

Suit Stories (Levels A-B)

GRATITUDE

To help students recognise and express basic emotions safely and to build empathy by showing connection when others share similar feelings.



Learning Intentions

Recognise Simple Emotions:

Students will explore four basic emotions linked to card suits.

Express Feelings in Their Own Way:

Students will show or choose a feeling using pictures, gestures, facial expressions, movement, or AAC.

Practise Early Empathy:

Students will notice when others feel the same and respond with a simple gesture (thumbs up, smile, wave).



Success Criteria

Students match the card suit to the correct feeling using visuals or AAC.

Students show a moment when they felt that emotion (gesture, picture, vocalisation).

Students respond to peers with a signal such as thumbs up, pointing to “same,” or smiling.



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Duration: 10 minutes

Objective

To help students recognise and express basic emotions safely and to build empathy by showing connection when others share similar feelings.

Players

Whole class, small groups, or pairs

Materials

A standard deck of playing cards

Emotion visual cards for: Love, Anger, Tired and Excited (found in PDF resource)

AAC words to include: *love, happy, excited, tired, nervous, same, me too, my turn*

Setup

Print and cut out a set of Emotion visual cards.

Students sit or stand in a circle formation.

Place the deck of cards in the centre, shuffled, face down.

Teacher introduces the emotions with matching visuals based on the suit of the playing cards:

Hearts → LOVE

Clubs → ANGER

Diamonds → EXCITED

Spades → TIRED

Teacher models by flipping over the first card on top of the deck.

"When I see **hearts**, I feel LOVE." (big hug gesture)

Gameplay / Activity Steps

Step 1: Draw a Card

A student picks a card by:

- flipping to the top card of the deck over
- pointing to the deck and a teacher flips the top card over
- choosing from held-up cards the teacher is holding (limited choice)
- using eye gaze towards the cards the teacher is holding

The teacher shows the matching emotion visual card for that suit.

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Step 2: Match the Feeling

The student matches the suit to the emotion by:

- pointing to the relevant emotion visual card
- pressing AAC ("love," "excited," etc.)
- nodding when teacher names the feeling
- showing a facial expression

Adults may model and support as needed.

Step 3: Show the Feeling

Instead of sharing a story with words, students show the emotion through:

- body language (hug for love, wiggle for excited)
- acting out the emotion
- AAC ("I feel happy," "I feel tired")
- a sound/vocalising (happy squeal, soft sigh)

Any expression counts.

Step 4: Class Connection

Peers respond with:

- thumbs up
- clapping
- mimicking/copying the emotion being acted out
- AAC "me too"

Teacher reinforces empathy:

"We feel like our friends sometimes!"

Step 5: Continue and repeat the process

Another student takes a turn.

Play until several students have had a chance to express a feeling.

Reflection Prompts (Visual-Supported)

Hold up emotion cards and ask:

- "Which one did YOU feel today?"
- "Show me LOVE!"
- "Show me EXCITED!"
- "How do we help a friend who feels tired/nervous?"

Students may respond with gestures, visuals, or AAC.



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Sensory-Seeking Learners Variation

1. Add Movement to Each Emotion

Pair each feeling with a sensory-friendly action:

- LOVE = gentle self-hug
- ANGER = shake hands lightly
- EXCITED = wiggle or bounce
- TIRED = slow stretch or head rest

2. Tactile Emotion Cards

Use textured cards:

- soft felt heart = love
- bumpy club = anger
- shiny diamond = excited
- smooth spade = tired

Students touch and choose.

3. Expressive Props

Provide props for expression:

- heart pillow
- star wand
- calming scarf
- squeeze ball

4. Safe Movement Circle

Students show emotions in place or with small movements to ensure accessibility and emotional regulation.

AAC-Specific Supports

1. Vocabulary to Prepare

love, excited, tired, nervous, same, me too, I feel..., happy, help, friend

2. Aided Language Input

Teacher models while speaking:

"You feel EXCITED."

"I feel TIRED."

"Friend feels LOVE."

"ME TOO."

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3. Choice-Making

Teacher presents two visuals:

"Love or Excited?"

Student chooses using AAC, pointing, or eye gaze.

4. Expression Support

If students cannot act out emotions, they may press:

- "happy"
- "tired"
- "love"
- "excited"

Teacher expands:

"You said EXCITED, yes! That is your feeling."

5. Empathy Response

Students use AAC to show connection:

- "same"
- "friend"
- "me too"
- "I feel that"

Notes for Inclusion

Provide multiple ways to respond: gestures, drawings, pictures, AAC, or acting.

Use large visuals for easy recognition.

Allow students to pass or only act out if words feel too demanding.

Ensure the circle has space for wheelchairs and for assisted movement.

Model respectful listening and celebrate all efforts warmly.



EMOTION VISUAL CARDS

PRINT AND CUT OUT THE CARDS. A STUDENT DRAWS A CARD, AND THE TEACHER SHOWS THE MATCHING EMOTION CARD FOR THAT SUIT. THE STUDENT SHOWS THE FEELING BY ACTING IT OUT. PEERS RESPOND WITH A "ME TOO" TO SHOW CONNECTION AND EMPATHY.

