

The Power of a Smile (Levels A-B)

WRITTEN

To help students build emotional awareness and positive social interaction by exploring how smiles (and other simple gestures) can show kindness, connect people, and create warm feelings.



Learning Intentions

Recognise Smiles:



Students will begin noticing smiles as a form of non-verbal communication that shows kindness.

Practise Smiling at Others:

Students will explore sharing a smile, wave, or happy gesture with a partner or group member.

Feel the Positivity:

Students will recognise that smiling can help them feel happy, calm, or connected.



Success Criteria

Students attempt to share a smile or happy gesture with a peer or adult.



Students choose or point to how smiling makes them feel (happy, calm, excited).

Students participate in the activity through looking, smiling, vocalising, gesturing, or using AAC.



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Duration: 10 - 15 minutes

Objective

To help students build emotional awareness and positive social interaction by exploring how smiles (and other simple gestures) can show kindness, connect people, and create warm feelings.

What You Need

Paper or notebooks

Coloured pencils

Visuals of smiling faces (Emoji's or AAC images are ok) (Emoji smiles are found in the PDF resource)

AAC devices with symbols such as: "happy," "smile," "friend," "yes/no," "I feel..."

Setup

1. Print and cut out Emoji Smiling faces
2. Show students photos or visuals of smiling faces.
3. Teacher models (copies) one of the smiles and says:
"A smile means kindness. A smile can help someone feel happy!"
4. Create a calm, welcoming space for drawing and sharing.

Gameplay / Activity Steps

Step 1: Notice a Smile

Teacher holds up two visual smiling faces cards:

- smiling face
- neutral or sad face

Ask:

"Which face is smiling?"

Students respond by:

- pointing to the relevant card
- eye gaze towards the relevant card
- pressing AAC "smile" or "happy"
- smiling back

Celebrate all responses.



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Step 2: Share Your Smile

The teacher holds up a emoji smile cards and models the smile shown. The students then aim to copy or mimic the same type of smile. Try to encourage the students to mimic the finer details, the eyes closed or the teeth not showing etc.

If smiling is difficult, they may:

- wave
- give a thumbs up
- nod
- show “happy” on AAC
- make a happy sound
- lift eyebrows or move hands

..... Rotate through a few different smiles and enjoy the laughter that will entail.

Step 3: Draw or Choose a Smile Moment (optional)

Students choose ONE happy smiling face card and attempt to re-create it on their paper using drawing materials.

Teacher narrates:

“Are you thinking of a smile that makes you happy or makes you laugh?”

Step 4: Smile Challenge (Simplified)

The teacher sets a challenge for the students:

“Let’s smile at THREE people today!”

Each student can smile, wave, or show an AAC “happy” to:

- a peer
- a teacher
- a support worker

Optional: put smile stickers next to names on a class chart as each smile is shared.

Step 5: Create a Smile Wall (Optional)

Students add their smile drawings or picture cards to a wall or board.

Adults ensure the wall is accessible from seated height.



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Reflection Prompts

Use emotion visuals and simple questions:

- "How does smiling make YOU feel?" (happy, calm, excited)
 - "Show me your happy face!"
 - "Who do you want to smile at today?"
 - "Do you feel good when someone smiles at you?" (yes/no)
- Any communication, gestures, looks, AAC is recognised as success.

Sensory-Seeking Learners Variation

1. Add Movement to the Smile

For students needing movement or sensory input:

- smile + big stretch
- smile + clap
- smile + gentle stomp
- smile + wiggle
- smile + spin arms

2. Use Tactile Smile Cards

Provide sensory smile faces:

- soft felt smile
- bumpy textured smile
- shiny foil smile

Students choose the one they like best.

3. Mirror Play

Students watch themselves in a mirror making:

- happy face
- surprised face
- calm face

Encourages regulation and engagement.

4. Puppet Smiling

Use puppets to model sharing smiles.

Students may smile at the puppet or have the puppet smile at them.



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AAC-Specific Supports

1. Prepare Vocabulary

Include:

- smile
- happy
- friend
- good
- yes/no
- I feel...
- more
- finished

2. Aided Language Input

Teacher models:

“I smile.”

“You smile.”

“Happy.”

“That made you feel good.”

“You smiled at friend.”

3. AAC Choice-Making

Offer 2 choices:

“Family smile or friend smile?”

Students select via AAC, pointing, or eye gaze.

4. AAC During Partner Smiling

Students may press:

- “smile”
- “hi”
- “happy”
- “friend”

This counts as participating in the smile exchange.

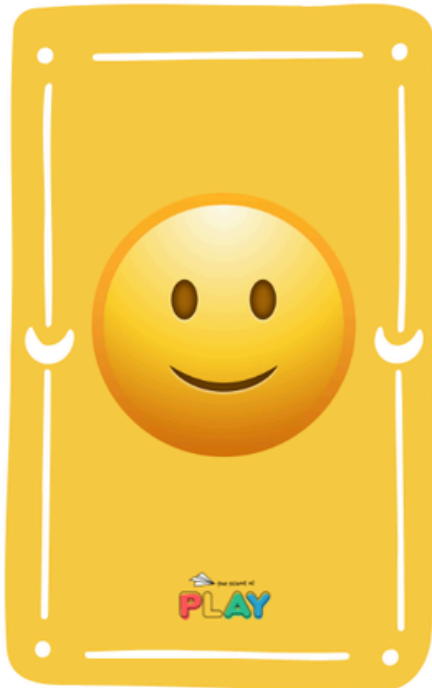
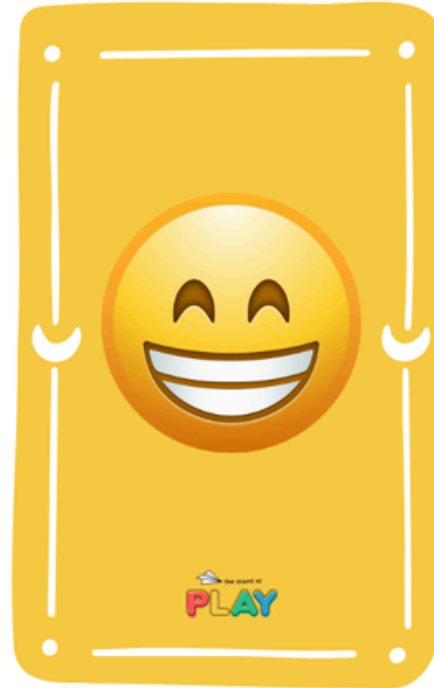
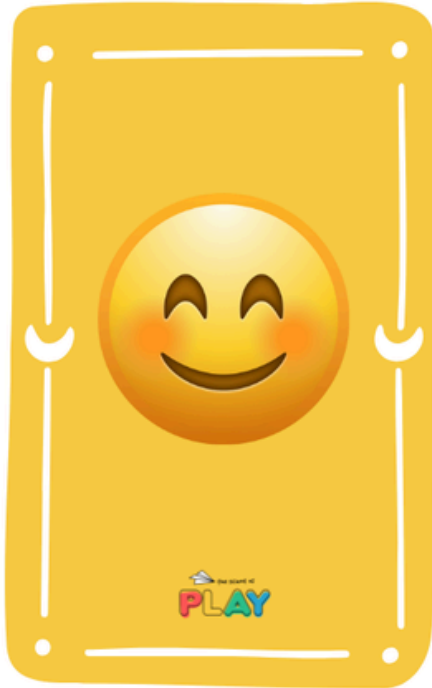
5. AAC Reflection

Students respond using:

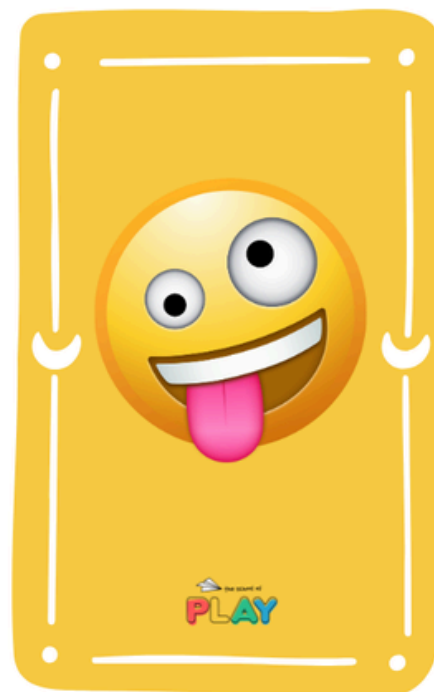
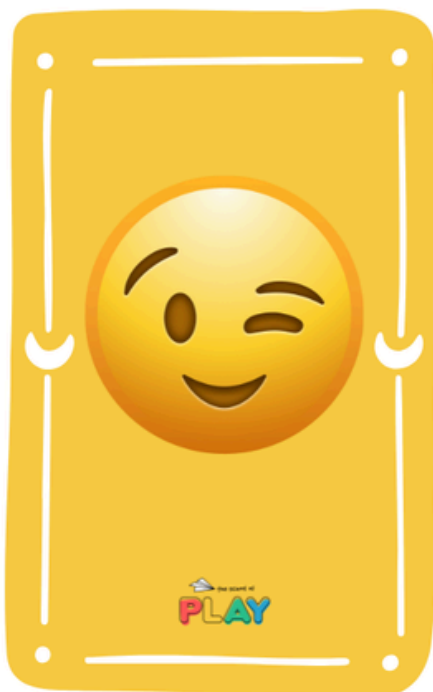
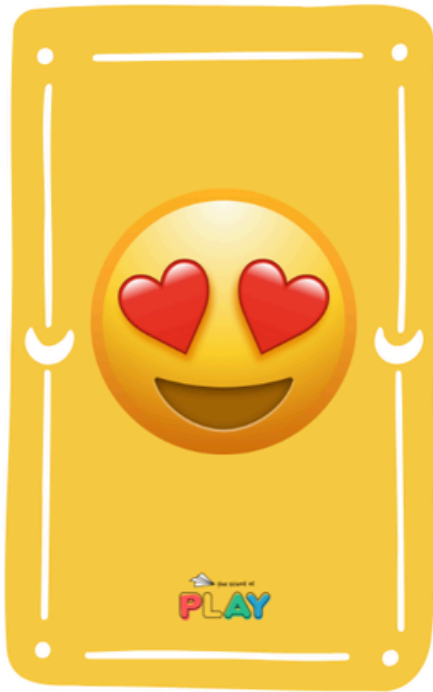
- “happy”
- “good”
- “more”
- “finished”

SMILING EMOJI CARDS

PRINT AND CUT OUT THE CARDS. A STUDENT PICKS A CARD, IDENTIFIES WHETHER IT'S SMILING OR NOT, AND COPIES THE EXPRESSION. ROTATE THROUGH MULTIPLE EMOJI SMILES AND ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO SHARE THAT SMILE WITH A PARTNER OR ADULT. CELEBRATE EVERY ATTEMPT.



SMILING EMOJI CARDS



EMOJI CARDS

