



7 Extremely Helpful Ways to Talk About Feelings

1

PRACTICE

Practice does not make perfect, but it does make things better and easier. Kimochis® is all about making things better over time. So you will want to repeat these activities over and over in order to provide lots of opportunities to practice and incorporate what's being learned. Say the word "practice" frequently as you direct and repeat activities. Explain that everyone needs to practice in order to learn new things and that practice involves putting in effort and trying again and again. Ultimately, practice is habit-forming.

2

HABIT

The Kimochis® Way speaks of developing *habits* rather than *skills*. The word "skill" can give the impression that someone either has an ability or does not have that ability. It can also make one think that there is a right and a wrong way to do something. In contrast, consider the word "habit." A habit is often acquired without being directly taught. People can develop not-so-good habits, but with teaching, repetition, practice, positive feedback, coaching, and gentle reminders, people can also learn and form new, positive habits. Using the word "habit" in relation to developing positive communication tools can help kids feel more hopeful that they can learn and improve. It can also encourage children to be more open to redoing or trying again when they forget to use positive communication habits.

3

TOOLS

Talk with the children you're working with about how tools help people. For example, hammers help us build. Pencils help us draw and write. Likewise, communication tools help us make and keep friends, resolve conflict, and do our best in school, at home, and in life. Using the word "tools" during your sessions makes communication sound and feel more tangible and lets children know there are positive actions they can take to express feelings.

4

SIZE

From the very beginning of any conversation about feelings, you can help children make the connection between mind and body by asking them to use their body to show how large their feelings feel. Ask kids to use their arms and hands, feet and legs, to respond to, for example, "Are you a little mad, medium-sized mad, or really, really big mad?" Conversely, you might ask, "Are you feeling a little optimistic, medium-sized optimistic, or really, really big optimistic?" The Kimochis® activities will focus on this directly in order to help children understand that feelings can be felt in different intensities, can come and go, and can be made more manageable by learning things to say and do to help them feel better. It's important to convey that feelings can be made smaller and bigger depending on whether we want to feel more or less of them.



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STORY

Most people start a conversation with the standard “wh” questions: *What? When? Where? Why? How?* Typically, these questions result in simple answers. For instance, when you ask someone, “*How are you?*” most people will reply with “*Fine.*” Instead, try asking for a *story* as a way to encourage a fuller, richer response. Ask children to tell you a story about their feeling, thought, and/or experience. Everyone likes a story, and using the word “story” can also help a child feel less interrogated or put on the spot.

Children can also be taught to tell themselves stories about what they are dealing with, incorporating feeling words, concepts, and tools they’re learning into their stories to help them get through a tough experience. This fosters self-talk and helps build resiliency; furthermore, it promotes self-help and self-care that lead to self-confidence.

6

MISTAKES

Everyone makes mistakes, and that’s okay! This is what you want to communicate to the children you work with as they strive to learn about their feelings and how to express them. People may yell or say unkind words in the heat of the moment. The Kimochis® Way understands this and believes that everyone deserves a **redo**—the chance to stop and start again if they make a communication mistake. It’s not about changing what is felt but about making another effort to communicate feelings more effectively.

7

HARD-TO-HAVE FEELINGS

Feelings can be put into two basic categories: feelings we like to have and feelings we do not like to have. Explain to children that *all* feelings are important and necessary. All feelings help us to learn and to grow, even the ones that make us feel bad and aren’t easy to live with. Feelings are very powerful and can affect how we think and act, and they can make our bodies not feel good on the inside. We label this category of upset feelings “hard-to-have feelings.” Talking about these feelings in this way helps children get some distance from tough emotions. This then allows them to develop ways to deal with these feelings and use communication tools to make things better for both themselves and others.