

We
Find

Feelings Clues

I Know Mad



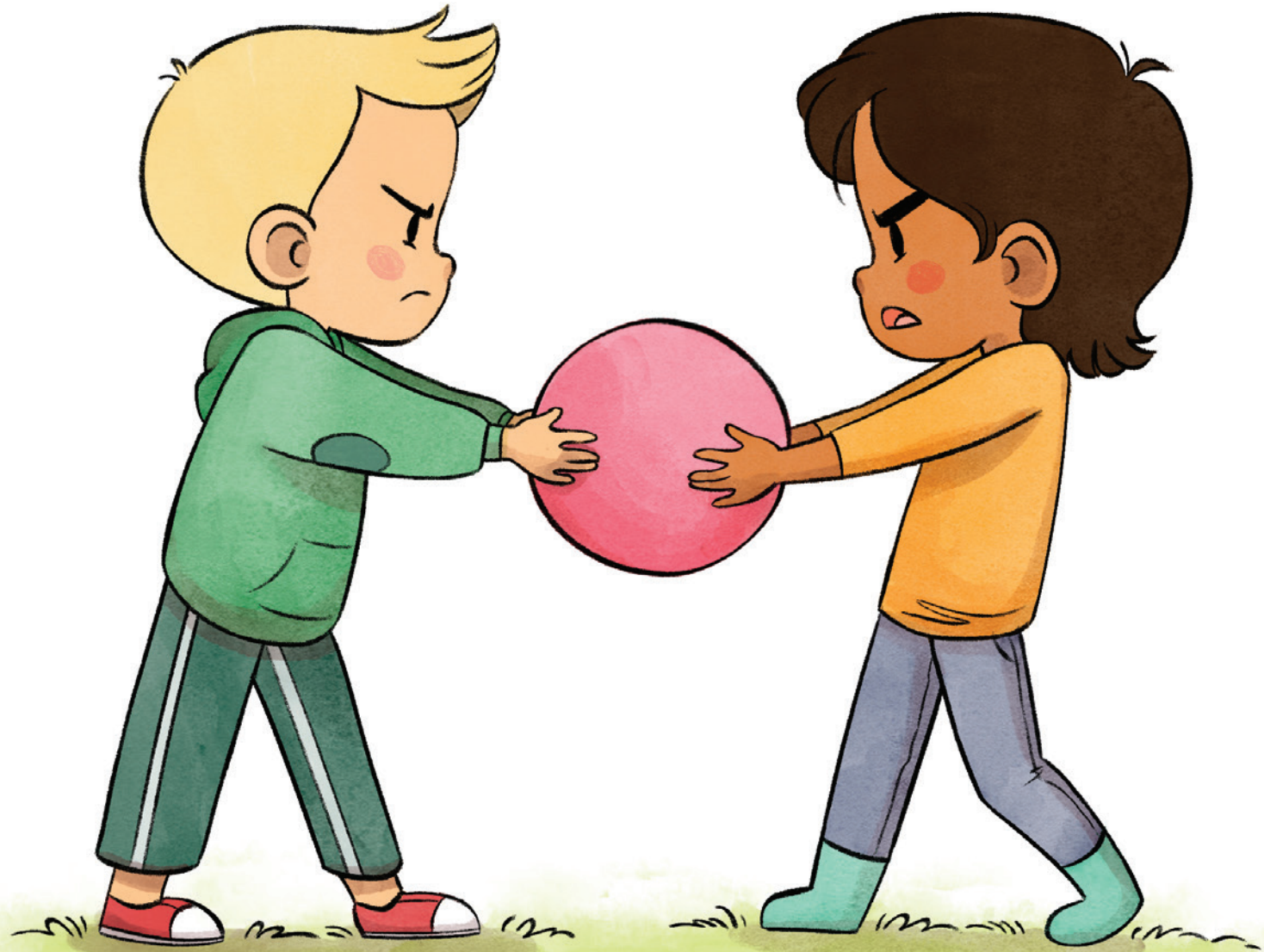


At school I've been learning about feelings. Our teacher, Mrs. Bird, is helping us become feelings detectives.

We look for clues in our bodies. They help us figure out how we are feeling. Then we draw our feelings and talk about them.



Sometimes it's easy to know how I feel.



Sometimes it's hard.



My feelings change every day and all day long.



This morning, I was having fun until I got bumped.

My body's clues started to change.
My cheeks felt hot.
My muscles felt tight in my forehead and hands.
I wanted to talk but my voice sounded like a growl.



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 emotions that feel a lot alike in order to help teach children a wide and complex emotion vocabulary. Rather than only focusing on feeling mad, this story highlights frustration and jealousy too. These three emotions, while feeling similar in one's body, are felt in different situations and sometimes eased by trying different coping strategies. Helping children recognize and name these emotional nuances will, in turn, help them respond to and cope with these feelings.

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 helping label and acknowledge an emotion, like Mrs. Bird did in this story by suggesting that maybe the main character was feeling jealous. It can also look like offering to help a child work through an emotion, rather than telling them they don't need to be frustrated or that their problem isn't a big deal.

Notice body clues in yourself or in children.

Model emotional skills by talking out loud about your own body clues. For example, you might say, "My heart is beating fast, and my teeth are clenched together. I've tried this recipe three times and it hasn't worked. I'm feeling really frustrated. I'm going to step away and come back to the kitchen later to try again when I'm calm." You can also ask children to tell you about their body clues by asking how their body feels, how their voice sounds, or how their face looks. Like the characters in this book, you can work to record body clues together and name them.

Build children's emotion vocabulary by introducing related emotion words.

When a child describes feeling mad that a peer has something they don't have, you can follow up by expanding with a more precise emotion word. "Being mad about not having what someone else has is an emotion like mad. It's called *envy*." Another similar feeling is called *jealousy*."

