Happy

Means feeling a wonderful sense of joy, gladness, or contentment inside.

What Does Being Happy Feel Like?
• Smiling and Laughing: You might grin, giggle, or want to jump for joy.
• Feeling Good Inside: Your body feels relaxed and warm when things are good.
• Having Fun: Playing a game, eating a favorite snack, or being with people you love makes you feel this way.

Things That Make Us Happy
• Playing with friends or pets.
• Spending time with family.
• Celebrating a birthday.
• Reading a good book or listening to music.

Confused

Means their brain feels too full or stuck because they do not understand what is happening or what to do next.

What Does Being Confused Feel Like?
• A crowded head: It feels like too many thoughts are bouncing around at the same time.
• Feeling lost: They feel like they are in a maze and do not know the way out.
• Worry or frustration: Not knowing the answer can make them feel mad, sad, or a little scared.
• Not knowing where to start: A big job or a hard question makes their mind freeze up.

Things That Make Us Confused
• Unpredictable boundaries.
• Schedule changes.
• A lot of sensory inputs.

Mad

Means feeling very upset or angry about something.

What Does Feeling Mad Feel Like?
• Fast heartbeat: The heart pounds quickly, and breathing gets faster.
• Tight muscles: Hands squeeze into hard fists, shoulders pull up tight, and jaws might clench.
• Hot and flushed: The face turns red, cheeks feel warm, and skin might feel hot.
• Upset tummy: The stomach might feel knotted, whirling, or twisted up in a strange way.

Things That Make People Mad
• Being treated unfairly.
• Being told "No”.
• Not being listened to.

Sad

Means feeling unhappy, down, or without joy because something difficult or disappointing has happened.

What Does Sad Feel Like?
• In your body: You might feel tired, heavy, or have a lump in your throat.
• On your face: You might frown or cry tears.
• In your mood: You might want to be quiet, sit alone, or stop having fun for a little while.

Things That Make People Sad
• Losing a favorite toy or game.
• Missing a friend, pet, or family member.
• Getting hurt feelings when someone is mean.

Afraid

Means feeling scared or worried that something might hurt you or go wrong.

What Does Feeling Afraid Feel Like?
• Your heart might beat very fast.
• Your tummy might feel fluttery or upset.
• You might want to hide, run away, or hug someone for safety.

Things That Make People Afraid
• Being scared of the dark
• Being scared of the loud noises
• Feeling nervous for the first day of school

Surprised

Means something that happens when you did not expect it.

What Does Feeling Surprised Feel Like?
• Your eyes open wide.
• Your heart might beat faster.
• Your mouth opens wide.
• Your eyebrows go up.

Things That Make People Surprised
• Opening a box and finding your favorite snack inside.
• Walking into a room and hearing everyone shout, "Happy Birthday!"
• A loud noise like a balloon popping out of nowhere.

Emotional regulation is the ability to understand, manage, and respond to your emotional state in healthy ways rather than being controlled by it. You can teach emotional regulation by helping individuals identify feelings, validate their experiences, and practice calming techniques during calm moments.

1. Label and Validate Emotions
• Name feelings in real time: Use everyday moments or stories to point out specific emotions like frustrated, worried, or excited.
• Validate the feeling: Remind the learner that all emotions are completely okay and normal.
• Separate feeling from action: Clarify that feeling angry or upset is fine, but hurting others or acting out inappropriately is not.
2. Practice Calming Techniques in Advance
• Teach tools when calm: Practice deep breathing, counting, or taking a quiet break when the person is relaxed—not during an active meltdown or high-stress moment.
• Build an emotional toolkit: Create a simple, flexible set of sensory items, physical movements, or quiet spaces they can choose from when "something feels off".
3. Model Good Behavior
• Show your own process: Narrate your own mild frustrations out loud and demonstrate how you take a deep breath or pause to reset. As noted by the American Psychological Association, a secure, trusting relationship and consistent modeling form the foundation of emotional control.
• Stay calm as a coach: Try to respond with patience and positive feedback rather than reacting with punishment or matching their high energy.

These skills are very important because self-regulation affects personal relationships, self-esteem and school success. People who learn to regulate their behavior and emotions usually have an easier time with feelings. Those who do not self-regulate well seem to have more emotional outbursts. Self-regulation includes the skills of self-control, impulse control and self-management. Higher level self-regulation like controlling temper tantrums start with small steps. Over time, the new skills build on each other.

As a teacher, you play a big part in helping a child learn these little steps - and you can give plenty of opportunities to practice.

There are four factors in self-regulation. They include:

- Temperament
- Sensory system development
- Opportunities for learning
- Brain development

Temperament-
Each child is born with the beginning roots of personality traits that affect the way the child approaches and responds to changes in their world. You will see their temperament come through in how they approach new skills. You may need to adapt to help them learn how to regulate their behavior in their own unique way.

Sensory system development-
A child's brain grows and changes when they get information from their world through their senses. As they mature, the brain is able to coordinate more intense and complicated sensations and organize that information.

Opportunities for learning-
The way you respond to, label and discuss a child's feelings helps them organize and understand them. By giving the child strategies for managing those feelings, you show them that they do have control and can handle them.
Here are some ways you can help:

- ★ Set appropriate limits on impulsive behavior.
- ★ Teach coping skills like taking a deep breath, holding a blanket to self-soothe, and using words instead of fists.
- ★ Teach games that encourage impulse control (like Red Light - Green Light or Mother, May I?)
- ★ Model self-control in your own actions and words.

Brain development-
The parts of a child's brain involved with emotions are connected to the parts that control language and thinking. Each child is becoming more aware of themselves, and you will hear it when they talk. Their emotions become more complex as their brain develops. Each child is starting to understand when their behavior is not acceptable to others and themselves. This is the beginning of more advanced emotions like pride and shame, which help is self-regulation.

A child's earliest sense of self comes at about age 3, which helps them become aware of others and their surroundings. This helps them to start navigating feelings and sensory needs.

Around 5-6 years old, children start to recognize and identify multiple emotions, want to help others who are sad, and label and understand others feelings. They do this by playing single games according to the rules, such as Simon Says and Red Light, Green Light, start to control their temper most of the time, and behave appropriately in certain situations. They are also able to negotiate and resolve conflict with their friends without an adult as well as respect the rights and properties of others. In order for them to do this, they need to be shown how to properly regulate their emotions.