



Family and Feelings



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My mom and I were talking recently about my daughter's development. She was wondering if I thought Madison (who is 4 years old) was ready for kindergarten. Lately, we have seen her become a lot better at letter and sound recognition. We are now working with her on her numbers ... it's a brutal process! To say that she is not interested would be an understatement.

As I continued to reflect with my mother, I thought, "absolutely ... Madison will certainly be ready for kindergarten." My study of resilience, my experience as a teacher and a trainer has taught me that there is so much that goes into school readiness. While Madison may be working to figure out the ABC's and 123's, her discoveries regarding emotions, feelings and how to express them in an appropriate manner have been a joy to watch.

One of the goals we try to implement as a family is to create a safe place for all of us to talk about our feelings. When we teach our children to name their feelings when they occur, they will begin to build an emotional vocabulary over time, and get to the point where they are able to identify those feelings and talk to you about them. This will then help them learn the basics of expressing their feelings appropriately.

Madison and I recently did an activity that we would like to share with you. The activity actually comes from DCRC's *Your Journey Together* (YJT) curriculum. This activity encourages parents and children to explore feelings and have an opportunity to express them visually. While the YJT version is designed for parents to complete, I did things a bit differently, and here's how you can try it yourself...

1. Download the YJT activity: [Self-Regulation – A Protective Factor](#)
2. Begin by reading each *feeling* word with your child and talking about what the word means.
3. Look at books, magazines and photos of people displaying different emotions. Have your child label what they see.
4. Take things further by asking your child to show you different *feelings faces*. For example, ask your child to show you a “scared face.” Capture the moment by taking a photo with your phone or camera. **(Can you guess the different feelings Madison is displaying in the included photos?)**
5. Next, ask your child to draw the faces on paper. Think about the eyes, the eyebrows, the nose and the mouth.
6. Perfection is not the goal regarding the artistic efforts! Just allow your child to draw.
7. Keep going as long as your child is interested; come back to it if you need to.
8. Have fun with the process!
9. Make it a family affair by having others get involved.



SCHOOL READINESS

- Am I able to take turns?
- Can I solve simple social problems?
- Am I able to follow more than 2 simple instructions?
- Can I climb equipment safely?
- Can I get dressed on my own?
- Am I able to identify my emotions?
- Do I listen to my friends and my teacher?
- Am I able to handle my frustration without harming others?

These skills will help me to learn my ABCs.
My ABCs won't help me learn these skills.

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That's it! This can be a wonderful activity for promoting your child's self-regulation. Madison and I had so much fun, and we hope you will, too!