

We  
Find

Feelings Clues

# I Know Silly



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To my mom and sisters. Together we are the silliest.

—LNG





I'm a detective. I look for clues. They tell me what is happening around me.



I see a familiar sign.  
I feel my stomach rumble.  
I know these clues.  
It must be pizza night!



I'm also a **feelings detective**. I look for clues in my body.  
They help me figure out how I am feeling.

I draw about my feelings in a special notebook.  
I call it my feelings detective notebook.





## Dear Caring Adult,

Thank you for choosing to explore emotions with young children. Reading about and discussing emotions offers you an opportunity to better understand a young child, to open a dialogue about how they feel, and to help them learn how to express and cope with those feelings. Young children are just starting to connect facial expressions with emotion words. You might notice that they can point out when a friend's face looks happy or when a book or movie character seems sad, but they might also need help understanding their own emotions.

Many emotions feel similar in our bodies. This book highlights silly—a joyful emotion—and also focuses on shy and embarrassed, which can feel a lot alike. These three emotions all have a social component. Shyness or embarrassment can often make children feel like they don't want attention, whereas silliness usually relates to wanting to share playful joy with others. While silly might seem to contrast with shy and embarrassed, reading about them together offers a range of feelings clues for children to recognize, discuss, and pair with coping strategies. Sharing three emotions also helps teach children a wide and complex emotional vocabulary.

You can work to support children's deeper understanding of emotions in many ways. The ideas that follow are just a few of them—you'll discover more as you go!

### Help children make and use their own feelings detective notebooks.

Children can build many key emotional competencies by looking for feelings clues in their own faces and bodies. Recording emotional experiences gives children a way to process emotions and provides adults with ways to discuss those feelings with children. Having a written notebook also allows children to go back and revisit emotions they have had and remember how they handled those emotions, a step that can also remind them of what could work in the future when those feelings or others arise.

Feelings detective notebooks can take several forms. A simple approach is for children to freely draw bodies and facial expressions, as the character in this book does. Children can work with adults to label the pages with emotion words. Depicting simple causes of emotions, such as a balloon popping, can help children remember the scenarios in more vivid detail. And if children wish to tell a larger story through words, adults can also support them by taking dictation and writing down what they narrate about their experiences.

Another option is for you to prepare notebooks with an outline of a body on each page. You can then support children in picking the colors that feel right to them to represent specific feelings, and coloring the parts of the



body where they are feeling that emotion. For example, this could look like a child picking green for excitement and coloring in a big green smile, green hands, and green feet to represent that their excitement was most strongly felt in their face and limbs.

Here are some other ways to support children in making and using feelings detective notebooks:

- Buy or make special feelings detective notebooks and help children as they decorate them.
- Ask children about their drawings and encourage them to talk about what happened, how they felt, and what clues they noticed in their bodies.
- If children want your support, help them label their pictures or add dictations.
- Model by drawing your own feelings detective picture, labeling it with an emotion word, and sharing how you felt and what clues you noticed in your body.
- Ask children what they did to feel better or what steps they took to help their bodies regulate. If they didn't feel like they had a strategy or tool for this, you could ask what might help the next time based on how their bodies felt. For example, you might say, "If your legs felt like running, how could you safely get that energy out?"
- Comment on children's efforts and their emerging skills. For instance, "Wow, you really listened to your body!" or, "You remember how your voice sounds when you are angry."



### Accept emotions without judgment.

Acceptance without judgment looks like responding to a child's shy or embarrassed feelings with support and validation. For example, "You're feeling shy right now and that's okay. Your body will tell you when you are ready to join in." Or it could look like offering to help a child work through an emotion. You might say, "It's hard to feel embarrassed," instead of saying that it isn't a big deal. Honoring children's emotions without trying to change them supports children in believing that they know their own bodies and feelings best.

### Notice body clues in yourself or in children.

Model emotional skills by talking about your own body clues. For example, you might say, "I didn't know anyone at the party. I felt a little shy at first, like I wanted to stand by myself and just watch." You might also note ways you regulate if you are feeling silly when it's less appropriate to be outwardly silly, or share how you recognize your body's clues and what steps you take when an emotion is uncomfortable. Ask children to tell you about their body clues by asking how their body feels, how their voice sounds, or how their face looks.

