

Being able to identify and name emotions is a vital step towards coping with strong emotions and empathising with how other people feel. The engaging faces on these tactile stones show four emotions that children most readily identify and experience: happy, sad, surprised and angry. Playing with and discussing the stones will build children's emotional awareness and empower them with the language they need to talk about feelings.

It's good to talk

The stones can be a starting point for talking about feelings, or used to develop children's understanding of emotions in stories or real-life situations:

- Keep it simple by starting with two or three stones – uncover them one at a time and talk about how the child on the stone is feeling. Looking at their face, what is their mouth doing or what are their eyes like?



- Have a go at making the expressions yourselves – a mirror will be useful.
- Introduce the rest of the stones and talk about which of the children on them might be feeling the same way.
- Describe a situation familiar to the children, such as stroking a fluffy rabbit, falling over in the playground or a balloon suddenly going bang. Ask the children to pick a stone showing how they might feel.
- Describe a funny or exaggerated scenario and ask the children to choose a stone showing how the character might be feeling. These could include finding a frog inside your birthday cake, losing a special magic feather or being thrown into a dungeon full of slime.

- When you share a book together, talk about how the character might be feeling and use the stones to help the children identify the emotions. For example, the *Elmer* series by David McKee (published by Anderson Press) has some great facial expressions as well as humorous and emotive situations – ideal for comparing with the stones.
- If children are overwhelmed by how they feel and need some quiet time in a calming environment, you could offer the stones alongside other sensory resources, such as Sensory Worry Stones for them to touch, hold and keep in a pocket. If they choose to engage with the Emotion stones, children might find them helpful for expressing how they are feeling.



Let's play

The stones are great for various matching games and imaginative play:

- Make it easier to begin with, by having all the stones face up on a surface and finding the matching pairs together.

- When children are familiar with the stones, you can use them to play a Pelmanism matching game. Turn the stones face down arranged in a rectangle then take it in turns to turn two stones over. If they match, you keep the pair, if they don't, turn them face down again.
- Hold two stones and make a facial expression the same as one of them. Can the children identify the matching stone? Encourage them to have a go themselves.
- Act out how you might behave if you felt a certain way – including both facial expression and body movements (such as stamping feet). Can the children identify the stone showing how you feel? Encourage them to have a go acting too.
- Describe one of the faces and ask the children to find the stone – e.g. 'My eyebrows are really high, my eyes are very wide and my mouth is wide open too – which one am I?'
- Encourage children to use their imagination as they play with the stones: 'Here are two sad stones. I wonder what might have happened to make them feel sad?' What might happen if the two sad stones meet the two happy stones? What might they say to each other?
- Introduce the stones to small world play scenes, such as various rooms in a house or a magical landscape.



Express yourself

Get creative using the stones as a starting point:

- Offer the stones with play dough so children can use them to make impressions of the faces in the dough.
 - Take it in turns to make a play dough impression for another child to identify which stone is showing, and which emotion it is.
 - Encourage children to copy the faces onto paper plates by drawing them or sticking on shapes and eyes made from paper, card or fabric. Alternatively, they could draw them in sand.
- Sing your own version of 'If you're happy and you know it'. You could turn the stones face down, then turn one over to supply the emotion. You could invent a corresponding action, or select one from several illustrations. For example, you might choose, 'If you're angry and you know it stamp your feet.'
 - Encourage children to turn feelings into dance by playing some music to reflect a particular emotion. You might like to use:
 - happy: The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba, by Handel
 - sad: Adagio in G Minor, by Albinoni
 - angry: Auguries of Spring from The Rite of Spring, by Stravinsky
 - surprised: second movement from Symphony no. 94 'Surprise', by Haydn

Get talking – useful words

Happy, pleased, sad, upset, angry, cross, hot, surprised, shocked, smile, turned down mouth, frown, red cheeks, wide eyes, high eyebrows, open mouth, laugh, cry, shout, stamp, freeze

Books about emotions

When I Feel Happy/Sad/Angry by Sharie Coombes

Mr Big by Ed Vere

My Big Shouting Day by Rebecca Patterson

Rabbit's Nap by Julia Donaldson