

# Back to School

## Ideas to promote wellbeing within the classroom following the year that was 2020!

It's a new school year, and many of you will have a brand-new class! The kids will be so excited to be back in the classroom after the upheaval that was 2020. And I'm sure you are very happy to be back to 'normality' — well COVID normality, that is! You and your students will both be feeling all the feelings — big and small! Some students will be excited to begin the new year and see their friends, while others may be sad and/or anxious to be leaving the security they have known at home. Some students will be feeling more anxious about their health and the health of the ones they love. (COVID certainly hasn't gone away as yet.) Some students will be missing grandparents, sad about the holidays that didn't happen and the familiarity of their 'previous' lives. And, sadly, some students may have had challenging and stress-inducing times confined at home; they may have felt unsafe and longed to return to the security and stability of school. As individual as your students are, their feelings and emotions at this time and how they move forward, will also be unique.

School routine, itself, will be quite different — which may be unsettling for your students. There will be extra hand washing, temperature checks and hand sanitisation. Where school was once a safe and familiar place it may now feel a little different for students. On that note: if you have not done so already, it might be an idea to write a Social Story for your class using a slide presentation format. This could be sent home prior to the commencement of school or just after. In the story you could recap on the remote learning of 2020, and then what will be the same at school in 2021, for example, reading stories, maths and art; and what will be different, for example, drop-offs, washing hands, maybe mask wearing, and no hugs just yet! You could let students know that if they are worried or unsettled, you are there for them at all times, and that you will work this out together as a class! After the initial 'getting to know each other' tasks, here are a few ideas to help with your students' wellbeing journey into 2021.

---

## 6 General Top Tips for starting school in 2021

1. Set up an 'Empathy and Wellbeing' classroom from Day 1. Talk to the students about what that might look like and list their ideas in point form so you can all refer back to these. Ideas might include: everyone has the right to speak without judgement, kindness and understanding is key, all students are equal, we take care of one another, we can take time out if we feel overwhelmed or anxious, our classroom is safe place. I'm sure the children will come up with far more brilliant ideas!
2. Give your students the tools to talk about their feelings (see the following tasks) and give them the time and space to express these feelings. The most important thing is that children feel heard and are listened to.
3. Lower your expectations of children 'bouncing back' especially into general academic tasks. It may take some time for them to adapt to the new 'normal'. Give them the time

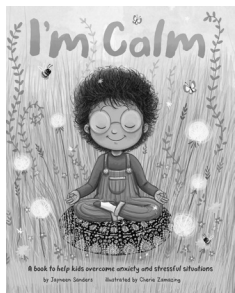
and space to work through the past year where life was unsettled, and to be honest, quite scary. Give them the space to play and share.

4. Do some 'Growth Mindset' work with your students, where together, you explore the ideas of persistence and resilience (see the following tasks).
5. Take time out every day to do some mindfulness such as deep breathing, yoga and gratefulness (see the following tasks).
6. Take time out in the school day to go outdoors, for example, investigating the school garden, a walk or run on the sporting field, or maybe you are lucky enough to have walking trails or a beach close by to explore. Spending time in nature is very grounding and allowing children to wander and wonder can help their anxiety levels.

Below are some more specific tasks you could implement. Then I suggest using the books in the Social and Emotional Intelligence Bundle and the accompanying lesson plans throughout the rest of the school year.

---

## I'm Calm and General Anxiety

1. Recently we released a free e-book entitled 'I'm Calm'. The link is [www.e2epublishing.info/im-calm-free-ebook](http://www.e2epublishing.info/im-calm-free-ebook) In this pack you will find a printout of the Discussion Questions to accompany the book. I suggest you read through the book yourself (as it is for the early years) and unpack it with your students via the Discussion Questions. The book is also available as a hard copy at [www.e2epublishing.info](http://www.e2epublishing.info) or on Amazon. Depending on the ages of your students you could have them write about and/or draw how it was in their house during 2020: Was it stressful? Was it calm? Or was it a bit of both? As a class try some of the mindfulness techniques 'Theodore' suggests. Run a guided mediation with the children also — there are lots of free programs on the internet and wonderful children's books available, or you could make up ones of your own, for example, *'Imagine you are walking down a soft sandy path towards a large wooden gate. You open the gate gently and inside is the most beautiful garden you have ever seen. There are red and pink roses and golden daffodils. Bright orange and green butterflies fly up, up, up into the amazingly blue sky... etc.'* **Note:** children love to draw their own gardens, and I always mention that it's their own 'special place' only they know, and they can go to this garden whenever they are feeling stressed or lonely or any other emotion. Try to implement a guided meditation a few times a week.
- 
2. I suggest you read 'How Big Are Your Worries Little Bear?' (for the early years) as many of your students may be feeling anxious right now. Within the book there are suggested ways children can deal with their anxious thoughts and help control them. There are also many hints for adults on how to further help anxious children. **Note:** this book has accompanying lesson plans available.

---

## Feelings

1. At this time, it is important to check in with your students' feelings daily. You may need to check in with some children more than others. I suggest you read 'Talking About Feelings' and implement some of the lessons. In this pack I have included: *Feelings*

*Cards poster, Feelings Faces and Words poster, Feelings Faces poster, How Are You Feeling Today? poster, Feelings Words poster, Feelings blackline master, Circles blackline master.* Display the *Feelings Faces* poster. As a class list all the 'feelings' words that may go with the faces. If children say, for example, brave; say, 'What does "brave" mean for you? Can you tell me a time when you were brave?' Over the next few weeks explore with your students the vocabulary to express their feelings. Even very young children are capable of going beyond 'happy' and 'sad' and learning more complex words for their feelings. Being able to verbalise an emotion reduces the likelihood of it resulting in problematic behaviour. I suggest you display *Feelings Faces and Words* poster and *Feelings Words* poster in your room and unpack the words and expressions with your class over the coming weeks.

2. Explain to students that our feelings are always changing. We might feel happy in the morning but angry at break because someone was uncaring. We might feel scared and happy at exactly the same time as we approach an exciting ride at a fair ground. Sometimes we don't understand why we feel certain ways and that's okay. Explain that we all need a trusted adult who we can speak to if we experience challenging feelings such as sadness or anger. Explain that you are always here to help and support.  
**Note:** see more about 'trusted adults' and a child's Safety Network in the book 'My Body! What I Say Goes!' At the end of the day, you could ask your students to draw the feelings they felt that particular day. Some may fill in all the faces and others may fill in only one. Use blackline master 'Feelings' for this task or 'Circles'. Allow some children to share at Circle Time. **Note:** review with your students the skills listed in the Circle Time poster included in this pack.
3. Using the cut-up cards from the *Feelings Cards* poster, have selected students during the day choose a card or cards to describe how they are travelling right now. Talk about the words we can use to describe this feeling, and if they seem comfortable, ask them what might be making them feel this way.
4. After reading 'Talking About Feelings', display the *How Are You Feeling Today?* poster in your classroom. Check in with those students who need checking in with via this poster. Note: different colours will mean different emotions to individual children. For one child red may mean 'anger', for another it may mean 'happiness' simply because it's the colour of their favourite T-shirt!
5. You might like to implement a 'Feelings Gauge' (perhaps something as simple as: 2 thumbs up = feeling good; 1 thumb up = feeling okay; 2 thumbs down = not coping) to make students' feelings more transparent. You could use this a couple of times throughout the day, for example, in the morning, after play time, etc. Encourage those students, who are willing to share, how they feel and what may be making them feel this way. Note: avoid using the word 'why' as children find this the most difficult question to answer; it also has negative connotations suggesting the problem is within themselves rather than externally. Take note of the students who have two thumbs down, and touch base with them individually.

---

## In 2020

1. Give all students a copy of blackline master 'In 2020!'. Read over the text with the children. Ensure they understand what they need to do. Have them fill in the spaces. Depending on the children's ages, have them write or draw in the spaces. For children

not yet writing, you could scribe their stories. Review the last statement with the students. Have them list their personal goals for 2021.

2. Another idea is for students to begin a Memory Scrapbook where children record (write, draw, photos) memories as they come up of their time at home; both when doing remote learning or being in isolation with family. They might record their best memory, their favourite moment and/or the funniest thing that happened. They might also like to record things they loved about being home and things they will miss. The Memory Scrapbook could act as a place for students to express their experiences and feelings (good and bad) over 2020. **Note:** if students wish to express negative experiences in their Memory Scrapbook allow them the space and time to do so and offer support if needed.
3. During a Circle Time session (see poster included in this pack 'Circle Time' Communication Skills) you might like to have one open-ended focus question where each student is given the opportunity to respond. **Note:** this should not be compulsory; however, it would be ideal for all students to have a voice even though some may not yet feel confident to do so. Questions could be asked over a series of days; perhaps using the first 10 minutes of every day to come together. Some possible prompts may be:
  - What is something new you learnt during 2020?
  - What was your biggest concern during 2020?
  - Tell the class about one thing you enjoyed and one thing you didn't enjoy about 2020.
  - What did you miss the most about school while you were home? And what do you miss about home now that you're back at school?
  - What are you looking forward to in 2021

**Note:** you might like to mention the Circle Time prompt the day before, to give students time to think about their responses. You could also record student responses and present the major themes to leadership. These opinions will contribute to student voice and agency within your school.

---

## Grateful Journal

1. With older students, you could list the questions from Point 3 on the board and have them write their own reflections.
2. 'Provide students who are reading and writing with a Grateful Journal (the hard copy is included in this pack but you can also download from [www.e2epublishing.info/freedownloads/kids-journal](http://www.e2epublishing.info/freedownloads/kids-journal) ). Copy or print the six Journal pages (each with a different border) back to back (if possible) as many times as you like. Staple the Journal cover sheet and pages together to make a book. Encourage students to draw on the cover or add their own photograph. Have your students write as much as they like, whenever they like, but daily or at least weekly would be ideal. Depending on a student's personality and age, they might like to discuss and share their Journal or they may not. However, students could share three things they are grateful for on a daily basis during Circle Time.
3. Many of your class may be feeling worried and concerned about their future and that of the planet. A great idea to encourage a more positive mindset is to do things for others. Read through 'Be the Difference' with your students and choose tasks you may like to do as a class or individually. There are also lots of activities students can do with their families and within their community. Implement some of the lesson plans for this book

with your class. Another book you could read at this time is ‘You, Me and Empathy’. This book helps students understand how others may be feeling and how to show empathy and kindness towards them. For the students who are struggling at this time, having their fellow classmates show understanding, kindness and patience will be key.

---

## Growth Mindset

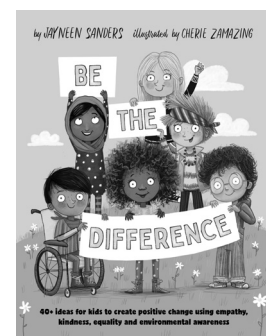
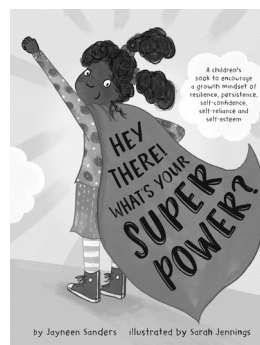
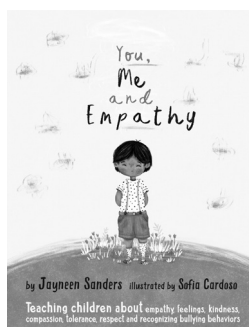
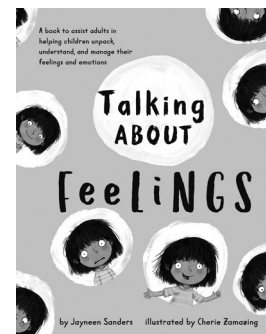
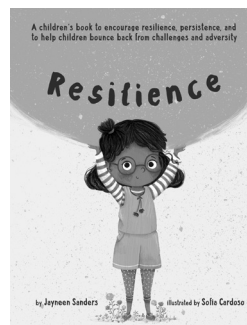
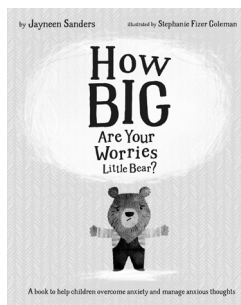
Display the *Growth Mindset* poster. During Circle Time, talk about each heart and how persistence helps us to succeed. Unpack the poster in depth, and with the students’ own examples (this may take a few lessons) of what each heart means. Discuss how ‘remote learning’ (if applicable) or 2020 was for each student. Ask, ‘Was it difficult at times? When was it difficult? What was hard about learning at home? What was easier about learning at home?’ As a daily routine on entering the classroom, you could ask each student to point to a heart that they are going to focus on for the day. Have them read it out to you (if they are reading) with conviction. **Note:** I suggest reading ‘Resilience’ and ‘Hey There! What’s Your Superpower?’ and implementing some of the accompanying lessons. These books focus on building students’ confidence and a growth mindset.

---

## Last Point

I suggest during the remainder of the school year you explore all six books in the Social and Emotional bundle and all 24 lessons that accompany them.

The books are listed below.

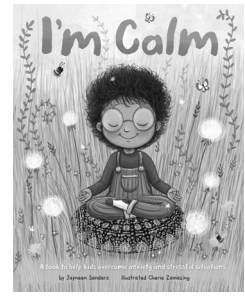


They cover the following topics: anxiety, empathy, compassion, kindness, positive thinking, feelings and emotions, resilience and persistence, growth mindset, confidence, equality, self-esteem and self-confidence

These are the social and emotional skills our students need for their own futures and the future of our planet.

# Discussion Questions

## for Parents, Carers and Educators for the children's book 'I'm Calm'



'I'm Calm' was written in the challenging time of the coronavirus pandemic, when most households are (or were) in a 'stay at home' lockdown and many families feeling under pressure and stressed.

This book takes a child-friendly and relatable perspective towards the stress many households may be feeling; with the aim of helping both children and their families deal with these unsettling times. This book has not been written to address coronavirus specifically, but has been designed to give children and their families general strategies to cope with, and discuss, stress and anxiety. The Discussion Questions are suggestions only and are not 'coronavirus specific' but they will help you and your child unpack how you both may be feeling. Throughout the questions there are links to other helpful sites and books.

### Pages 4-5

What does 'stressed' mean? What does 'calm' mean? Have you ever felt stressed? When was this? What did you do? What makes you feel calm? Why do you think the adults in this picture feel stressed?

### Pages 6-7

Why do you think Mum is working from home? What do you think Mum's job might be? Why do you say that? Do you think it's hard or fun for adults to work from home? Why do you say that?

### Pages 8-9

What would you do if you were Mumma? What might be some reasons why Mumma can't get the mower fixed?

### Pages 10-11

Baby Billy looks pretty stressed. So does Granny. Why do you think Baby Billy has red cheeks and cries a lot? Why do you think Granny is so stressed? What might you do in this situation?

### Pages 12-13

Why might Grandpa be feeling stressed about Granny? How is he trying to help?

### Pages 14-15

Why do you think Theodore is so calm? What things (calming strategies) might he be using right now?

### Pages 16-17

How do you think slowing down your breathing helps to keep you calm? Let's try it and see if it works!

**Note:** for brilliant mindfulness ideas for kids go to Smiling Mind <https://www.smilingmind.com.au>

## Pages 18-19

When Theodore is worried, what does he do to calm himself? Theodore gave his mum a hug and said a helpful thing. How do you think this made his mum feel? If someone in your family is stressed, what might you do? What do you think, 'You've got this!' means?

**Note:** a great book for stressed adults is 'Me Time' by Jessica Sanders. Available from <https://booktopia.kh4ffx.net/eW71r>

## Pages 20-21

Why do you think Theodore does some of his yoga poses when he hears Mumma trying to start the mower? Have you tried yoga? Did you enjoy it? The key to yoga is to take your time with each pose and to breathe in and out slowly to quieten your mind. Let's try some of the poses Theodore is doing. *Top left:* extended pose, *Top right:* warrior pose, *Bottom left:* cobra pose, *Bottom right:* tree pose, *Page 21:* downward facing dog pose

**Note:** here is a link to Cosmic Kids Yoga [www.cosmickids.com](http://www.cosmickids.com)

And here is a link to Yoga with Adriene for adults [www.yogawithadriene.com](http://www.yogawithadriene.com)

## Pages 22-23

Why do you think Theodore holds Mumma's hand and says kind words? How do you think others feel when you show kindness and empathy? What do you think 'empathy' means?

**Note:** see the children's book 'You, Me and Empathy' by Jayneen Sanders, available at [www.e2epublishing.info](http://www.e2epublishing.info) and Amazon US and Amazon UK.

## Pages 24-25

What does 'anxious' mean? Why do you think Baby Billy's crying made Theodore anxious? What do you do when you feel

anxious? Do you think deep breathing or yoga might help too? Why do you say that?

**Note:** see the children's book 'How Big Are Your Worries Little Bear?' by Jayneen Sanders, available at [www.e2epublishing.info](http://www.e2epublishing.info) and Amazon US and Amazon UK.

If you need more help with your child's anxiety, an absolutely brilliant site is Karen Young's 'Hey Sigmund'. Karen is a trained psychologist and has written some very empowering children's books on this subject. See [www.heysigmund.com](http://www.heysigmund.com)

## Pages 26-27

What words would you use to describe Theodore? (kind, caring, nurturing, thoughtful, empathetic). With his kind words and actions, how do you think Theodore has made Granny feel? What about Baby Billy — how has Theodore made him feel?

## Pages 28-29

Who are the grown-ups that make you feel safe? Why do they make you feel safe? What do you do if you ever feel sad/scared/worried? How does a walk in nature make you feel? If you are sad, scared or worried, a really good idea is to talk to a grown-up you trust about how you are feeling.

**Note:** see the children's book 'Talking About Feelings' and 'My Body! What I Say Goes!' both by Jayneen Sanders, available at [www.e2epublishing.info](http://www.e2epublishing.info) and Amazon US and Amazon UK.

## Pages 30-31

When other people are calm, does this make you calm too? Why do you say that? If other people are stressed, does this make you feel stressed too? Why do you say that? What might be some other words for 'calm'? (chill, relaxed, joyful) Does the family look calm now? Why do you say that?



**NAME:** .....

# IN 2020

In 2020 I felt ....

When I was doing my schoolwork at home I ...

At home I really liked ...

At home I didn't like ...

Here are some things I missed about school ...

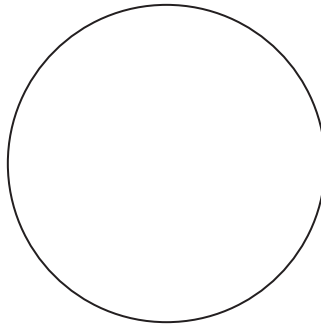
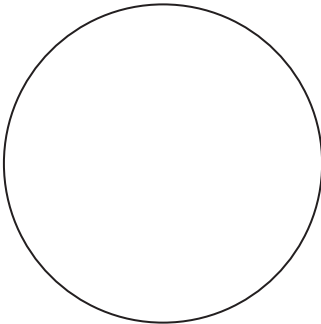
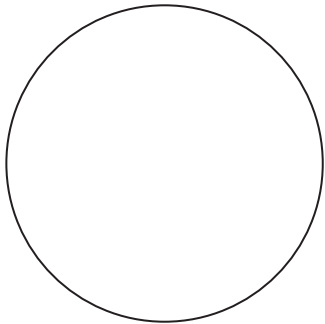
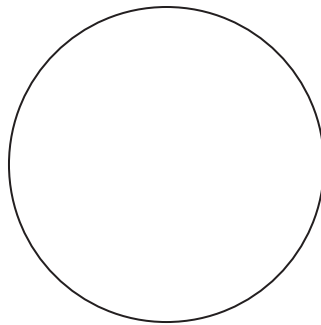
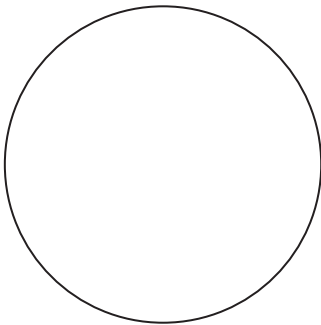
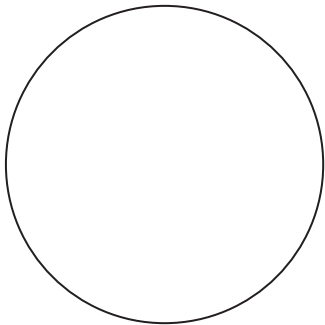
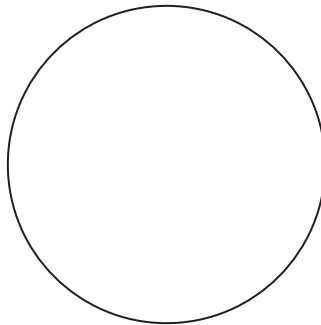
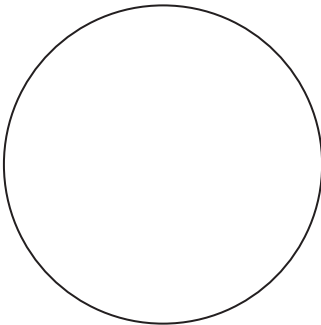
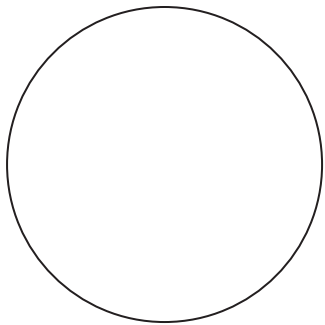
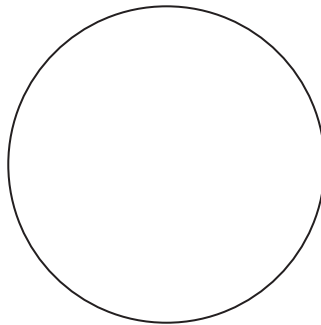
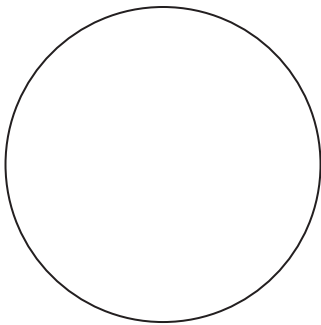
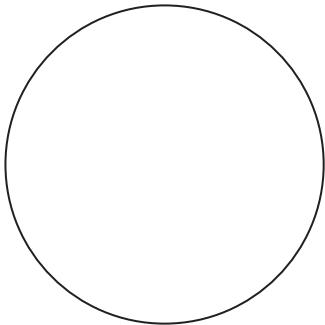
Here are some things I didn't miss about school ...

In 2021 I want to ...

Now I am back at school, here are some things I am looking forward to ...

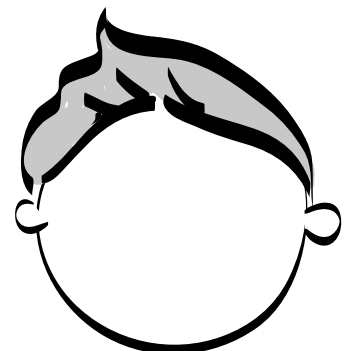
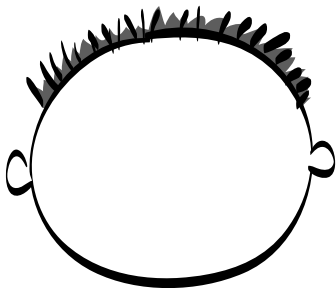
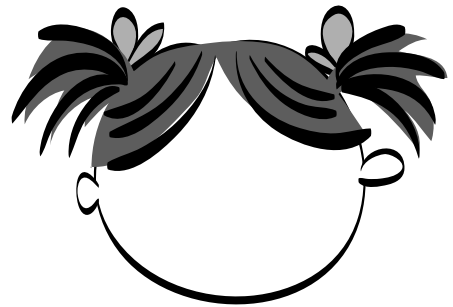
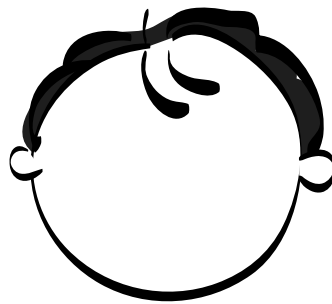
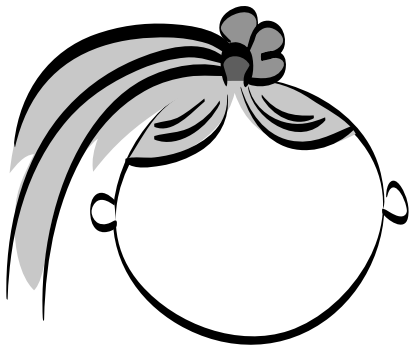
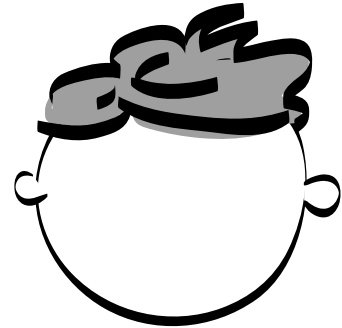
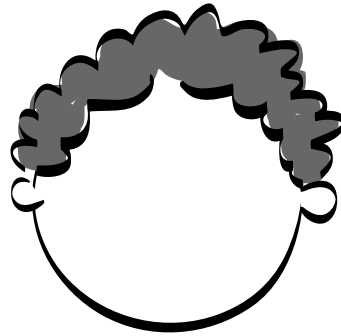
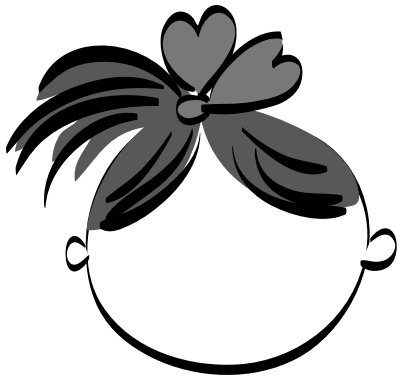


# FACES





# Feelings

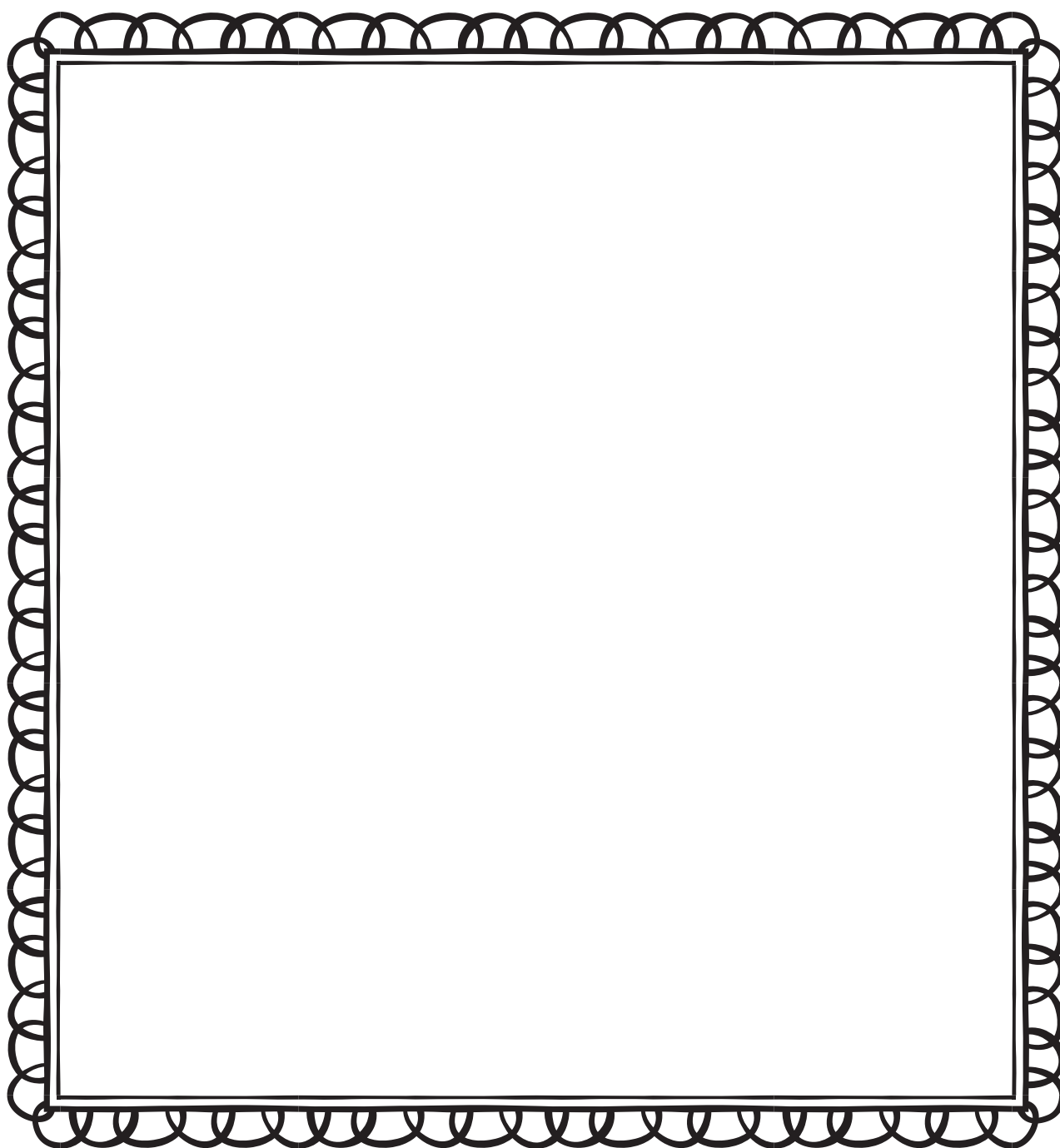




'S



# JOURNAL







A decorative border of various triangles (some solid, some with patterns) surrounds the page. The triangles are arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides.

'S JOURNAL

DATE: .....

How have you shown kindness to yourself today/this week?

How have you shown kindness to others?

What do you feel grateful for?

What did you really like about yourself today/this week?

What do you need to improve on?

Who or what inspired you today/this week?

In what way or ways did they inspire you?

What was something you learned today/this week?

Space to write anything you like!

'S JOURNAL

DATE:

How have you shown kindness to yourself today/this week?

How have you shown kindness to others?

What do you feel grateful for?

What did you really like about yourself today/this week?

What do you need to improve on?

Who or what inspired you today/this week?

In what way or ways did they inspire you?

What was something you learned today/this week?

Space to write anything you like!

# 'S JOURNAL

DATE: .....

How have you shown kindness to yourself today/this week?

How have you shown kindness to others?

What do you feel grateful for?

What did you really like about yourself today/this week?

What do you need to improve on?

Who or what inspired you today/this week?

In what way or ways did they inspire you?

What was something you learned today/this week?

Space to write anything you like!

# 'S JOURNAL

DATE: .....

How have you shown kindness to yourself today/this week?

How have you shown kindness to others?

What do you feel grateful for?

What did you really like about yourself today/this week?

What do you need to improve on?

Who or what inspired you today/this week?

In what way or ways did they inspire you?

What was something you learned today/this week?

Space to write anything you like!

# 'S JOURNAL

DATE: .....

How have you shown kindness to yourself today/this week?

How have you shown kindness to others?

What do you feel grateful for?

What did you really like about yourself today/this week?

What do you need to improve on?

Who or what inspired you today/this week?

In what way or ways did they inspire you?

What was something you learned today/this week?

Space to write anything you like!

# 'S JOURNAL

DATE: .....

How have you shown kindness to yourself today/this week?

How have you shown kindness to others?

What do you feel grateful for?

What did you really like about yourself today/this week?

What do you need to improve on?

Who or what inspired you today/this week?

In what way or ways did they inspire you?

What was something you learned today/this week?

Space to write anything you like!

# EMPOWERMENT BUNDLE



**Bundle of 18 Books  
With 57 Lesson plans**

# Little BIG Chats

12 Little books to help kids unpack BIG topics

**BONUS!  
24 FREE  
LESSON  
PLANS**



**Soft Cover Pack of 12 Books**

**Hard Cover Pack of 12 Books**

Hard cover books can also be purchased individually.

To purchase go to: [www.e2publishing.info](http://www.e2publishing.info)

# FEELING WORDS



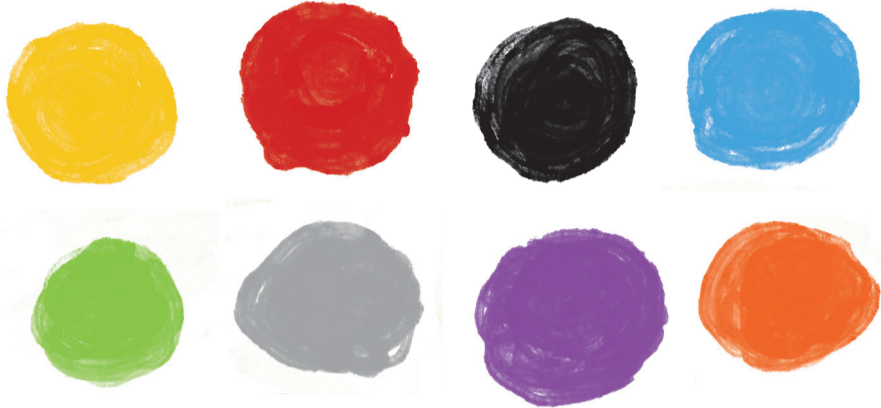
surprised brave joyful worried angry bored  
frightened proud sad embarrassed friendly  
calm quiet curious anxious confused safe  
unsafe relieved jealous frustrated excited  
uncomfortable silly forgotten ignored loved  
curious interested overwhelmed terrified  
peaceful lonely annoyed shy happy

Image from the book 'How Big Are Your Worries Little Bear?'

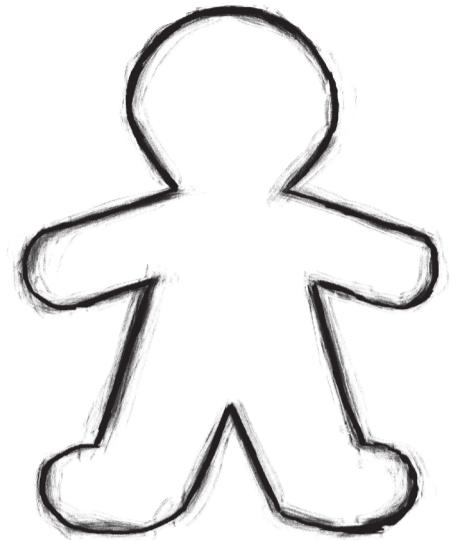


# How Are You Feeling Today?

What colour is your feeling?

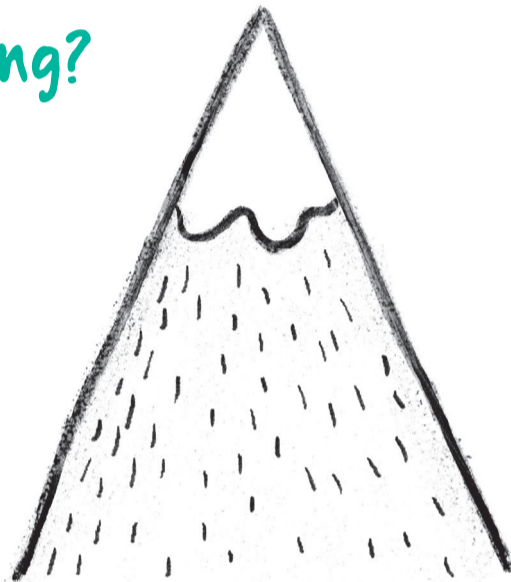


Where do you feel this colour in your body?

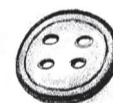


How BIG is your feeling?

Does it feel as BIG as a mountain?



Or does it feel middle-sized ... like the size of a chair?

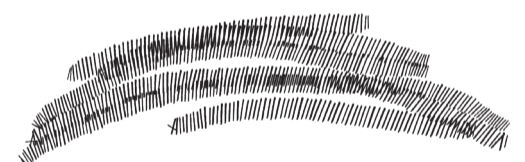


Or as small as a button?

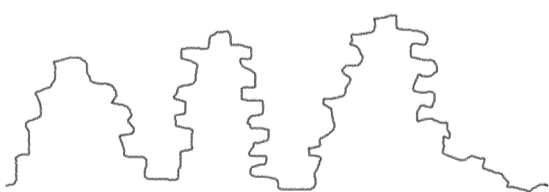
If you could touch your feeling, how might it feel?



bumpy



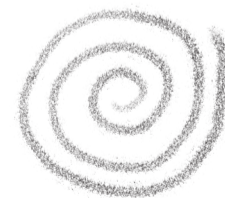
prickly



wibbly wobbly



flat



swirly



soft



hard

What else would you like to say about your feeling?

# Feelings Cards



## WORRIED

anxious, overwhelmed,  
uncomfortable, unsafe, fearful



## PROUD

self-reliant, strong,  
empowered, pleased



## CALM

quiet, relaxed,  
peaceful, serene



## HAPPY

loved, joyful,  
safe, cheerful, hopeful



## SAD

unhappy, disappointed,  
miserable, hopeless, gloomy



## BRAVE

courageous, fearless, empowered,  
strong, daring, independent



## ANGRY

annoyed, frustrated, cross,  
outraged, hurt, mad



## SCARED

frightened,  
terrified, fearful



## DISAPPOINTED

unhappy, sad,  
upset



## CONFUSED

overwhelmed, puzzled,  
muddled



## LONELY

sad, overwhelmed, ignored,  
forgotten, unhappy, hurt



## SHAME

unhappy, unsafe,  
guilty



## GUILTY

shame, confused,  
unhappy, uncomfortable



## EMBARRASSED

confused, worried, sad,  
uncomfortable, shy, unhappy



## EXCITED

happy, joyful, thrilled,  
curious, silly, interested



## CONFIDENT

relaxed, secure,  
comfortable

✂ Cut out each card. Cut out and paste the key word and alternative words on the back of each card, or fold under.

# Feelings Faces and Words



## WORRIED

anxious, overwhelmed,  
uncomfortable, unsafe, fearful



## PROUD

self-reliant, strong,  
empowered, pleased



## CALM

quiet, relaxed,  
peaceful, serene



## HAPPY

loved, joyful,  
safe, cheerful, hopeful



## SAD

unhappy, disappointed,  
miserable, hopeless, gloomy



## BRAVE

courageous, fearless, empowered,  
strong, daring, independent



## ANGRY

annoyed, frustrated, cross,  
outraged, hurt, mad



## SCARED

frightened,  
terrified, fearful



## DISAPPOINTED

unhappy, sad,  
upset



## CONFUSED

overwhelmed, puzzled,  
muddled



## LONELY

sad, overwhelmed, ignored,  
forgotten, unhappy, hurt



## SHAME

unhappy, unsafe,  
guilty



## GUILTY

shame, confused,  
unhappy, uncomfortable



## EMBARRASSED

confused, worried, sad,  
uncomfortable, shy, unhappy



## EXCITED

happy, joyful, thrilled,  
curious, silly, interested



## CONFIDENT

relaxed, secure,  
comfortable

# Feelings Faces



# ‘Circle Time’ Communication Skills

- 1** Let everyone have a turn at speaking.
- 2** Don't make fun of other people's ideas; be respectful.
- 3** Listen to others when it's their turn. Listening to others is how we learn.
- 4** Take time to talk about and explore new ideas.
- 5** Ask questions of others and listen carefully to their answers.
- 6** Don't be afraid to speak up; your voice matters.
- 7** If you don't agree with someone, that's okay, but don't carry the argument with you into other activities.
- 8** Be kind, be friendly, be interested, be respectful and have fun!



# Growth Mindset

Mistakes  
help me learn  
and grow.

I am  
on the right  
track.

I try things that  
are sometimes  
hard for me.

I stick with  
things and  
don't give up.

I cheer myself  
up when things  
get hard.

I am a  
problem  
solver!

I always  
try new  
things.

Learning  
is my  
superpower!

I am always  
brave enough  
to try.

I get better at  
things when  
I practice.

When I don't  
succeed right  
away, I try  
again.

I ask for  
help when  
I need it.

I learn  
from my  
mistakes.

I don't  
compare  
myself to  
others.

When I don't  
succeed, I say, "I  
can't do it YET,  
but I'll keep  
trying."