

3. Reading the Signals Activity

Ages 3–6 years

Recommend for: HT, IT, VT, ET, ST, OT



Directions:

Steps 1

Trace around a coin on a sheet of paper to create six circles or use the prepared ones below. Draw a different feeling on each face: happy, sad, surprised, afraid, disgusted, and angry.

Step 2

Ask your Twitch to make up his own facial expressions to show each of those feelings. Maybe you have to guess which feeling he is trying to show. Alternatively, you can make your own facial expressions for all six, and your child has to guess which ones you're showing.

Step 3

Chat about what sort of things make him feel like the emotion you're referring to (i.e., what makes him feel happy, angry, sad, afraid, etc.).



happy



sad



surprised



afraid



disgusted



angry

Step 4

Return to the book *The Very Frustrated Monster* and see if your child can identify those things that made Twitch feel angry, frustrated, or sad.

Step 5

Next, shift the focus away from those negative emotions and see if he can identify positive feelings (e.g., happy, calm, brave, surprised, friendly).

Step 6

Then, try to pinpoint things in your child's life that bring on those good feelings.

Step 7

Combining the above steps, see which of those things he would like to do to help him feel better when he's feeling hurt, frustrated, angry, or afraid. Feel free to add a few ideas, such as doing his breathing exercise (mentioned below), walking away from a situation, or telling his mom or the caregiver how he's feeling. Other options to help him feel better could include having some safe outlet to get rid of the frustration, such as beating up a pillow, jumping on a trampoline, bouncing a ball, playing with the dog, going on a swing, or just playing with water.

Step 8

By way of follow-up, in the evening, see if your child can recall times when he started to feel bad or the Put-Down Bug attacked. Did he manage to beat it; how did he do it?

AN ALTERNATIVE BUT LESS THREATENING APPROACH FOR "SELF-FOCUSED" Twitch (ST)

Some kids often find it easier to learn about emotional management via on-screen activities, rather than face-to-face confrontations with people. Non-human or machine characters, such as Thomas the Tank Engine or The WorryWoos Monsters, offer less threatening alternatives for emotional learning for ST children. One little boy I was dealing with was obsessed with Thomas, so his mom knitted and stuffed a Thomas for him. Young Paul would carry it around with him to feel safe and secure; when he got upset, he would just hug Thomas to help himself calm down.

A Cambridge University program has capitalized very effectively on this style using Transporters (www.TheTransporters.com). Faces on the machines, rather than on people, reflect the emotions, and the ST-style child often seems to learn more about feelings this way. Certainly, the Cambridge program is claiming big gains through this approach.