

Jumpstart **Expanding Past “Happy”**

Children first.

As young children begin to learn how to express their emotions, we can help them expand their vocabularies to share how they're feeling more accurately. In and out of the classroom, we can help children learn mental state words beyond happy, sad, and mad. One way we can help children learn new words for labeling nuanced emotions is by modeling them in our conversations.

Did you know?

- When children can label their emotions, it helps them learn how to better regulate their own reactions to their feelings.
- Children can better interpret others' emotions as their own emotion vocabulary expands.
- Another way to help children develop their social-emotional skills is by making connections between their emotions and those of familiar characters in stories.



Other words to use for

happy:

- Cheerful: full of positive energy
- Delighted: very pleased
- Ecstatic: intense, overpowering joy
- Content: satisfied
- Merry: joyful



Try this!

- Encourage your child to pick their favorite book at home or at the library.
- Read through the story together and search for the various emotions the characters in the story are feeling. Use the pictures for clues.
- Be as specific as possible while labeling emotions together. If your child labels the feeling as happy, encourage their expanding vocabulary by agreeing and adding the more subtle emotion words. “They do look happy. What kind of happy do they look like they are feeling?”
- You may practice trying out the facial expressions or body positions from the illustrations with your child.
- As your child comes across an emotion in the story, ask them why they think the character might be feeling that way. If they are stuck, notice some words from the text as clues to figure it out together.
- After your child has shared their thoughts about the cause for the character's emotion, have them share a time they might have felt that emotion or a similar one.
 - If your child needs additional support, you can share a sentence starter like “I have also felt _____, when _____.”