



## Feelings Catcher Companion Guide

Sometimes it's hard for children to know how to express their feelings. Here are some ways to help them know that it's OK to show emotions.

**Angry:** Offer support to your children by letting them know that you are aware they are angry. You can say something like, "I can see how angry you are." Avoid blaming or making them think they are bad because they have angry feelings. Be patient and calm while encouraging your child to take a break. Try doing something that will help her feel calmer. Suggest activities to help your child cope with and express the anger she is experiencing in a safe and healthy way-- such as journaling, drawing, taking a walk outside together, shooting a basketball, using a stress ball or taking deep breaths. Remember to praise your child when she makes healthy choices to handle her feelings.

**Anxious or Nervous:** Feelings can be hard to identify. Pay attention to body language. What are you observing about their behavior? Listen to what they are saying about their worries, concerns or what makes them anxious. Asking, "Where do you feel that feeling in your body?" can help start a conversation about how your child experiences anxiety.

**Ashamed:** When your child expresses feelings of shame or embarrassment, don't underestimate the power of letting him know you love, care and support him unconditionally. Be there to listen if he wants to talk about what happened. Be nearby, or sit with him, if he doesn't want to talk.

**Bullied:** Resist the urge to make your child's feelings or experience go away. Listen and invite him to share how bullying made him feel. You can encourage emotional expression with, "Tell me about what happened..."

**Confused:** Help your child identify or explore her feelings if she is struggling to express what is happening or what she experienced. Avoid overwhelming her by asking lots of questions, but try and clarify misunderstandings or misinformation.

**Depressed and Hopeless:** Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness. Depression can also include feeling a sense of hopelessness. It can be hard to know "the right thing" to say when someone is depressed. Let your child know that you care about her, she matters, and that you are here to help. Offer help by listening to her experience. The risk of suicide is high in those suffering with depression. Be aware of the warning signs such as talk of or preoccupation with death, or statements about wanting to hurt herself or not be here anymore. Seek professional help for additional support.

**Fearful or Scared:** When children express feeling scared, listen to their experience and fears without judgment. Don't try to solve the issue. Let your child share and express what he is feeling and/or thinking. Kids benefit from the structure of a normal routine, adult role models and appropriate limit-setting and expectations. This helps create a sense of safety and dependability for a child who is fearful.

**Frustrated:** Help your child express his feelings instead of acting them out or keeping them hidden inside. Allow him to express his feelings. Avoid making statements that ignore his emotions such as, “You’re not upset” or “What are you crying for?” Instead, try saying, “I can see you’re frustrated. I’m here to help or support you” or, “You look frustrated right now, what can I do to help?” You can also encourage or suggest ways he can take time to relax before responding or trying again with a frustrating situation.

**Happy:** When kids say they are feeling happy encourage them to describe how this feels in their body or what helps them feel this way.

**Hyper:** Kids often have a lot of energy and can have a hard time settling down after an exciting day. Use this as an opportunity to teach them to take a moment to slow down or take a break. Support calming busy minds and bodies by encouraging them to sit down, plant both feet on the ground and to take deep breaths. Offer something to help with fidgeting such as a stress ball. Be patient with difficulties in attention span. Try to limit tasks during this time and keep directions simple.

**Lonely:** If your child is experiencing loneliness, suggest doing something together like going for a walk or having a family game night. Help him make connections with others through play dates, getting involved in sports, community activities or other interests he enjoys.

**Sad:** Validate the sadness your child is feeling through acknowledging statements such as, “I know you’re having a hard time” or, “I am sorry you’re hurting.” These statements communicate to your child that he is not alone and you are available to comfort him.

**Unhappy:** When your child is feeling unhappy, remain calm and validate her feelings by saying, “It’s OK to feel upset.”

**Unheard:** When feelings are minimized or dismissed they often come out in other ways or are expressed with unhealthy behaviors. Acknowledge when your child doesn’t feel like her feelings were heard. She needs to hear that her feelings and thoughts matter and are important.

A note of support: Reach out for professional help if your child’s emotions are disrupting his everyday life. He may need extra support to help manage and cope with his feelings.