

How I Feel









Welcome to the Adult Interpretation Guide

A gentle guide for noticing, naming, and responding with care

This guide is here to gently support your understanding of the feelings a child might be expressing through the What Helped Me toolkit. Each category reflects different emotional states, needs, or signals — from calm and connected to overwhelmed or unsure.

Understanding the Categories

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|---|---|
|  Calm | A quiet moment when things felt soft, safe, or gently settled |
|  Silly | Playful energy or laughter that brought lightness or joy |
|  Cross | Strong feelings that needed space, movement, or support |
|  Sad | A tender feeling of hurt, loss, or needing comfort |
|  Brave | Trying something hard, even when it felt a bit scary |
|  Mixed | Swirly, tangled feelings that were tricky to name |


Jump to a category

 Calm

 Silly

 Cross

 Sad

 Brave

 Mixed

How I Feel – Calm

Gentle Support for Emotional Awareness

This tool helps children notice and share when they feel calm — inside their body, in their thoughts, or in their surroundings. It's designed to be speech-optional, so children can point, choose, or simply sit with the cards. There's no pressure to explain — every feeling is valid.

Why It Helps

Calm can mean many things: feeling safe, settled, quiet, or okay. It doesn't have to mean still or silent — it might be a soft feeling in the body, a gentle breath, or a moment of peace. Recognising calm helps children build emotional awareness and notice what supports regulation.

This tool makes those invisible feelings visible — so adults can respond with care, not assumptions.

How to Use

- Invite the child to choose a card that shows how they feel.
 - You can use this tool during a check-in, or to reflect after a moment of regulation.
 - No need for words — just noticing is enough.
 - Adults can use the gentle interpretations below to respond supportively.
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Calm Feelings and Gentle Interpretations



I Feel Proud

This may reflect a sense of achievement, recognition, or growth.

Supportive response: Acknowledge the child's effort with warmth. Say, "I see how hard you worked," or simply share the moment. Let pride be felt without explanation.



I Feel Safe

This may signal emotional or physical safety, often after connection or co-regulation.

Supportive response: Honour the feeling. You might say, "I'm glad you feel safe." Let the child stay in that feeling without needing to move on.



I Feel Calm

This may reflect a sense of internal quiet, safety, or regulation.

Supportive response: Acknowledge the calm gently. You might say, "I see you're feeling calm — that's lovely." No need to ask why — just affirm the moment.



I Feel Okay

This may signal a sense of balance, emotional regulation, or quiet stability.

Supportive response: Honour the calm without pushing for more. Say, "It's good to feel okay," and let the child rest in that feeling. No need to elevate or analyse — okay is enough.

**I FEEL
CONTENT**



I Feel Content

This may show a sense of quiet satisfaction, balance, or emotional ease.

Supportive response: Celebrate the feeling softly. You might say, “It looks like things feel okay right now.” No need to analyse — just be present.

**I FEEL
LOVED**



I Feel Loved

This may express emotional connection, warmth, or relational safety.

Supportive response: Reflect the love back. You might say, “You’re loved, and I’m so glad you feel it.” Let the child hold that feeling without needing to explain.

Gentle Reflection Prompt

“Let’s notice what helped your body feel a little better.”

(This can be spoken, signed, or simply offered as a quiet moment.)

How I Feel – Silly

Gentle Support for Playful Feelings

This tool helps children notice and share when they feel silly, playful, or full of energy. It's designed to be speech-optional, so children can point, choose, or simply sit with the cards. There's no pressure to explain — every feeling is valid.

Why It Helps

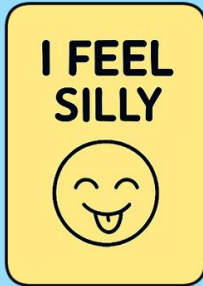
Silly feelings are often joyful, expressive, and full of movement. They can be a sign of emotional safety, social connection, or sensory excitement. Recognising silliness helps children feel proud of their playfulness and understand that light-hearted emotions are just as important as calm or serious ones.

This tool makes those invisible feelings visible — so adults can respond with celebration, not correction.

How to Use

- Invite the child to choose a card that shows how they feel.
 - You can use this tool during playful moments, or to reflect on times of joy and connection.
 - No need for words — just noticing is enough.
 - Adults can use the gentle interpretations below to respond supportively.
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Silly Feelings and Gentle Interpretations



I Feel Silly

This may reflect a playful mood, social safety, or expressive energy.

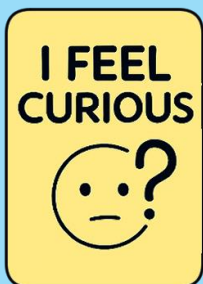
Supportive response: Join in if invited. Let the child be silly without needing to tone it down — it's a valid emotional state.



I Feel Playful

This may signal a desire for interaction, imagination, or joyful movement.

Supportive response: Offer playful engagement — games, pretend play, or movement. Avoid framing it as distraction or misbehaviour.



I Feel Curious

This may show a sense of wonder, exploration, or interest in the world.

Supportive response: Encourage gentle discovery. Let the child ask questions or explore without needing to “get it right.”



I Feel Excited

This may express anticipation, joy, or high energy.

Supportive response: Celebrate the excitement. Help the child channel it safely, without dampening their enthusiasm.



I Feel Energetic

This may reflect a need to move, express, or release energy.

Supportive response: Offer movement breaks, dancing, or outdoor play. Let the child regulate through action, not suppression.



I Feel Happy

This may reflect joy, lightness, or emotional ease — often expressed through play, movement, or laughter.

Supportive response: Celebrate the moment with warmth. Join in if invited, mirror their joy, or stay nearby. Let happiness be felt freely, without toning it down or turning it into a task.

Gentle Reflection Prompt

“Let’s notice what helped your body feel a little better.”

(This can be spoken, signed, or simply offered as a quiet moment.)

How I Feel – Cross

Gentle Support for Big Feelings

This tool helps children notice and share when they feel cross, frustrated, or overwhelmed. It's designed to be speech-optional, so children can point, choose, or simply sit with the cards. There's no pressure to explain — every feeling is valid.

Why It Helps

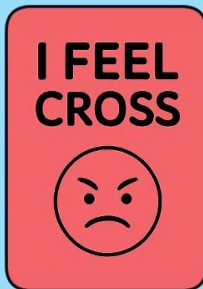
Feeling cross is part of being human. It can show up as frustration, anger, wild energy, or emotional wobbles. Recognising these feelings helps children feel seen and safe — not punished or misunderstood. It also opens the door to co-regulation and gentle repair.

This tool makes those invisible feelings visible — so adults can respond with empathy, not control.

How to Use

- Invite the child to choose a card that shows how they feel.
 - You can use this tool during or after a moment of dysregulation, or as part of a daily check-in.
 - No need for words — just noticing is enough.
 - Adults can use the gentle interpretations below to respond supportively.
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😞 Cross Feelings and Gentle Interpretations



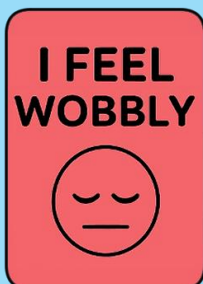
I Feel Cross

This may reflect injustice, frustration, or emotional overload.
Supportive response: Acknowledge the feeling without judgment. You might say, "It's okay to feel cross. I'm here."
Avoid asking for reasons straight away — just offer calm presence.



I Feel Wild

This may signal high energy, dysregulation, or a need to release strong emotions.
Supportive response: Provide safe movement options or sensory outlets. Let the child express without shame — wildness is not misbehaviour.



I Feel Wobbly

This may show emotional instability, confusion, or vulnerability beneath the surface.
Supportive response: Offer grounding and gentle reassurance. You might say, "Things feel wobbly right now — let's sit together." No need to fix, just be with.



I Feel Overwhelmed

This may reflect a buildup of emotional, sensory, or cognitive stress — when things feel too much, too fast, or too loud.
Supportive response: Slow everything down. Reduce demands, offer quiet space, and let the child pause without explaining. Say, "It's okay to take a break," and stay nearby



I Feel Frustrated

This may express blocked needs, unmet expectations, or difficulty with control.

Supportive response: Validate the struggle. You might say, “That was really hard.” Help the child name what didn’t work, if they’re ready.



I Feel Angry

This may reflect a strong emotional boundary, a need for justice, or deep hurt.

Supportive response: Honour the anger without fear. You might say, “Anger is okay. Let’s find a safe way to be with it.” Avoid trying to calm too quickly — first, connect.

Gentle Reflection Prompt

“Let’s notice what felt strong or heavy inside.”

(This can be spoken, signed, or simply offered as a quiet moment.)

How I Feel – Sad

Gentle Support for Tender Feelings

This tool helps children notice and share when they feel sad, worried, or emotionally tender. It's designed to be speech-optional, so children can point, choose, or simply sit with the cards. There's no pressure to explain — every feeling is valid.

Why It Helps

Sadness can feel quiet, heavy, or invisible. It might show up as tiredness, loneliness, or a sense of being left out. Recognising sadness helps children feel seen and supported — not rushed to “cheer up.” It also builds emotional literacy and opens space for gentle connection.

This tool makes those invisible feelings visible — so adults can respond with care, not correction.

How to Use

- Invite the child to choose a card that shows how they feel.
 - You can use this tool during quiet moments, or to reflect after emotional overwhelm.
 - No need for words — just noticing is enough.
 - Adults can use the gentle interpretations below to respond supportively.
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☹️ Sad Feelings and Gentle Interpretations

**I FEEL
SAD**



I Feel Sad

This may reflect emotional heaviness, disappointment, or quiet grief.

Supportive response: Acknowledge the sadness softly. You might say, “It’s okay to feel sad. I’m here.” No need to fix — just be present.

**I FEEL
WORRIED**



I Feel Worried

This may signal anxiety, uncertainty, or fear of something unknown.

Supportive response: Offer reassurance and safety. You might say, “You’re safe now. We can talk if you want.” Let the child lead.

**I FEEL
SMALL**



I Feel Small

This may show vulnerability, shame, or a sense of being overlooked.

Supportive response: Affirm the child’s worth. You might say, “You matter so much.” Avoid minimising — just reflect kindness.

**I FEEL
TIRED**



I Feel Tired

This may express emotional exhaustion, sensory overload, or physical fatigue.

Supportive response: Offer rest, quiet, or soft comfort. You might say, “Let’s take a break together.” No need to push through.

**I FEEL
LONELY**



I Feel Lonely

This may reflect a need for connection, presence, or emotional closeness.

Supportive response: Sit nearby, offer gentle touch if invited, and remind the child they're not alone.

**I FEEL
LEFT OUT**



I Feel Left Out

This may signal exclusion, social pain, or a need for belonging.

Supportive response: Validate the feeling. You might say, "That must have felt hard." Invite connection without forcing interaction.

Gentle Reflection Prompt

"Let's notice what felt tender or heavy inside."

(This can be spoken, signed, or simply offered as a quiet moment.)



How I Feel – Brave



Gentle Support for Courageous Feelings

This tool helps children notice and share when they feel brave — even if that bravery feels quiet, wobbly, or growing. It's designed to be speech-optional, so children can point, choose, or simply sit with the cards. There's no pressure to explain — every feeling is valid.



Why It Helps

Bravery isn't loud or perfect — it can be soft, shaky, or uncertain. It might show up as trying something new, facing a fear, or simply showing up when things feel hard. Recognising brave feelings helps children build confidence, self-awareness, and emotional resilience.

This tool makes those invisible feelings visible — so adults can respond with encouragement, not expectation.



How to Use

- Invite the child to choose a card that shows how they feel.
 - You can use this tool after a moment of courage, or to reflect on growth and effort.
 - No need for words — just noticing is enough.
 - Adults can use the gentle interpretations below to respond supportively.
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Brave Feelings and Gentle Interpretations



I Feel Brave

This may reflect a moment of courage, effort, or emotional strength.

Supportive response: Acknowledge the bravery. You might say, “That was really brave of you.” Avoid measuring it — just affirm it.



I Feel Strong

This may signal physical or emotional strength, or a sense of capability.

Supportive response: Celebrate the strength. You might say, “You felt strong today — I saw that.” Let the child define what strength means to them.



I Feel Ready

This may show confidence, preparation, or emotional readiness.

Supportive response: Honour the readiness. You might say, “You’re ready, and I believe in you.” Avoid rushing — readiness can be quiet.



I Feel Hopeful

This may express optimism, trust, or emotional openness.

Supportive response: Reflect the hope gently. You might say, “It’s lovely to feel hopeful.” Let the child hold onto that feeling without needing to explain.



I Feel Capable

This may reflect self-belief, independence, or emotional growth.

Supportive response: Affirm the capability. You might say, "You did that all by yourself — I'm proud of you." Avoid overpraising — just notice.



I Feel Change

This may signal an internal shift — emotional, sensory, or situational — that feels new, uncertain, or stretching.

Supportive response: Honour the transition. You might say, "It's okay to feel different inside." Let the child explore the change without needing to explain or resolve it.

Gentle Reflection Prompt

"Let's notice what felt brave or growing inside."

(This can be spoken, signed, or simply offered as a quiet moment.)

How I Feel – Mixed

Gentle Support for Complex Feelings

This tool helps children notice and share when their feelings are mixed, muddled, or hard to name. It's designed to be speech-optional, so children can point, choose, or simply sit with the cards. There's no pressure to explain — every feeling is valid, even when it's confusing.

Why It Helps

Mixed feelings are common — especially during transitions, big changes, or emotionally layered moments. A child might feel hopeful and worried, excited and tired, or unsure altogether. Recognising mixed emotions helps children feel safe in their complexity and supported without needing to “figure it out.”

This tool makes those invisible feelings visible — so adults can respond with curiosity, not pressure.

How to Use

- Invite the child to choose a card that shows how they feel.
 - You can use this tool during uncertain moments, or to reflect when feelings feel tangled.
 - No need for words — just noticing is enough.
 - Adults can use the gentle interpretations below to respond supportively.
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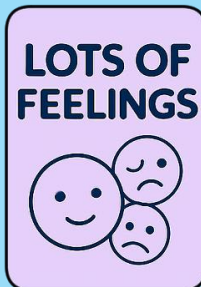
Mixed Feelings and Gentle Interpretations



Need Help

This may reflect emotional overwhelm, confusion, or a quiet call for support.

Supportive response: Offer help gently. You might say, “I’m here if you need me.” Let the child lead — don’t rush to fix.



Lots of Feelings

This may signal emotional layering — joy, sadness, worry, and more all at once.

Supportive response: Validate the mix. You might say, “It’s okay to feel lots of things at once.” Avoid asking for clarity — just be present.



I Feel Quiet

This may show internal processing, emotional fatigue, or a need for stillness.

Supportive response: Honour the quiet. You might say, “We can be quiet together.” Let the child rest in the silence.



I Don’t Know

This may reflect emotional ambiguity, avoidance, or a need for time.

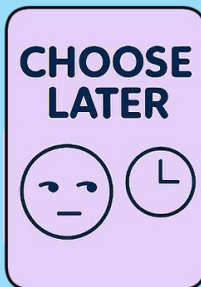
Supportive response: Respect the not-knowing. You might say, “We can come back to this later.” No need to push for answers.



I Don't Know

This may reflect emotional ambiguity, avoidance, or a need for time.

Supportive response: Respect the not-knowing. You might say, "We can come back to this later." No need to push for answers.



Choose Later

This may signal a need for delay, emotional distance, or quiet reflection.

Supportive response: Honour the timing. You might say, "We can wait until you're ready." Let the child feel in control of their process.

Gentle Reflection Prompt

"Let's notice what felt mixed or hard to name."

(This can be spoken, signed, or simply offered as a quiet moment.)