PLAY BREAKS

PLAY TO DISCOVER & MANAGE EMOTIONS

Children experience big emotions every day, but learning to understand and manage them takes time and practice. Play offers a natural & safe way for children to explore feelings, express what's inside, and learn how to cope with the everyday emotional ups & downs. This section includes simple, playful ideas designed to help children do just that.



MIRROR EMOTIONS

Stand face-to-face and mirror each other's facial expressions. Take turns leading and copying.

Why it helps
Builds emotional recognition and empathy.

Parent tip
Make it playful with silly expressions too.

2-3 min

Emotional Play



TOY TAKES A BREAK

Pretend a toy feels overwhelmed, angry, or sad. Together, help it calm down or cheer up, breathing, stretching, resting or telling it a story.

Why it helps
Teaches self-regulation strategies.

Parent tip
Use the same calming tools you'd suggest to your child.

2-3 min

Emotional Play



EMOTION CHARADES

Act out a feeling using only your body.
The other person guesses the emotion.

Why it helps
Strengthens emotional awareness and nonverbal communication.

Parent tip
Keep it light: laughter helps make feelings safer.

5-10 min

Emotional Play



TOY RESCUE

If a toy "breaks" (or pretends to be sick or had a very bad day), work together to "fix" it with a hug, a tissue "bandage," or singing a lullaby.

Why it helps
Practises empathy and nurturing behaviour toward others.

Parent tip
Model gentle touch and soothing words that your child can later use for themselves.

10 min

Emotional Play



HOW IS MY TOY FEELING?

Place a few small toys in front of your child. Take turns choosing a toy and saying how it feels today and why.

Why it helps
Builds emotional awareness and vocabulary.

Connection tip
Model simple emotions first (happy, sad, worried).

10-15 min

Emotional Play



GUESS MY EMOTION

Write emotions on 15–20 cards and place them face down. Each player clips a card to their headband without looking. Your child and you take turns asking yes-or-no questions to guess the emotion. If they guess correctly, they keep the card. The player with the most cards wins.

Why it helps
Builds emotional recognition and empathy.

Parent tip
Make it playful with fun emotions too.

30 min

Emotional Play