

Feelings Relay - Levels A - B

STAY ACTIVE

To support early emotional awareness, body-emotion connection, and social participation by engaging students in a simple, movement-based activity that links feelings to actions in a safe and supportive environment whilst also testing working memory.



Learning Intentions

Students are working towards:

Recognising and responding to basic emotions

Exploring how feelings can be shown through simple body movements

Participating alongside peers in a shared, supportive activity



Success Criteria

Students demonstrate success when they:

Respond to an emotion cue with a movement or action, with support

Participate in the activity by moving, gesturing, or observing

Attend to peers during the activity in their own way



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Duration: 5 - 8 minutes

Objective

To support early emotional awareness, body–emotion connection, and social participation by engaging students in a simple, movement-based activity that links feelings to actions in a safe and supportive environment whilst also testing working memory.

Players

Whole class, small group, or 1:1 with an adult
(Group size adjusted to support regulation and safety)

Materials

- Emotion cards (happy, sad, excited, angry) (found in PDF resource)
- Open, accessible space

Setup

1. Print and cut out the emotion cards ready to play.
2. Create a clear space for students to stand or sit that is in front of the teacher
3. Have the students in a semicircle formation in front of the teacher.
4. Introduce the four emotions (reduce complexity if needed by introducing only 2).
5. Clearly model each emotion and its movement (see step 2 below)

Gameplay / Activity Steps

Step 1: Choose or Show an Emotion

- The teacher draws out one of the emotion cards and shows the emotion to the students.
- The adult names the feeling clearly, for example, “Happy” and completes the relevant movement in step 2.

Step 2: Match Emotion to Movement

- Students are supported to respond with a simple action as they aim to copy/mimic the movement and facial gestures demonstrated by the teacher.
- Examples include:
 - Happy: arms up, clapping above head, smiling
 - Sad: head down, gentle body sway with a frown
 - Excited: small jumps on the spot, fast little claps in front of the body
 - Angry: strong steps/stomping on the spot, index finger pointing angrily

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Step 3: Repeat process

Repeat the process until all four emotion cards have been demonstrated as a practice run.

Step 4: Memory recall and gameplay

The teacher now says to the students, "I will hold up an emotion card and you need to try and remember the movement for it."

The teacher holds up one of the emotion cards and pauses to see if the students can remember the relevant action/movement. This is a test of their working memory. Adults can assist and prompt as required throughout the game play. Celebrate every effort to move when a card is held up.

Step 5: Pause and Repeat

Play the game for as long as your students are engaged and regulated. Hopefully with repeated action and practice the students can begin to remember at least one of the actions that links to the emotions.

Reflection

Using visuals, gestures, or AAC, prompt gently:

- "How did your body move?"
- "Show me your happy movement!"
- "Did we watch our friends play?"

Reflection may be adult-narrated where appropriate.

Sensory-Specific Learner Variations

For sensory-seeking learners:

- Allow bigger movements or faster actions
- Add deep-pressure movements like pushing hands together
- Increase repetitions of preferred emotion movements

For sensory-sensitive learners:

- Allow students to remain seated or act in place
- Reduce noise and cheering
- Use fewer emotions
- Offer observation as a valid form of participation



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AAC and Communication Supports

- Provide AAC buttons such as "happy," "sad," "excited," "angry," "again," "finished"
- Use emotion visuals or choice boards with two options
- Accept all communication modes including eye gaze, pointing, switches, or vocalisation
- Adults model AAC use consistently throughout the activity

For Wheelchair Users / Accessibility

- Replace travelling movements with upper-body actions
- Use rolling speed or arm movements to represent emotions
- Ensure clear, wide pathways if moving through space
- Display emotion cards at eye level

Notes for Inclusion

- Participation may include moving, gesturing, observing, or choosing
- Adults scaffold emotional language and movement
- Emotional expression is flexible and individual
- Celebrate effort, creativity, and engagement equally
- Keep routines predictable, calm, and emotionally safe



EMOTIONS CARDS

PRINT AND CUT OUT THE EMOTION CARDS. STUDENTS TAKE TURNS PICKING A CARD AND SHOWING THE MATCHING MOVEMENT OR FACIAL EXPRESSION. ADULTS MODEL AND NAME THE EMOTION WHILE LINKING IT TO HOW SOMEONE MIGHT FEEL. CELEBRATE EACH ATTEMPT BEFORE MOVING ON TO THE NEXT CARD.

