

SEPTEMBER 2022

TOOL

Emotions Playdough Mats

Children need to recognise emotions before they can learn to talk about them.

This month's educational tool comprises a set of printable face templates

We've designed images of faces for you that are without eyes, a nose and mouth so that you and your child can have fun building emotions on them, using playdough.

This activity is aimed at creating an opportunity for you as a parent to do two things:

- 1) The first aim is to introduce your 3- to 5-year-old to a variety of age-appropriate emotions as an investment in their social and emotional development.
- 2) Secondly, having fun together and talking to each other about emotions and real-life situations can help to open up communication between you and your child – as an investment in your relationship.

Kick off by introducing the most relatable emotions first.

Although happy, sad, angry and scared (afraid) are viewed as the most basic emotions in the human experience, young children typically relate more easily to feelings that they personally experience on a daily basis. They typically say they know what it feels like to be *laughing*, *crying*, *sleepy* and *silly*. We therefore advise starting with these four concepts.

Here's a more comprehensive list of emotions that 3- to 5-year olds can learn to identify, along with how to build these emotions on a playdough mat, using playdough:

It's important to remind you that there is no right or wrong way of building an emotion and you're more than welcome to build others too. The suggestions below are included as a way of saving you time and making it easier for you to guide your child.

Laughing (mouth wide open, with narrowed eyes)
Crying (tears on cheeks and mouth downturned)
Sleepy (serene face with eyes closed)
Silly (one large eye, one small eye, mouth skewed)
Happy (mouth closed, smiling serenely)
Sad (mouth downturned, without tears)
Angry (eyebrows in a V-shape with a large mouth, screaming)
Scared (large eyes, lips pressed together)
Shocked (large eyes, lips wide open and circle-shaped)
Surprised (very large eyes, lips open and smiling)
Worried (eyebrows in a V-shaped unibrow, lips pressed together)
Lonely (eyes closed as if sleeping, with a single tear on one cheek)
Shy (solemn face covered halfway behind a piece of clay as if hiding)
Disgusted (upturned nose with two large nostrils, mouth closed and downturned)

Instructions:

- Print the images and laminate the pages that are waiting for you via [this link](#).
- Get out your playdough and find a mirror or use your cell phone camera to look at your faces.
- Discuss one emotion at a time by describing a situation that would lead up to it and then acting it out together. Be careful not to describe scenarios that are very disturbing.
- While looking in a mirror – or taking selfies on your cell phone – take a close look to see what your faces look like when each of you show the emotion.
- Now use play dough to copy the shape of your eyes and mouth on the mats. Use the descriptions above as guidelines when needed.
- Frequently use the name of the emotion that you are targeting to make it easier for your child to remember it.

[Please design 7 faces. One per A4 page.]

Different genders and ethnicities should ideally be captured, plus a non-gender non-ethnic version.

- 1) Black boy (curly hair and brown skin),
- 2) Black girl (curly hair and brown skin with hair accessories like that of a girl),
- 3) European boy (as the example below),
- 4) European girl (as the example below but with lighter hair, ponytails and hair accessories),
- 5) Indian boy (as the example below but with darker skin and black hair),
- 6) Indian girl (as the example below but with darker skin and black hair in ponytails with accessories that look different to the other girl's).
- 7) Black and white design with a beanie to hide the hair and no gender-specific features.





Make a happy face using playdough.
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Make a sad face using playdough.
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Make a shocked face using playdough.
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emotions playdough mat
Laughing



Make a laughing face using playdough.
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emotions playdough mat
Scared



Make a scared face using playdough.
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emotions playdough mat
Worried



Make a worried face using playdough.
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emotions playdough mat
Silly



Make a silly face using playdough.

emotions playdough mat
Sleepy



Make a sleepy face using playdough.



<https://intheplayroom.co.uk/emotions-playdough-mats-free-printable/>