

Two–Minute Tips

This Week's Topic: Exploring Emotions

Emotions happen constantly and there are many opportunities throughout the day in which you can name an emotion or provide an opportunity for a participant to name an emotion. Staff can model emotion naming and the use of emotion vocabulary. Emotion naming can simply be the act of asking participants to select one word that represents their emotion. You can also have participants identify the thoughts, physical sensations, and behavior associated with their emotions. When staff members name an emotion, participants are likely to feel seen and recognized.¹

Participants will vary in their ability to name emotions. They may not feel comfortable or have the vocabulary to express themselves—which could be due to their home life, their sense of safety, or their own emotional development. But when young people can identify and name their own emotions, it is a powerful first step to developing self-regulation strategies. From this first step they could go on to develop self-awareness and self-determination in the face of problems.²³⁴

Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips on integration emotion-naming activities into your program.

Visualize It

Start with a [feelings chart](#) such as one of these, which you can access online. You could also select something more basic like [this chart](#), or advanced like [this one](#).

Check In

Have participants sit in a circle and encourage them to select a smiley face or word to describe how they're feeling. Ask questions that have them identify a word associated with the smiley face, explain what the word means to them, and what caused them to feel that way. Ask them to connect the emotion to their body, actions, and thoughts.

Build Emotion Language

Show a smiley face with a word already associated with it. Ask participants to name the word that describes it and define what the word means to them. Smile, nod, and ask open-ended questions that require more than a yes or no answer to elicit responses. Encourage

participants to expand or clarify (see Active Listening Two-Minute Tip). Affirm what they're saying, link their words to thoughts and feelings to guide a mutual understanding of the word.

Ask the group if they've ever felt this emotion. Ask the group if anyone would be willing to share a time when they felt that emotion.

Tips in Action!

[Watch](#) more on exploring emotions. See staff at Village Theatre lead an activity where young people build emotion language.

Want more two-minute tips?

Check out:

<https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expanded-learning-opportunities/>

There you will find the latest tip, an archive of past tips, and a discussion board to connect with peers!

¹ Hillaker, B., Akiva, T., Jones, M., Sutter, A., Wallace, L., McGovern, G., Harris, J., Peck, S., & Smith, C. (2017). *Program quality assessment handbook (social emotional learning version)*. Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment.

² Ibid.

³ Gottman, J., & DeClaire, J. (1998). *Raising an emotionally intelligent child*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

⁴ Cohen, J. (2006). Social, emotional, ethical, and academic education: Creating a climate for learning, participation in democracy, and well-being. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76(2), 201-237.