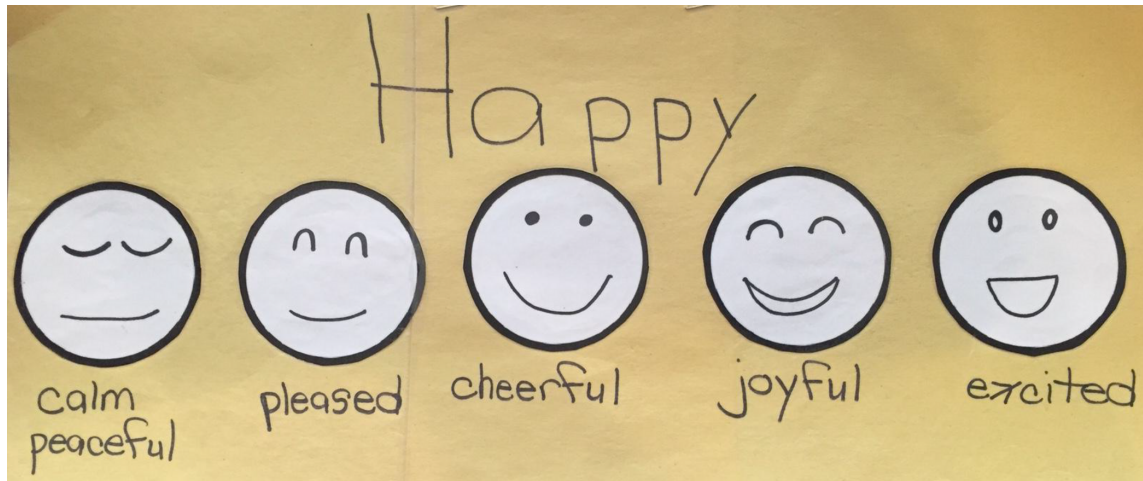
How does this game help us in our lives?

LESSON

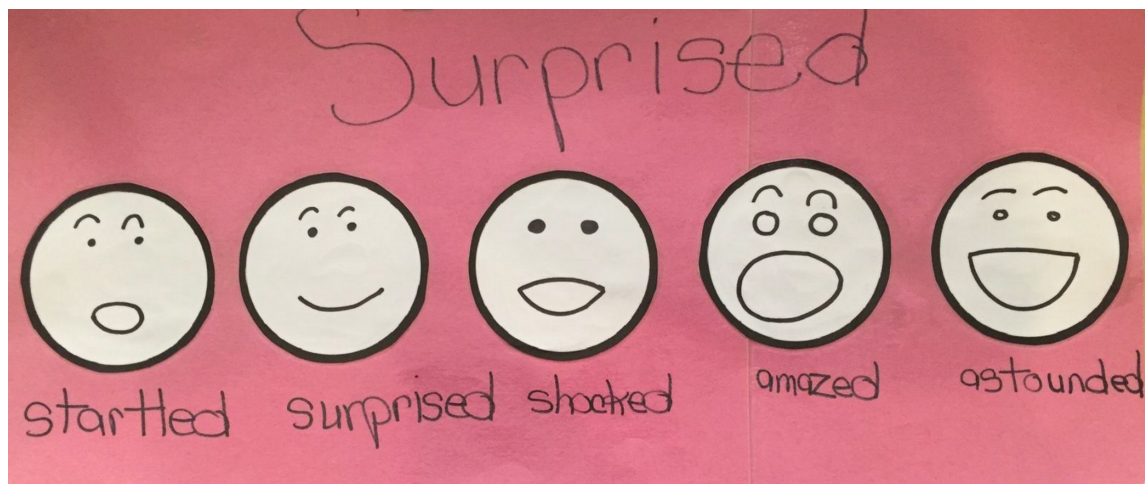
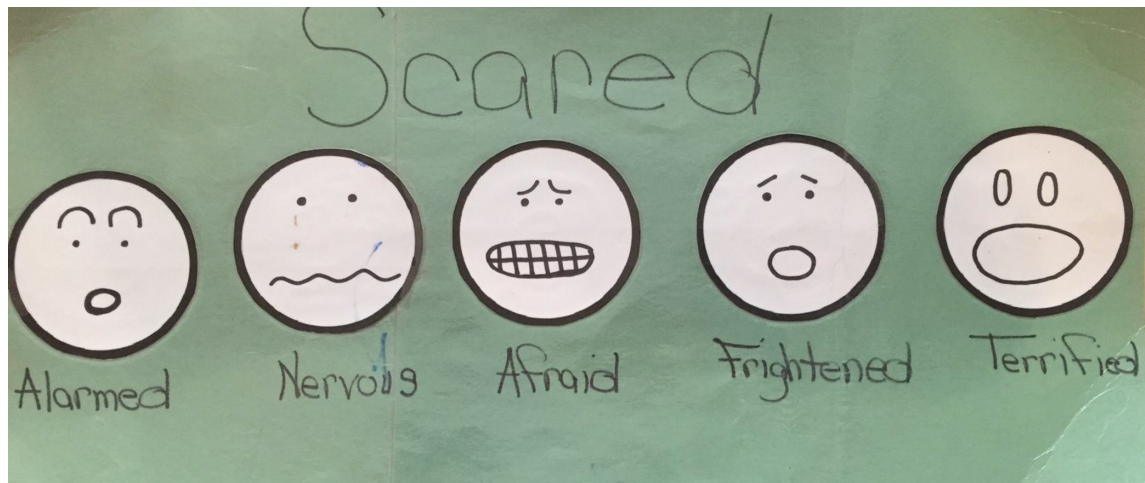
It is important to expand our emotional vocabulary so that we can describe how we and others are feeling. This activity also gives participants an experience of putting themselves in the shoes of another and building empathy – an essential skill for restorative practices and life!

EXAMPLE EMOTION FACES BY KAIJA SCHEUERMAN

This activity was inspired in part by our friend, Joan Scheuerman, who does amazing work with her preschool class and restorative practices including using these emotion cards (created by her daughter, artist Kaija Scheuerman) for circle processes.



EXAMPLE EMOTION FACES BY KAIJA SCHEUERMAN



EXAMPLE STORIES

Here is a link to a list of stories you may consider using for this activity that deal specifically with emotions.

- <https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/bhf-book-lists/emotional-awareness-picture-books>