

Most people are pretty good at naming the basic emotions: *happy, sad, angry, and scared*. But our emotions are much more complex than that!

Thinking About Feelings

Thinking About Feelings gives you a chance to think and talk about many different feelings. It's fun to find the perfect feeling word!

Activities to help people describe how they REALLY feel

Recommended Age Range: Ages 7 and up

Treatment modality: Individual, family, group

Goals: With this activity, players

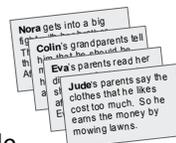
- Recognize the connection between situations and consequent emotions.
- Identify (and discriminate between) a wide variety of emotions.
- Develop insight and empathy by discussing situations faced by children, adolescents and adults.
- Learn that some situations may give rise to “mixed emotions” of varying intensity.
- Create an opportunity for discussion about the connection between events, thoughts, and emotions, providing a foundation for cognitive-behavioral therapy. (See suggestions on next page)

Materials needed:

Feelings Word Finder chart. The chart has words that can be used to describe feelings. The words are grouped into four categories: The **Yellow** section has words that describe pleasurable feelings about a situation; the **Blue** section has words associated with sadness or regret; the **Red** section has words that express dissatisfaction with a situation; the **Green** section has words associated with feelings of uncertainty.



Here's What Happened cards. Each card presents a person confronting a situation that might evoke a mixture of emotions. The persons presented include adults, teens, and children. This mixture allows players to put themselves in the place of other people, which helps players understand multiple viewpoints and aids in the development of empathy. The cards tell only “what happened” (observable behavior) and not thoughts or emotions; it is up to each player to decide what thoughts and emotions the person might experience.



Paper clips. Paper clips are used to mark various feeling words on the Word Finder chart. You can use plain paper clips or yellow, blue, red and green clips can be matched to the four sections of the Word Finder.



HOW TO PLAY:

Place the **Here's What Happened** cards and the **paper clips** near the **Word Finder**. (If you use colored paper clips, sort them by color.)

When it is your turn, choose the top card and read it aloud. Imagine how the person described in the situation might feel. Next, using both the paper clips and the words on the board, show how you think the person might feel. Place the paper clips over the words you choose. (For color-coding, place yellow clips in the yellow section, blue clips in the blue section, etc.) You can stack extra paper clips on some words to show that those are the strongest feelings. If the word you want to use isn't on the chart, just name the word and then put the paper clip(s) on the *face* in that section.

Before your turn is over, take a second look. This is especially important if all of your paper clips are in one section. Look at other sections of the board to see if there are any other emotions the person might experience in this situation. You can ask the other players if they can think of any emotions the person might have.

The turn passes to the next player.

Important! There are no right or wrong answers. Another person might have very different ideas from yours. That's OK. The purpose of this activity is to get players thinking and talking about feelings. Discussion among players is encouraged!

Add variety and depth to this activity with the variations on the next page:

1. **What If?**
2. **Lights, Camera, Action!**
3. **Home Assignments**

Expand this activity:

After using the introductory activity on the reverse side, expand the learning with these additional activities:

1. What If?

After the player completes his/her turn as described on the previous page, ask some "What If?" questions. These are questions that will encourage the players to think more flexibly about what happened. For example, suppose the card chosen is:

Keli had a bad day at school. When she gets home her mom is very busy taking care of the baby, talking on the phone and fixing dinner.

and the player indicates that Keli feels:

sad, annoyed, stressed, left-out, jealous

Example of "What if?" questions

A. What if the person changes what they are thinking?

"What do you think Keli was thinking to herself when this happened?"

(Together with the player, "brainstorm" for multiple possible thoughts behind the feelings. Take turns and try to elicit a number of thoughts from the player. Ask questions such as, "Keli is feeling **stressed**; I wonder what it is that is making her feel stressed?")

Maybe Keli is thinking

I hate school.

The baby gets all of the attention around here.

If I ask my mom to play with me, she'll probably say No.

I have so much homework to do and I'll never get it done.

Next, ask: "**What if** the Keli thinks about the situation in another way--then how would Keli feel?" Brainstorm for different ways to think about the situation, for example:

I'm glad school is over for today. Maybe tomorrow will be better.

Mom is busy now, but she always reads with me at bedtime.

As the player generates alternative thoughts, have the player also arrange the paper clips on the chart to reflect any consequent change in feelings.

B. What if the person changes what is happening?

"Let's make a change in what is happening. What if Keli decides to ask her mom if she can help take care of the baby or help make dinner? Then what might Keli be thinking/feeling?" Arrange the paper clips on the chart to reflect any consequent change in feelings.

2. Lights, Camera, Action!

Use puppets, stuffed animals or sand-tray miniatures to role-play the situations presented on the cards. (Make it more fun by using a director's clapboard, available from online party supply companies, and perhaps making a video recording of the play.) Using the information generated in the previous "What If?" activity, play out several "takes:"



Take 1: Keli thinks to herself: *The baby gets all the attention around here.* With the player, decide how Keli would then feel, and "act out" what she might say and do, how others might react to her actions, etc.

Take 2: Kelli thinks to herself: *Mom is busy now, but she always reads to me at bedtime.* With the player, decide how Keli would then feel, and "act out" what she might say and do, how others might react, etc.

Take 3: Change the situation: *Let's pretend Keli decides to ask her mom if she can help take care of the baby for fix dinner.* With the player, decide how Keli would then feel, and "act out" what she might say and do, how others might react, etc.

Note: Players may need some help in differentiating thoughts from feelings. If the child offers a feeling rather than a thought, you might say "That's how the person might feel, but what would the person be saying inside their head that would make them feel that way?" You may need to give examples of possible thoughts and then brainstorm with the child for more thoughts. It is worthwhile spending time on this as it may help to elicit "hidden thoughts" that can influence emotions and behavior.

3. Create Home Assignments

Assignment 1: Be a Feelings Detective

Make a copy of the **Feelings Word Finder** (the black and white version copies best) and give it to the child (and perhaps other family members) to take home. During the week, have them circle feelings that they observe in themselves and others and, on the back of the page, write down the situation that gave rise to each feeling. When the Word Finder is returned, discuss the situations. If desired, create "Here's What Happened" cards based on those situations. (See below)

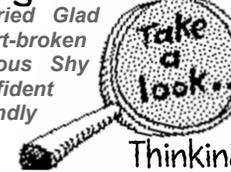


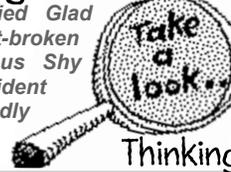
Assignment 2: Make-your-own cards

Copy the blank "Here's What Happened" card template, cut the cards and put in an envelope. After the child has completed some of these activities, Have the child (and perhaps family) create cards to use with the Thinking About Feelings activity. (Instruct them beforehand to include events only, and not include thoughts or feelings.) When they complete the cards, use them for any of the Thinking About Feelings activities.

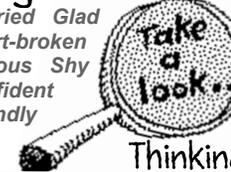
Provide extra motivation for home assignments: Allow children to earn tickets for completing assignments. Tickets can then be exchanged for special activities, treats, or a choice of small prizes from a treasure chest.

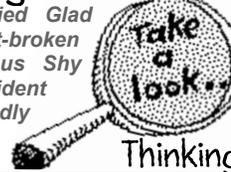
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