



September 2021

Feelings – the compass of children’s soul

All children want to feel good, that's innate. To do this, they need love, community and security, for example. This is called “having needs”. Feelings show us whether our needs are being met. Children want to feel seen in it. They want us to support them so that they feel well. This is their right.

Tip: *Show that you take your child's feelings seriously.*

- *Give your child loving attention.*
- *Emphasise in your voice, facial expression, and posture that you can sense your child's feelings. That is good for him or her. For the first few months, you can lean forward a little so your child can see you better.*
- *Pay attention to your child's needs. Try to find out and give him or her what he or she needs.*
- *Help the child dealing with stress and be happy when he or she is happy.*

When we perceive our feelings, we learn about ourselves. What do I need? What hurts me? These are important experiences for children. Sometimes it is difficult to let in negative feelings because these hurt us. But feelings want to be felt. It is therefore important that children know that all feelings are welcome.

Tip: *You are a role model for your children:*

Children decide at an early age whether and how to show their feelings and try out what they can do to make them or their parents feel good. Ask yourself: “Which feelings do I allow myself, and which not so much? How can I deal with it in such a way that my child and I are fine with it?”



It is important that children have the opportunity to have many different experiences in contact with other children. That is why a visit to a day nursery or day-care centre is so valuable. The more experience they have, the better they can make decisions. Depending on where and how we grow up, we learn differently to express our feelings. Since some feelings are shown similarly in many cultures around the world, children can often understand each other well even without speaking a common language.

Misunderstandings and unpleasant experiences are just as much a part of life as pleasant ones. An argument gives children the opportunity to negotiate rules together. They learn that conflicts can be resolved and negative feelings go away. When we understand our own feelings, we develop trust in ourselves and compassion for other people. It is important that your own family and the day nursery or day-care centre are places with a good mood.

Tip: *Create beautiful experiences for your child, for example with regular rituals:*

- *Sing songs (for example, while diapering) or play with your fingers.*
- *Take regular trips together, to the playground or into the nature. Leave digital devices (e.g. your cell phone) at home during this time.*
- *Invite friends or visit someone together.*
- *Read children's books with your child. Every good story is an experience.*
- *When you are stressed, take a deep breath together, or lie down together on a towel that you call an "island of calm". Tell yourself what you can see.*
- *Make up your own rituals. Which ones do you already have?*

Dealing with feelings has to be learned. Children try a lot. It happens that they do something that is not good for them or others. Try to interpret your child's behaviour. What feeling / what need is behind it? Give him or her words for that. When the child speaks, give him or her time. Also state what you suspect behind the behaviour of other children. You can help your child make better decisions: "Was that a good decision?" "What would you like to do now?" This is how you help the child to become active themselves and to adapt their actions.



Tip: Give your child many opportunities to show his or her feelings in everyday life, such as:

- Creative offers such as dance, games, songs, movement, painting materials.
- At dinner we tell: what was beautiful today and what was exhausting?
- Give your child physical contact when he or she needs it to calm down.
- Enable games and group experiences, for example in the day nursery, day-care centre or with friends in holiday offers.
- Make picture cards that can be used to show feelings.
- Read children's books that show feelings, such as: "Heute bin ich" by Mies Van Hout. Such books can be borrowed free of charge from the city library.
- Make a rage box: it can be made from an old shoebox with a hole in it. Everyone can shout into here. There are also inflatable balloons in it, which you can then crush or crayons and paper and a kitchen towel that can be swirled around. The box is emptied and refilled regularly.

We cannot avoid our children getting into situations in their lives that are overwhelming to them. This can happen to parents too. The following "sources of strength" can help us to cope better with difficult experiences:

- "I feel good in my family."
- "I have regular breaks, free time, relaxation."
- "I have friends, social support."
- "I am in nature and move."
- "I work without digital media (without cell phone, computer or television)."

Tip: You have a right to support:

Stress can come, for example, from poverty, divorce, serious illness in the family, frequent quarrels or a certain experience. If this is a problem for you or your children, you can get help. For example, you can talk openly with educators about your worries or request an appointment with the early help department. Every family has the right to professional support.