



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Words

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing focused on different ways a young child shows he/she is happy.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers briefly act out ways of showing we are happy as part of a book sharing.



Cognitive

Exploring Objects

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers explore holding water in their hands.
- Option 2** (OO) A toddler practices filling a bottle with water by immersing it in a tub of water and pouring water from the bottle.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers gain skills in manipulating a free-flowing material.



Self-Regulation

Focusing and Remembering

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers watch a caregiver stop moving his/her body, relax arms, and lower his/her head when music stops.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers move their bodies to music and then practice stopping moving, relaxing arms, and lowering their heads when the music stops.



Social-Emotional

Exploring Feelings

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler explores pictures of babies' facial expressions that show different feelings.
- Option 2** (OO) A toddler is invited to make facial expressions that communicate several specific emotions.



Physical/Health

Using Our Hands

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler practices manipulating pieces of a puzzle that has knobs.
- Option 2** (OO) A toddler manipulates pieces of a chunky puzzle.

(OO)=One-to-One, (IG)=Informal Gathering



12–24 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

Toddlers participate in a book sharing focused on different ways a young child shows he/she is happy.



Key Concepts

Happy



Materials Needed

If You're Happy and You Know It... by Annie Kubler



Also Promotes

Social-Emotional
Cognitive

BEGIN: *[Invite several toddlers to join you to look at pictures of being happy.]*

Sometimes we have a big smile when we feel happy.
Let's all show a big smile.

[Demonstrate a smile while pointing to your mouth. Encourage toddlers to smile.]

There are different ways to show we feel happy.

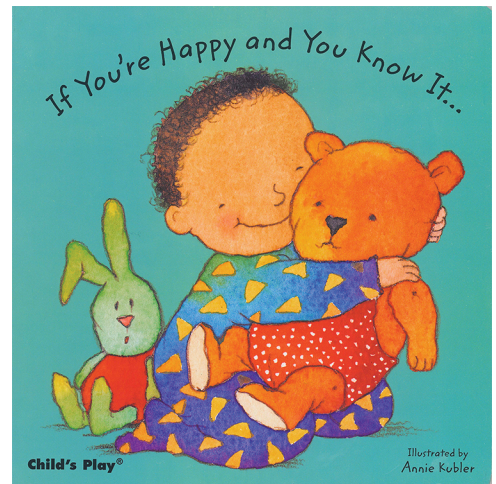
[Show the cover of the book and point to the baby.]

ASK: The baby in this picture is happy. What is the baby doing?

[Pause for toddler responses. Repeat and expand responses.]

Emphasize the baby is smiling and hugging a teddy bear.]

EXPLAIN: We can smile and hug a teddy bear when we are happy. The pictures in our book tell us more things to do when we are happy. Let's look inside our book.



ACT: *[Use the following strategies to describe pictures in the book:*

- *Begin your description of each main page by enthusiastically saying or singing "If you're happy and you know it. . . ." Complete this phrase with the action shown in the picture.*
- *Point to and briefly describe what the pictured baby is doing. Example: "The baby built something with blocks and then pushed it over." Pause for toddlers to look closely at each picture.*
- *Emphasize action words in the text: clap, hide, kick, push, hug, wave. Use the picture to help explain the action. Example: "The baby is covering his/her eyes. The baby is hiding from others. Maybe the baby is playing Peek-a-boo!"*

If time or toddler interest is limited, focus on pictures that you anticipate will be of greater interest to toddlers. You may wish to omit the "hold on tight" page.]

**Option 1 continued**

RECAP: The pictures in our book showed us different things we can do when we are happy. Smiling is one way to show we are happy. There are many more ways to show we are happy!

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

The book featured in this activity plan extends the attention to feelings offered in recent and current Social-Emotional activity plans. Toddlers' familiarity with happy is a useful base for strengthening awareness of new words and phrases. In particular, monitor each toddler's reaction to your descriptions of action words included in the book text and corresponding pictures. Some words or phrases may not be familiar to some toddlers in the contexts in which they are used in the book. Example: The "push the blocks" phrase may be new to a toddler who thinks of the action as "knocking over" a tower of blocks. Look for opportunities to help a toddler learn that the same action can be described in different ways.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Sing or say slowly "If you're happy and you know it" so toddlers can focus on words that may be easily missed when the phrase is sung or said quickly. Toddlers are likely familiar with the tune of this popular song, but may not know some of the words or what the words mean. Example: It may be helpful to say or sing "you are" rather than "you're."

Enrichment ■ Leave out a key word when you sing or say "If you're happy" for toddlers to fill in.

12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Receptive language Expressive language

Toddlers briefly act out ways of showing we are happy as part of a book sharing.



Key Concepts

Happy



Materials Needed

If You're Happy and You Know It... by Annie Kubler

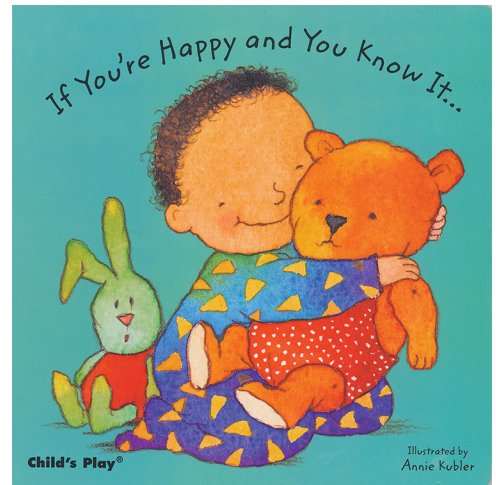


Also Promotes

Cognitive
Physical/Health
Self-Regulation

Share the book with several toddlers using the strategies suggested in Option 1. Emphasize the pictures show some things the baby does when he/she is happy. At the conclusion of the book, return to pictures that seemed to be of particular interest to toddlers. Use the following steps to strengthen awareness of words or phrases:

- Describe again (or invite toddlers to describe) what the baby is doing in the picture.
- Invite toddlers to say with you the key action word for the picture. Examples: clap, hide, kick, shake, push, hug, wave. Then use the word in a sentence that describes the pictured baby's action.
- Encourage toddlers to do the action with you. Example: "The baby in our picture is hiding his/her eyes. Let's all cover our eyes and pretend we are playing *Peek-a-boo!*" For some actions, explain that we can pretend we are playing with something, such as a rattle or blocks. Describe toddlers' actions as they are doing them. Examples: "We are hiding our eyes." "We are pushing pretend blocks."



👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Doing an action associated with a word or phrase is a valuable way to strengthen understanding of the word or phrase. Saying a key word is also beneficial for language development. Some toddlers may prefer to watch and listen rather than talk and act. Remember that watching and listening are useful ways to learn, and positively acknowledge different forms of participation.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Use an actual tower of blocks and rattle or shaker if you anticipate it will be challenging for toddlers to imagine these items when you demonstrate an action.

Enrichment ■ Ask toddlers what they like to do when they feel happy.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: *If You're Happy and You Know It...* by Annie Kubler, *If You're Happy and You Know It (A Barefoot Singalong)* by Anna McQuinn, several shakers or rattles in a basket

Place the books and the basket of shakers/rattles on a blanket on the floor. Invite several toddlers to use the shakers/rattles as they look at pictures in the books. Some toddlers may act out some of the pictures with your guidance, and others may say some words, such as "baby" or "clap." Read or sing some of the pages in the books and join toddlers in moving a shaker or rattle during the song.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: *If You're Happy and You Know It (A Barefoot Singalong)* by Anna McQuinn

Invite all children in your setting to read the book with you and sing this popular song. Invite children to imitate the actions of some of the pictured children. After the book reading, invite each toddler and preschool-age child to do an action of their choice during a verse of the song. Older children may wish to participate too, and perhaps demonstrate some actions. Infants may enjoy being held, and older infants may engage in clapping or reaching up high.



12–24 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Toddlers explore holding water in their hands.



Key Concepts

Cup
Hold



Materials Needed

Sensory table with 1" of warm water
Water smocks—1 per toddler
Small cups or containers—1 per toddler



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language
Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: The activity begins with toddlers using their hands to explore features of water and then shifts to using cups to fill and pour. The cups provide a different way to explore water and can help you constructively guide the activity away from possible splashing.

BEGIN: *[Invite several toddlers to join you at the sensory table to explore water. Invite toddlers to help you roll up their sleeves and secure the closure on water smocks.]*

There is warm water in our tub. Let's move our hands back and forth in the water.

ACT: *[Draw toddlers' attention to what happens to the water when a hand or finger is put in the water.*

Describe toddlers' actions. Examples: "Your hands are moving the water." "Cameron, you are moving your fingers under the water."

Repeat and extend toddlers' vocalizations.]

ASK: Can we hold water in our hands?

[Demonstrate trying to grasp the water without cupping your hand(s).]

EXPLAIN: The water does not stay in our hands. We can make a cup with our hands to hold water. Please look at my hands.

[Demonstrate cupping both of your hands together above the water. Then dip your cupped hands into the water to show how water remains in your hands for a little while.

Invite each toddler to cup his/her hands and hold water in his/her cupped hands.

Demonstrate what happens to water held in our cupped hands when we un-cup our hands. Encourage toddlers to try this.]

ACT: *[Use your cupped hands to transfer water to the cupped hands of each child, one at a time. Point out the cup shape of our hands and how our cupped hands hold water for a moment.*

Give each toddler a small cup to fill with water. Then encourage him/her to pour the water out. Describe toddlers' pouring actions. Emphasize the fill and pour.]

**Option 1 continued**

RECAP: We watched the water move when we put our hands in the water. We held our hands like a little cup to hold water. We used real cups to hold water. We filled our cups with water and then we poured out the water.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Some toddlers may begin to produce actions associated with bath time at home, such as slapping the water or putting water on their head. Respond positively by showing and telling how to use the water. Example: “We are doing something different with water today. We are moving our fingers or hands. Water stays in the tub.” Anticipate toddlers will differ in the length of time they spend with the water tub.

Toddlers often get clothing wet during the activity. Even though changing clothes may take a few extra minutes, the benefit of guided water experiences far outweighs the extra staff effort required to change the clothes. Sensory play sends signals to children’s brains that help strengthen neural pathways important for learning. Water play helps toddlers develop their sense of touch, which creates a foundation for other skills, such as manipulating objects.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ When cups are given to toddlers, demonstrate how to fill the cup with water and then pour it out. ■ Kneel next to a child who needs help with self-control and make positive comments about the toddler’s play. ■ Praise toddlers for keeping the water in the tub.

Enrichment ■ Encourage toddlers to watch for differences in how the water in the tub moves when an entire hand versus a finger, or several fingers, are put in the water. ■ Invite toddlers to watch for differences in how the water in the tub moves when they slowly versus quickly pour water from their cup. ■ You may wish to add several drops of tear-free baby shampoo to the water and encourage toddlers to move their hands in the water to create bubbles.



12–24 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

A toddler practices filling a bottle with water by immersing it in a tub of water and pouring water from the bottle.



Key Concepts

Pour
Fill



Materials Needed

Sensory table with 1" warm water (see Be Prepared)
Waterproof smock
Nonbreakable clear bottle (4–8 oz.)



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language
Self-Regulation

■ **Be Prepared:** A container with a wide opening may be used instead of a sensory table.

Invite one toddler at a time to practice pouring and filling. The toddler will enjoy discovering how bubbles come out of the bottle when held under water. Pouring water back into the sensory table (or into a container with a wide opening) is a good way to begin learning how to control the amount of water poured from a bottle. Encourage the toddler to pour the water slowly, letting a little bit at a time out of the bottle.

What to Look For—Option 2

This activity option builds on the last segment of the Option 1 activity by providing more and focused use of a container for pouring practice. This is both a motor and cognitive task. Use the smallest of stacking cups if a toddler has difficulty holding a bottle. A cup with a handle may work for some toddlers.

It is natural for toddlers to want to splash the water. Use a gentle tone to remind a toddler to keep water in the table. A container with a large opening (suggested as an alternative to a sensory table) may decrease the tendency to splash.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ If a toddler does not show interest in pouring, provide several toys that float in the water and a plastic basket or pail. Encourage the toddler to transfer the toys to a plastic basket.

Enrichment ■ Provide a second clear container for the toddler to fill and pour from.



12–24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Object inquiry skills

Toddlers gain skills in manipulating a free-flowing material.



Key Concepts

Scoop
Pour



Materials Needed

Sensory table with 1" of warm water
Small containers—2 per toddler (see Be Prepared)
Water smocks—1 per toddler



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language
Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: Secure simple containers (about six inches in size) that are easy for toddlers to hold and control. Stacking and nesting cups are a possibility. Securing some clear (see-through) containers can enhance toddlers' awareness of how the water level goes up or down when adding or pouring water.

Invite 2–3 toddlers to join you at the water table. Give each toddler two containers for pouring water back and forth among containers. Include key concepts in your descriptions of toddlers' actions (particularly scooping and pouring), and what happens to their containers (particularly empty and full). Point generously while also enabling toddlers to pursue their interests with the containers and water.

What to Look For—Option 3

Holding and manipulating two containers at the same time may be too challenging for some toddlers. Offer to hold a container while the toddler pours; pouring is the more challenging of these two actions. Watch for chances to comment on, and perhaps guide, the numerous learning opportunities in this activity—including practice in pouring, noticing changes in water volume (especially with clear containers), sharing space and materials with peers, and using familiar and novel words.

If toddlers splash the water, or put water on a peer, offer a gentle reminder. For some toddlers, the experience of touching the water may be more captivating than pouring.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ If you end up with more containers to hold than is logistically feasible, hold one container for two toddlers to fill.

Enrichment ■ Toddlers may want to take turns pouring water into each other's container. ■ Add a small amount of color so toddlers can see the water level change.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: 4 small (about one quart) containers, sensory table with 1" of warm water, small blocks

Place the four small, empty containers in the sensory table with the warm water. Add an assortment of small blocks to the water. Invite toddlers to use their hands to grasp the blocks and transfer them to the containers. Toddlers will see the container filling with blocks and water. Stay close by to facilitate problem-solving. Example: "Your container is full. Your container will not hold one more block. Where can you put the block?" The toddlers may dump the contents of the container or find an empty container to use.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: toys, soapy water, high chair with tray, containers

Preschooler-age children will enjoy the Interest Area activity and the one-on-one opportunities of Option 2. Preschooler-age children also often enjoy washing toys in tubs of soapy water. Infants may enjoy splashing their hands in one tablespoon of water on a high chair tray or other shallow surface. During a rainy day, place containers outdoors to collect water that children can then pour on plants or grass.



12–24 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Executive function

Toddlers watch a caregiver stop moving his/her body, relax arms, and lower his/her head when music stops.



Key Concepts

Stop
Down



Materials Needed

Lively recorded music (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: Select music that is lively but unlikely to be overstimulating. Arrange for another adult to turn on/off the recorded music.

BEGIN: *[Draw attention to the gathering area by playing the lively music and dancing or moving your body in simple ways to the music. After several toddlers have joined the gathering, have the music turned off, stop moving your body, and lower your head.]*

ASK: I had fun dancing to the music. What happened when the music stopped?

[Pause for responses. Repeat and expand responses. Example: "Jayson said 'quit.' I quit dancing when the music stopped."]

EXPLAIN: I put my head down when the music stopped. I relaxed my arms. We are learning how to relax our arms when we calm down after doing something that gets us excited.

Watch me relax my arms and put down my head.

[Demonstrate relaxing your arms, using an approach that is similar to how you encourage toddlers to relax their arms during a calming-down activity. Demonstrate lowering your head. Describe how your chin is touching your chest.]

Then encourage toddlers to relax their arms and lower their heads.]

Putting down our head helps us stop moving and focus on our body.

I am going to dance to the music again. You can help me remember what to do when the music stops!

[Turn on the music and dance or move enthusiastically, but briefly, to the music. Have the music stop but do not lower your head or relax your arms.]

ASK: The music stopped. What do I do?

[Pause for toddlers' responses. Repeat and expand responses. Example: "Emilia said 'arms.' I want to relax my arms."]

Demonstrate and describe relaxing your arms and lowering your head.]

RECAP: You watched me have fun dancing to music. I stopped dancing when the music stopped. I relaxed my arms. I put down my head. You helped me remember what to do when the music stopped!



12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Executive function

Toddlers move their bodies to music and then practice stopping moving, relaxing arms, and lowering their heads when the music stops.



Key Concepts

Listen
Stop
Down



Materials Needed

Lively recorded music (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who participated in Option 1. Arrange for an adult to turn on/off the recorded music.

Invite several toddlers to join you in moving our bodies (dancing) to music. Point to your ears and encourage toddlers to point to their ears. Explain that we listen carefully while we are moving our bodies so we know when the music stops. Demonstrate and describe (or invite toddlers to demonstrate and describe) what we do when the music stops. Emphasize relaxing our arms and putting down our heads. Remind toddlers that putting down our head helps us focus on our body.

Turn on the music and lead toddlers in moving their bodies (dancing) to the music. Have the music stop after a minute or less and lead toddlers in: (1) stopping moving/dancing, (2) relaxing our arms, and (3) putting down our heads. Offer verbal reminders as needed. Hold the relaxed-body position briefly. Repeat if toddlers remain interested. Conclude the session by emphasizing how we listened carefully. Invite toddlers to tell what we did when the music stopped.

👁️ What to Look For—Options 1–2

The activity plan promotes self-regulation skills in ways similar to the *Freeze Game* introduced in Block 9. The current activity is more challenging than the *Freeze Game* because it suggests two separate actions—relaxing our arms and putting down our heads—instead of the one action of holding our bodies still when the music stops. Toddlers will differ in the ease with which they relax their arms and lower their head after the music stops. Some may find it challenging to stop moving. Others may enjoy using a part of calming-down practice (relaxing arms) and lowering their heads. Offer friendly reminders that also maintain a positive approach to the activity.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2

Extra support ■ If you anticipate dancing may be too stimulating, use an alternative action when the music plays, such as clapping hands while sitting and putting our hands in our lap when the music stops in both Options 1 and 2. ■ Instead of lively music, select a slower piece of music that may be used for gently swaying your body or moving your arms from side to side. ■ In Option 2, encourage toddlers to practice relaxing their arms and putting down their head before playing the music.

Enrichment ■ Demonstrate moving your head and looking around instead of lowering your head to help toddlers understand how it is easier to focus on our body when our head is down.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: calm recorded music

Offer an adaptation of the activity using a calmer form of movement, such as moving our arms from side to side while sitting when the music plays. Continue to encourage toddlers to relax their arms and put down their heads when the music stops. This Interest Area activity helps toddlers practice the skills of listening, focusing, and remembering with a different music-accompanied movement and a different style of music. Provide verbal guidance as needed.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: music, music player

Preschool-age children will enjoy participating in Option 2. They may wish to demonstrate the three key actions triggered when music stops: stop moving, relax arms, and put down head. A school-age child may wish to manage the music with your guidance. A long period of doing movements to music is not suggested.



12–24 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Awareness of emotions

A toddler explores pictures of babies' facial expressions that show different feelings.



Key Concepts

Feelings
Happy
Sad
Angry



Materials Needed

Making Faces: A First Book of Emotions by Abrams
Appleseed



Also Promotes

Communication/Language

BEGIN: [*Invite a toddler to join you in looking at pictures of babies' faces.*]

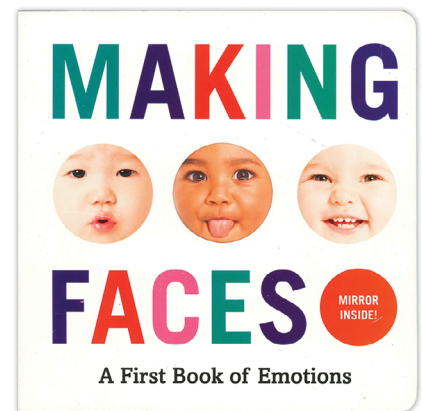
EXPLAIN: We are learning about feeling happy and feeling sad. We know what a happy face can look like. We know what a sad face can look like.

[*Show book cover.*]

Here are some pictures of babies' faces.

ASK: Which baby looks happy?

[*Pause for the toddler to look at pictures. Then encourage the toddler to point to the picture he/she thinks shows a happy face. If additional support is needed, point to each picture and ask "Does this baby look happy?"*]



ACT: Our book has pictures of babies who look happy and babies who look sad. There are other pictures of babies in our book. Let's look at some more pictures.

[*Use the following approach to each pictured facial expression:*

- *Name the feeling shown in the facial expression. In this specific activity, avoid asking the toddler to show a similar face (as suggested at the bottom of the book page).*
- *Describe and point to features of the facial expression that communicate the emotion. Example: "This baby looks like she is going to cry. Here are some tears in the baby's eyes."*
- *Encourage the toddler to point to the facial expression on the next page that communicates the emotion shown on the prior page. Example: "Which face looks angry?"*
- *After the corresponding picture is identified on the page with five different baby pictures, describe again how features of the face show what the baby is feeling. This time, point to characteristics of the facial expression shown in the pertinent picture on the page with five pictures.*
- *At the end of the book, invite the toddler to look at his/her face in the mirror. Example: "Here is your face in a mirror! We have looked at many pictures of faces. Now we see your face!"*

**Option 1 continued**

RECAP: The babies shown in our book were feeling different things. One baby looked happy. Another baby looked sad. One baby felt angry. Another baby looked surprised. One baby looked silly. There are many different things we can feel.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

The current activity expands the range of feelings explored with toddlers. Prior activities focused on happy and sad, as recently as Block 17. Most toddlers will readily connect with the facial expression of anger. Anger is an important emotion for toddlers to know and say. There is a wide range of ways babies and older persons communicate feeling surprised and silly through facial expressions. These two emotions can be challenging to discuss and understand through pictures of facial expressions. Spend less time on discussion of these feelings if a toddler seems confused or uninterested.

Avoid pursuing a deeper or more advanced approach to discussion of each feeling. A higher-level question, such as “What makes you feel sad?” is more appropriate for older children. It is difficult for most toddlers to describe a time they have felt the emotion shown in a picture. Keep the session focused on the name of the feeling and what the feeling can look like in a facial expression.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ If a toddler seems to want help in identifying a particular facial expression on a page with five different pictures, point to several of the facial expressions that might be more like the facial expression on the opposite page. For each picture you point to, ask “Does this baby look (name of feeling)?”

Enrichment ■ If the toddler can say the emotion words featured in the book, return to pages that show one facial expression only and ask the toddler to say the name of the feeling the baby is showing.



12–24 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Awareness of emotions

A toddler is invited to make facial expressions that communicate several specific emotions.



Key Concepts

Feelings
Happy
Sad
Angry



Materials Needed

Making Faces: A First Book of Emotions by Abrams
Appleseed
Unbreakable handheld mirror

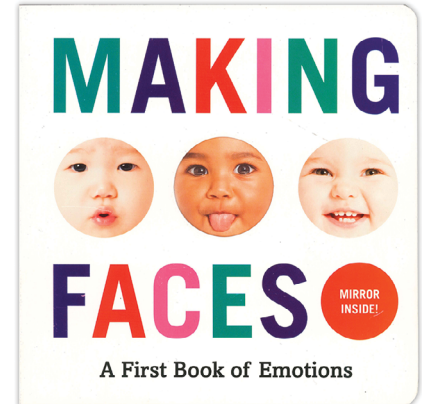


Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

Invite a toddler to join you to look in a mirror. Hold the mirror in front of your face (with a typical expression on your face) and position the mirror so the toddler can see your face in it. Explain that we can see your face in the mirror. Offer the mirror to the toddler and talk about how the toddler's face is in the mirror. Do not invite the toddler to make a specific facial expression at this point.

Remind the toddler that we are learning about different kinds of feelings. Show the book's picture of a baby with a happy facial expression. Encourage the toddler to show a happy face in the mirror. Look at the mirror image of the toddler's face and point to and describe a feature of the toddler's face that communicates the feeling. Example: "Look at your big smile in the mirror. Your smile tells us you are happy!"



Repeat the above process for sad and angry. Pursue facial expressions that can show feelings of silly and surprise if the toddler remains interested.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Pay attention to the toddler's level of familiarity and comfort with a mirror. There may be an initial indication of mirror experience at the end of Option 1 when a mirror is available in the book. There also will be clear signs in the opening segment of the current activity, which is aimed at helping the toddler become comfortable with mirror use. Determine early in the activity whether the mirror enhances or detracts from the goal of encouraging a toddler to show a facial expression that communicates a particular emotion. Most, but certainly not all, toddlers enjoy looking at their reflection in a mirror.

There are different ways to communicate the emotions emphasized in this activity. The book pictures are offered as examples, not models for the toddler to mimic. Positively recognize a toddler's version of a feeling. Watch for fine motor challenges in holding a mirror steady.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Offer another example of a facial expression by making a facial expression in the mirror that shows the targeted emotion after looking at the pictured baby in the book. Encourage the toddler to look at your expression in the mirror. Then invite the toddler to use the mirror for making his/her own expression. ■ A toddler may be more interested in the faces of

**Option 2 continued**

babies shown in the book than looking at his/her face in a mirror. Follow the toddler's lead and talk about pictured baby faces if this is of most interest. ■ Omit use of the mirror if this is too challenging for a toddler. ■ Hold the mirror for the toddler.

Enrichment ■ Encourage the toddler to say the name of the feeling communicated by his/her facial expression. Example: "What feeling are you showing with your face?" ■ A toddler may appreciate more time to explore the mirror during or after your interactions.

**Interest Area**

Materials Needed: assortment of books with pictures of different facial expressions, several unbreakable mirrors of different sizes throughout the room

Provide time throughout a day for toddlers to explore their reflections in mirrors. Toddlers may enjoy a mirror on the wall as well as mirrors they can hold and carry. Encourage toddlers to look at different facial expressions in books. Point out there are different ways to show the same feeling. Talk with toddlers about their facial expressions and uses of the mirrors. Encourage toddlers to use different mirrors.

**Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: assortment of books with pictures of facial expressions, several mirrors of different sizes throughout the classroom, including a full-length mirror in the dramatic play area and a mirror affixed low on a wall for infants

Children of all ages enjoy seeing their reflections in mirrors. Encourage preschool-age and older children to participate in the Interest Area activity. In addition to making different facial expressions, older children will enjoy having a mirror to use during dress-up time. Infants enjoy looking at themselves in a large mirror affixed to the wall. Invite interested children to make different faces and play copycat or imitation games with the mirrors. Help children use emotion words to describe a facial expression they or their peers are making.



12–24 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal Fine motor development

A toddler practices manipulating pieces of a puzzle that has knobs.



Key Concepts

Out
In
Turn



Materials Needed

Puzzle with knobs (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Communication/Language
Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: Select a puzzle with 3–4 pieces, a knob on each puzzle piece for a toddler to grasp, and, under each puzzle piece, a picture that is identical to the picture on its respective puzzle piece. Select a puzzle topic that is of interest to the toddler who participates in this activity. The activity description uses an animal puzzle as an example only.

BEGIN: *[Invite a toddler to join you on the floor or at a table to do a puzzle. Clear the work space of other items. Place the completed puzzle fully in front of the toddler. Point to each puzzle piece as you say its name.]*



Here is a puzzle with pictures of animals. There is a bird, a dog, and a cat.

ACT: Would you please take each of the pieces out of the puzzle?



[Encourage the toddler to remove each piece, one at a time. Remove the first piece if you anticipate a demonstration would be helpful. Invite the toddler to place the pieces to the side of the puzzle.]

After all puzzle pieces are removed, draw attention to the picture under each piece. Example: “Look, there is another picture of a cat under the puzzle piece!”

Invite the toddler to place the puzzle pieces back in the puzzle board. Begin with a piece of the toddler’s choice. Use the following strategies:

- *Ask the toddler to point to where the piece goes on the board. Affirm that the pictures on the puzzle piece and board are the same. Example: “Dog and dog go together.”*
- *Encourage the toddler to move his/her finger around the outside of the puzzle piece and then around the outside of the respective opening on the puzzle board. Comment on what the toddler is feeling with his/her finger. Example: “Your finger is feeling the bump on the cat’s ear on the puzzle piece. Now your finger is feeling the bump on the cat’s ear on the puzzle board.”*
- *Offer simple verbal support if the toddler has difficulty putting the piece in the puzzle. Examples: (1) “Turn the puzzle piece.”*

**Option 1 continued**

Make a turning gesture with your hand as you say “turn.” (2) “Here are the bird’s feet on the puzzle board. Where are the feet on the piece in your hand? Feet on feet.” (3) “Remember when you felt the bump on the cat’s ear? Try putting the bumps together.”]

RECAP: *[Describe the toddler’s efforts. Example: “You worked hard on a puzzle! You took out the puzzle pieces. Then you put each piece back in the puzzle board. You looked at pictures. You used your fingers to feel parts of the puzzle. You turned some pieces so they fit in the puzzle.”]*

What to Look For—Option 1

Work with puzzles supports different types of skills. Visual discrimination skills were the focus of several prior ELM activity plans aimed at helping toddlers identify a puzzle-piece picture that is the same as a book picture (Block 4, Option 3, Communication/Language) or a picture in the puzzle board (Blocks 6 and 15, Self-Regulation). Fine motor skills, including eye-hand coordination, are the focus of the current activity.

Toddlers are likely to approach the puzzle in different ways. Offer just enough verbal assistance for the toddler to explore the puzzle in relation to his/her interests. Focus on the process of taking apart and putting together a puzzle, not on an outcome of whether all pieces were returned to their appropriate spot. Below are some possible situations:

- If a toddler removes all the puzzle pieces and shows little interest in putting them back, acknowledge his/her efforts. Taking the puzzle pieces out may be the successful puzzle experience for today. You can build on the toddler’s efforts by pointing to and naming each piece.
- If a toddler returns several, but not all, pieces to the puzzle board, positively acknowledge his/her effort by pointing to and saying the name of each “returned” piece. You also could return pieces to the puzzle board and encourage the toddler to take out the pieces again.
- If a toddler quickly removes all pieces (perhaps by turning over the puzzle board), invite the toddler to help you find pieces you identify. Example: “Will you help me find the bird? Let’s find the bird.” Hold your hand out for the puzzle piece.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Demonstrate using your finger to trace the outline of a puzzle piece and opening.
 ■ Draw attention to whether the pictures on the puzzle piece and board are the same if the toddler has difficulty locating an appropriate opening on the board. ■ If a toddler refers to a puzzle piece by the sound it makes, such as “meow” for a cat, enthusiastically acknowledge the sound while also offering the name. Example: “That is right. The cat says meow.” ■ Point to and describe a characteristic of a puzzle piece. Example: “The dog has big ears.”

Enrichment ■ Offer a second puzzle that presents an equivalent challenge.



12–24 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

A toddler manipulates pieces of a chunky puzzle.



Key Concepts

Out
In
Fit



Materials Needed

Chunky puzzle



Also Promotes

Cognitive

Be Prepared: This activity is for a toddler who readily manipulates puzzles that include pieces with knobs (such as in Option 1) and is ready for more challenge. Secure a chunky puzzle with 3–4 pieces and no pictures under its pieces. Select a puzzle topic that is of interest to the toddler who participates in this activity.

Put the fully assembled puzzle in front of the toddler. Point to each piece and say (or encourage the toddler to say) the name of the pictured item. Encourage the toddler to take out each puzzle piece, one by one, and place the puzzle pieces face up on the table so he/she can see all the pieces. Encourage the toddler to use his/her fingers to hold the puzzle piece, not grip the piece in the palm of his/her hand. After all pieces have been removed, again point to and name each piece.



Draw attention to the outline of one or more of the puzzle pieces by encouraging the toddler to move his/her finger around the outside of the piece and then around the outside of the corresponding opening on the puzzle board. Offer a demonstration if appropriate. Then encourage the toddler to put the puzzle pieces in the puzzle board. Encourage the toddler to look first at the puzzle piece and then at each of the openings on the puzzle board. Use questions to help the toddler look for an opening that looks like the puzzle piece in his/her hand. Example: Point to an opening and ask whether the toddler thinks the piece in his/her hand would fit in the opening. After a piece has been put in its corresponding opening, point to and describe how a piece and its opening fit together. Invite the toddler to trace the puzzle piece with his/her finger.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Manipulating a chunky puzzle piece is a much different fine motor experience than holding onto the peg of a puzzle piece. Working with a puzzle without the benefit of pictures under the corresponding puzzle piece adds challenge. Promptly offer a puzzle with pegs and pictures if a chunky puzzle without pegs and pictures is too challenging for a toddler to manage.

Emphasize the importance of putting puzzle pieces on the table so it is easy to figure out what they are. Turn upside down a puzzle piece that is on the table so the toddler can see the contrast with right side up. Example: A puzzle

Option 2 continued

piece that shows socks may not be recognized as socks if upside down. Emphasize also the importance of looking at available openings before trying to put a piece in an opening, especially if a toddler rushes to fit a piece into any and all openings. Example: "Let's look at all the openings. Which opening looks like the piece in your hand?"

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

Extra support ■ When the puzzle is initially put in front of the toddler, engage the toddler in moving his/her finger around the space where each puzzle piece fits into its opening. ■ Offer verbal support for turning a piece slowly to help it fit in the opening. ■ Explain why you are turning a puzzle piece. Example: "I am turning this puzzle piece so we can see what it is. Look, it's a shirt." Encourage the toddler to turn pieces on the table.

Enrichment ■ Offer a chunky puzzle with up to six pieces.

 **Interest Area**

Materials Needed: two familiar puzzles, farm puzzle, *Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown, no-skid place mat, small toys, sensory table, mailing tube, basket of balls, muffin pans, paper egg cartons, art smock, chubby paintbrush, paint

Leave two familiar puzzles on a low table. If using the farm puzzle, display the book *Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown. Encourage toddlers to look at the animals on the puzzle and find similar images in the book. Share the book with one or more toddlers. Place a puzzle on a low surface on top of a no-skid place mat.



Provide small toys to manipulate in the sensory table. Arrange play materials to encourage toddlers to revisit some of the skills needed for puzzles. Example: Attach a mailing tube to the wall or furnishings next to a basket of balls that will fit through the tube. Muffin pans and paper egg cartons with small toys or balls provide a satisfying experience for toddlers when the number of items and openings are equal.

Set up a painting activity to foster fine motor development. Offer each toddler one chubby paintbrush and one egg carton. Applying paint to the egg carton is often an appropriately challenging fine motor task. A carton can be repainted after it dries, providing fun for a few days.

A small brown icon of a house with a chimney, positioned to the left of the text "Family Child Care".

Family Child Care

Materials Needed: muffin pan, small toys or balls, puzzles, string or lace, large wooden beads, lacing cards, small paintbrushes, watercolors or tempera, jigsaw-type puzzle of 25–50 pieces, cookie sheet or tray

Infants will enjoy using a muffin pan and small toys or balls that fit into each section. Provide a range of puzzles that provide the right amount of challenge to each child in your setting. Other activities to foster small motor development are stringing large wooden beads and lacing cards. School-age children can increase fine motor skills by learning to tie their shoes and zip their own jacket. Offer small paintbrushes and watercolors or tempera to preschool-age and older children. A school-age child may be ready for a jigsaw-type puzzle of 25–50 pieces. Encourage a child to start a puzzle on a cookie sheet or tray so it can be available for multiple days.