

Feelings Boards

'Feelings Boards' are visual aids which support children who struggle to recognise, express and manage feelings and emotions. Children with Autism can particularly struggle to understand and recognise their own feelings and interpret those of others. 'Feelings Boards' can not only support children to communicate how they are feeling in a calm manner but can also teach them to recognise the feelings of others.

When the child's feelings are recognised, appropriate support and actions can be put in place to reduce the likelihood of their anxiety and frustration rising, preventing an escalation in undesirable behaviour.

There are a range of different types of *Feelings* resources, many of which can be purchased online, including some which can be clipped to your belt loop so always to hand. This resource will offer two types:

- A 'How do You Feel Today?' board
- A 'Feelings Scale'

With acknowledgement of original concept: Ae, M. S., Van Den, C., Ae, H., and Smeets, R. C. (2008). Facial feedback mechanisms in autistic spectrum disorders. *J. Autism Dev. Disord.* Baron-Cohen, S. (2000). Theory of mind and autism: a fifteen year review.

'How do You Feel Today?' board

The 'How do You Feel Today' board offers the child a number of pictures which represent different feelings. The child learns to link a picture to how they are feeling and can communicate this to you through the board so that they can receive the support they need. The boards can also open up social interactions with the child to support them to understand what causes the feeling, how to read this in others and to learn the word to expand their vocabulary

How do I use a 'How do I Feel Today?' Board?

1. Decide how many 'feelings' that the child will be able to cope with as you don't want to overwhelm them with too many. This will depend on their level of understanding. You may need to start with just 2, happy and sad, until they understand the concept.

2. When the child arrives at the club, show them the board and encourage them to show you how they are feeling. This can be part of a meaningful social interaction with them as they transition from home to Breakfast Club, or school day to After School Club. For example, if they have had a positive day at school and they arrive in good spirits, use this as an opportunity to support them to link that they are feeling happy to the relevant picture to represent this.
3. During the club, if the child shows any change to how they are feeling, refer them back to the chart and talk to them about what has happened which made them feel different and what picture represents this feeling. For instance, if they have had a dispute with another child which has made them angry, support them to link this to the relevant picture.
4. From time to time, encourage the child to 'check in' with you with how they are feeling. This will encourage them to come to you when they need support to manage how they are feeling.

Example of a 'How do You Feel Today?' Board

How Do You Feel Today?		
 Happy	 Sad	 OK
 Angry	 Sleepy	 Anxious

Feelings Scales

Feeling Scales are used to support a child to recognise their own anxiety levels as they begin to increase, and a means of being able to communicate these to you. Anxiety can be triggered by lots of different situations. Feeling Scales can help children recognise what situations make them feel more worried or anxious than others. They consist of a scale from calm to angry and the child identifies with the adult where

they are on the scale. The number of stages on the scale will depend on the child's level of development. If the child is still at the stage of learning about basic feelings then you may need to start with just 2 'happy' and 'sad'

How to use a Feelings Scale.

1. Talk about each image representing emotions with the child. It can be helpful to role play them to support their understanding
2. Fill in the right side of the scale together identifying how they look and feel when they are at each level and what you can do to bring them down to the base level again (happy level). Record these ideas on the Positive Behaviour Support Plan
3. Place the scale where you and the child can easily access it.
4. Observe the child and if their behaviour changes, encourage them to show you on the scale where they feel they are. Implement the strategies to bring the child back down to the base level again. Record any new triggers identified on the Behaviour Plan.

5	 Angry	<p>I'm feeling really cross now and I can't control my emotions.</p> <p>I may shout, push you away and throw things. My body is rigid and my face cross.</p>
4	 Anxious	<p>I'm feeling anxious because the problem has not gone away.</p> <p>I'm starting to pace around the room and I have clenched fists. I can't relax</p>
3	 Sad	<p>I'm feeling sad because of something. I will be restless.</p> <p>I won't be joining in and I may not ask for help</p>
2	 OK	<p>I am feeling ok. I will be relaxed but won't be smiling.</p> <p>I will be doing an activity or relaxing but I may not be enjoying it much</p>
1	 Happy	<p>I am feeling happy. I will have a smile or my face is relaxed.</p> <p>I will be enjoying an activity or relaxing</p>

Template 'How do you Feel Today' Boards to print, cut out and laminate

How Do You Feel Today?	

How Do You Feel Today?

How Do You Feel Today?

A Feelings Scale Template to print, personalise and laminate

5	 Angry	
4	 Anxious	
3	 Sad	
2	 OK	
1	 Happy	