



1-2-3



My Feelings and Me



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Illustrated by Priscilla Burris

free spirit
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Dedication

To each other for the friendship, support, sharing, and meaningful work!



A Letter to Caring Adults

Welcome, everyone! We are so glad you have found this book. Parents, grandparents, teachers, counselors, and all caring adults play an important role in helping children with their feelings.

Understanding how feelings work and what to do with them is a skill that children can learn and practice. Children who understand, accept, and manage their feelings in healthy ways experience greater overall emotional and physical wellness.

This book gives you friendly, straightforward, and hands-on ways to support children in identifying, expressing, and coping with all their feelings. This is done in child-friendly language, structured around a counting format, which is easy to remember and integrate into your busy life. The Guide for Caring Adults at the back of the book contains even more information, ideas, and easy-to-use strategies. *1-2-3 My Feelings and Me* is meant to be read, shared, discussed, and played with!

We hope that together you will have fun, learn, and feel empowered.

*Yours on the feeling journey,
-Goldie and Lisa*



Everyone everywhere has all kinds of feelings—*just like me.*



And me!



What about you?

There are many different feelings and many things to know about them.

Let's count our way through the **1-2-3s of feelings** together!

Talking About Feelings and What to Do with Them: A Guide for Caring Adults

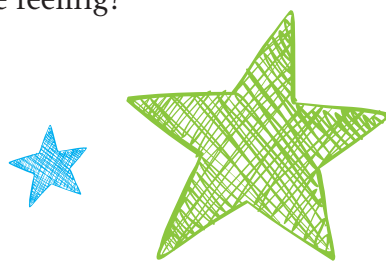
One thing we all have in common is that we all have feelings, and we all need to find ways to manage and deal with them. Our ability to manage our emotions is connected to our effectiveness in navigating the world and creating healthy and supportive relationships with ourselves and others. The earlier we learn how feelings work and what to do with them, the more wellness and life satisfaction we experience.

This guide provides detailed information about the concepts presented in *1-2-3 My Feelings and Me*. This guide can be used to support children in understanding the myriad of emotions they face, how those feelings might be experienced in daily life, and various coping strategies.

1: We All Have Feelings

There is value in knowing and sharing out loud with children that we all have feelings and that we all need to learn how to manage them. All people—including adults—must find ways to deal with comfortable and uncomfortable emotions. The universality of emotional experiences can often be a place of connection and a bridge to creating conversation. Here are some suggested questions to use to engage children as you read the book:

- ★ “Look at the pictures in the book. How do you think each person is feeling?”
- ★ “Why do you think that?”
- ★ “What do you think the person might do about the feelings?”
- ★ “What else might this person be feeling?”



2: We Can Feel Our Feelings in Two Important Ways

Our feelings can be felt through physical sensations in our body. At the same time, we can experience feelings through thoughts that can fill our mind. Learning how to identify the physical sensations and thoughts we have in response to feelings can help children feel more in charge of their emotions.

Ask children to think about a time when they had feelings filling their bodies and their minds. Ask them questions such as:

- ★ “What were you feeling?”
- ★ “Where in your body did you feel it?”
- ★ “What words did you say to yourself?”
- ★ “What thoughts filled your head?”

Tell children that learning to ask themselves these questions *while* they are experiencing feelings can help them understand what might be happening and give them ideas about how to handle the situation.

Children may need examples of the physical and cognitive experiences that can accompany emotions. For example, when we are nervous or scared, it may feel like we have butterflies in our stomach, our heart might beat faster, or we may feel hot or out of breath. At the same time, these physical sensations can be accompanied by thoughts such as, “I can’t do it,” “People will laugh at me,” or “Something bad is going to happen.” Encourage children to try drawing these feelings, sensations, and thoughts; to act them out; or to write stories about them. These activities may help children become more aware of what is happening for them physically and mentally.

3: Feelings Come in Three Sizes

Feelings (both at the physical and cognitive level) can be felt with various degrees of intensity, from quite small to really big. The intensity of feelings can also change, with bigger feelings decreasing or smaller feelings increasing. It is important to normalize the intensity of the feeling experience for children. Adults can help do this by asking, “How big or strong is this feeling?” and “How long have you been having this feeling?” Adults can also get the conversation going by talking about their own feelings and their intensity. For example, “I was so nervous about going to the dentist that my stomach was hurting” or “I was a little bit frustrated when I could not get my computer working.” It is important to help children understand that the size and intensity of feelings gives us information about what’s going on inside of us.

It can also be valuable to use a visual scale to display the range of intensity an emotion might have. For instance, you could show children a numeric scale, with 1 representing a low intensity, 5 a medium intensity, and a 10 a high intensity. If this scale were



displayed in a classroom or other space, children could then be asked to indicate where on the intensity scale they are feeling during any given situation.

Another way to represent a scale of intensity would be to invite children to draw expressive faces or emojis and then share and describe their drawings. The action of drawing and sharing is a healthy way of exploring and expressing internal emotional experiences. In addition, children could be asked to show with their bodies the different sizes of their feelings. For example, children might stretch their arms wide and make their bodies appear taller and bigger to represent an intense and possibly overwhelming feeling. Children can then be invited to name, as best they can, the strength of the feeling. This will help them get connected physically and mentally to what it feels like to experience this level of emotion. Once the intensity of the feeling is identified, adults can invite children to try various strategies outlined in the book to manage or cope with their feelings.

4: Feelings Are Always Changing

Children and adults will experience many feelings in a single day, a single hour, or even a single minute! Feelings are by nature fluid, constantly growing, lessening, and shifting. Some feelings will change quickly and may be quite easily experienced, processed, and expressed by children and adults. Other feelings will move slowly and need time before they can be articulated. It can be a source of comfort for children to know that no feeling is permanent and their feelings will change. In particular, children may feel better equipped to tolerate emotions—especially strong or uncomfortable emotions—if they understand the experience will not last forever and that feelings are constantly transforming.

Naming these changes when we observe them is one simple, direct, and powerful strategy to help children begin to identify that feelings change. For example, “I noticed this morning you were feeling excited about the soccer game, and now I can see you are feeling a bit nervous” or “You seem to be feeling shy about playing with the other kids at the park. Do you think that feeling may change, and you might feel curious about what they are doing once you are there?” This is not to deny a child’s current

