



Social-Emotional Learning Activities for Kids

The Iowa Alliance for Healthy Kids, in partnership with Sesame Street in Communities, offers these lessons and take-home items to support young kids in building social-emotional skills.

Activities are designed to help kids with these kinds of skills: naming different feelings, identifying who and what brings them comfort when they are upset, and finding ways to work through big emotions. Each lesson contains 2-3 activities to do as a group and at least one item for children to take home to their families that supports the in-class lesson. In addition to all the handouts you need for each lesson, you will also need crayons and scissors for kids to use.

Lesson 1: Exploring Emotions

Feelings come in all shapes and sizes. When you help children express and understand their emotions, you're helping them overcome challenges, understand others, and communicate. The following lesson will help give kids some tools to recognize and handle their feelings.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES:

Feeling Faces:

1. Hand out the “Feeling Faces” sheet to each child and a set of crayons.
2. Talk about each of the emotions on the sheet. Try these activities to engage kids:
 - a. Ask children to act out each of the emotions.
 - b. Ask one child to pick an emotion on the page and, without telling the group, act out that emotion. Ask the group to guess which emotion the child is acting out.
 - c. Turn on music and hold up a feeling. Have children move in a way that expresses that feeling. Try another one.
3. Give children the chance to color the page. On the back, ask them to draw a picture or write their own memory to go along with one of the feelings.

Talking About Feelings:

1. Give each child the “Talking About Feelings” handout and let them color the page.
2. As they color, ask them to think about some grown-ups they can talk to about their feelings.



3. Discuss as a class who they go to or what they do to express how they are feeling. Brainstorm other people they can go to or things they can do when they are having big feelings.

TAKE HOME ITEMS. Send home with each kid the following items:

- A Feelings Tic-Tac-Toe handout
- Kids and Feelings: 5 Things to Know rack card

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES. For additional activities you can do with kids and families, visit sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/emotions/

- Play the “Feeling Faces” game to help kids learn words describing feelings and express their own emotions.
- Play the “Exploring Big Feelings” or “Feelings Have Names” videos featuring Sesame Street characters.
- Read “Grouchy Party” and talk about Oscar’s feelings.

Lesson 2: Finding Comfort

Kids can go through difficult, and sometimes traumatic, experiences, but adults hold the power to help lessen the effects. Feeling seen and heard by a caring adult and being patiently taught coping strategies and resilience-building techniques are just some ways of helping kids through these times. Big Bird is the perfect bird to teach kids how to imagine the important coping strategy of creating their own safe place inside.

IN CLASS ACTIVITIES:

Comfy-Cozy Nest Book

1. Read the Comfy-Cozy Nest Storybook aloud to the whole group. You can find the book online at sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/traumatic-experiences/?activity=comfy-cozy-nest. If you are in the central Iowa area, order the book at www.iowaallianceforhealthykids.org/resources
2. Use the “My Safe Place” handout to walk kids through the exercise of imagining their own safe place. Read the instructions aloud slowly as kids go through the exercise together.

Big Bird’s Nest

1. Pass out “Big Bird’s Nest” handout to each child with a set of crayons.

2. Let kids color the sheet.
3. During or after the coloring time, talk with the group about:
 - a. Where do you feel safe?
 - b. Would you like to have your very own nest? Why or why not?
 - c. If you had a nest, what would you do there? What would you want in your nest?

TAKE HOME ITEM. Send a copy of the Comfy-Cozy Nest book home with each child if you can order the books through the Iowa Alliance for Healthy Kids. If you cannot order books, share another printout activity at the link below.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES. For additional activities you can do with kids and families, visit sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/traumatic-experiences

- Watch the Comfy-Cozy Nest video or play the interactive Comfy-Cozy Nest game
- Watch the videos “It’s Not Easy Being Green” or “The World Sings to You.”

Lesson 3: Problem Solving

All children feel big emotions sometimes: anger, frustration, impatience, sadness. And that’s okay. It’s what they do with these feelings that counts. Grown-ups know how hard it is when big feelings cause big meltdowns, but you can help kids identify and name their feelings and learn to act in a positive way. When you show kids how to manage big feelings and stay calm, you’re showing that there are other ways to deal with overwhelming emotions.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Breathe. Think. Do!

1. Pass out the “Breathe, Think, Do” handout to each child with crayons and scissors. Let them color and cut out each of the three cards.
2. When finished, bring the class together for a discussion.
 - a. Share an example of a problem kids might face, such as another child playing with the same toy they want to play with.
 - b. Hold up each card and explain: “When you have a problem, first stop and breathe. Put your hands on your belly and take three slow, deep breaths—in through your nose and out through your mouth. Then think about a plan to solve your problem.”
 - c. Ask kids to share some ideas about what they could do to solve the problem you explained.

- d. Then say, “Now do it! Try out your plan.” Kids can act out their idea.
- e. Let kids know that even if their first plan doesn’t work, they can always try again with a new plan.

When I Have Big Feelings

1. Ask kids to talk about what happens when they feel different big emotions, such as anger, frustration, sadness, or jealousy.
2. Next, ask them what they do to calm down or feel better when they have those emotions.
3. Pass out the “When I Have Big Feelings” handout. Explain that this exercise works not just with siblings but also with other kids they are playing with or any time they are experiencing a big feeling.
4. Talk about and/or act out each item on the list. As you go through the list, ask kids to put an x next to the things they have tried or circle the things they might want to try.

TAKE HOME ITEM. Send home the handout for parents “Frustration... and Persistence.”

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES. For additional activities you can do with kids and families, visit sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/tantrums

- Read the “Breathe, Buddy, Breathe!” storybook.
- Play the interactive game “Breathe, Think, Do.”

Find more resources at www.ssic.org or www.iowaallianceforhealthykids.org.

