

Exploring feelings, making connections: activities to try at home

Here are some activities to enjoy with babies, toddlers and young children.
All the activities suggested here support the development of children's social and emotional skills.

Knowing ourselves

Knowing ourselves – our likes and dislikes, our hopes and preferences – is an important skill. This knowledge helps us to look after ourselves and it helps us to navigate our relationships with other people. Knowing ourselves can also help us to identify and work towards goals that matter to us.

Portraits often tell us a story about the people in them. The setting of a portrait and any objects shown can give us useful clues about a person's likes and dislikes, their job, even their family background or religion.

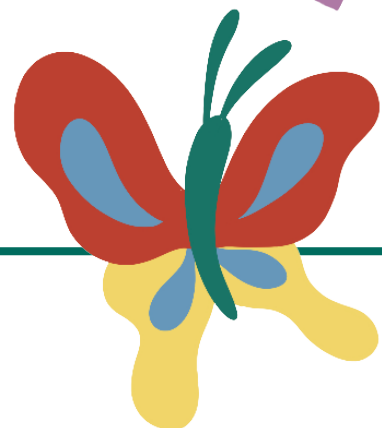
Activity ideas

Toddlers

- Talk to children about the things that they like and do not like. Ask them to draw a picture of their favourite thing. You could also make a portrait by taking a photo of them with their favourite object or toy.

Pre-school children

- Help your child to use collage to make a self-portrait that tells a story about them. You could cut up photos or magazines together to include objects and colours that they like.



Managing our emotions

Recognising and naming emotions is an important skill. It helps us to understand and manage how we feel. It also helps us to understand other people's feelings, so we can build positive relationships and respond to others in kind and helpful ways.

Using 'feelings words' with children supports their ability to understand emotions in themselves and others.

You may want to use the [Feelings Word Bank](#) to help you talk together about your own feelings and the feelings of people in photographs, books and TV programmes.

Activity ideas

Babies and toddlers

- Use pictures in books to talk about feelings. Look at a picture together and spot people or animals who are showing their feelings. Maybe they are happy, or sad? You could talk about why they feel that way.
- Talk about how our face shows our feelings. Make a happy or sad face at each other or into a mirror at home. What other feelings can you show with your face?

Pre-school children

- Play a musical statues game, where children strike a pose that shows a particular feeling. Play music, and when the music stops, ask the children to strike a pose. You can shout out the feeling, and they show the pose. Or they can make the pose, and you guess what they are feeling.



Nurturing our relationships

Positive relationships are vital for our health and happiness. Being kind, giving freely, and setting healthy boundaries enable us to build relationships based on trust, respect, and mutual care. Nurturing relationships where we feel loved, supported, and connected is key to living a fulfilled and happy life.

Activity ideas

Babies and toddlers

- Many of us have photos around our homes and on our phone which show people we care about. Babies and toddlers often love looking at these pictures and talking about the people in them. Show the toddlers photos of themselves with a friend or family member and talk about what they were doing together.

Pre-school children

- Ask the children to draw a picture of someone they care about. Encourage them to think about the person when they draw them. For example, could they draw the person wearing their favourite colour? Or in their favourite place? This portrait might make a lovely gift for a family member or friend.
- Sit together and draw portraits of each other. Encourage other family members or friends to join in. This can provide a particularly nice moment of connection between parents and children as you spend time looking at and focusing on each other – and maybe having a giggle together!



Find out more about
The Royal Foundation
Centre for Early Childhood's
Shaping Us Framework,
and children's social and
emotional development at:
centreforearlychildhood.org