



# EMOTIONAL- AND FRIENDSHIP SKILLS PATH - a tool for emotional skills



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# EMOTIONAL- AND FRIENDSHIP SKILLS PATH

## - a tool for emotional skills

The emotional- and friendship skills path tool is made to support emotional and social skills in early childhood education and preschool education.

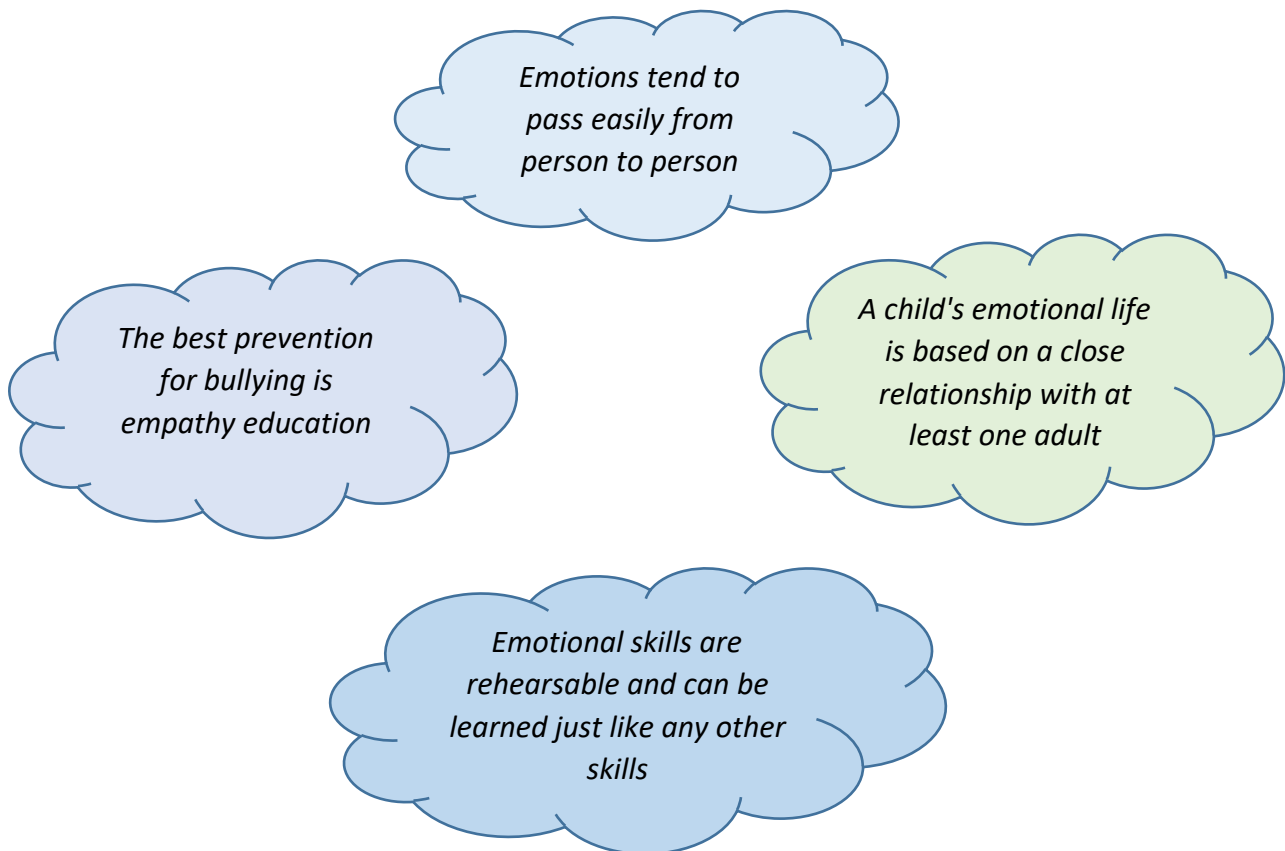
The tool includes:

### 1. The development of emotional- and friendship skills

### 2. Tip box

### 3. Circle of feelings

The first section provides information on the development of children's emotional and social skills in general and by age. Tip box has a material and tip package for pedagogical planning and training in emotional- and friendship skills (Finnish material). The Circle of feelings is used as a basis for pedagogical discussions among staff during the whole year.



## 1. BUILDING EMOTIONAL- AND FRIENDSHIP SKILLS

All our actions are driven by emotions. The duration of an emotion can vary from a few seconds to several hours. Emotions are like clouds: they come in all shapes and sizes. Just like clouds, emotions come and go. Emotions are useful. We can never entirely turn them off because we experience one emotion or another all the time. There is a connection between emotions and physiological reactions in our bodies. Emotions, or emotional reactions, arise in situations that are crucial in terms of our wellbeing. Our facial expressions, body stance, and even our tone of voice may reflect these reactions. Some children are unable to recognise these emotional cues in other people or in themselves. Similarly, those with an autism spectrum disorder can have difficulties with understanding emotional reactions.

**There are *six basic emotions* that influence the regulation of human behaviour: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust and surprise.**

**Happiness** is a positive emotional reaction. Happiness acts as a reward for the body and helps the body recover from stress. Stress has various negative effects, including on our ability to learn new things. All children should experience happiness every day. Children experiencing happiness can appear calm or relieved. Alternatively, a child can demonstrate a sudden burst of joy while engaged in an activity. Children may also appear happy when they are excited or feel a sense of achievement over learning something new or overcoming something that has been weighing on their mind.

**Sadness** causes psychomotor retardation and slows down information processing. Sadness can manifest itself as a longing or a yearning for a person. Sadness can be an overwhelming reaction that depletes a person entirely of any physical strength or energy. A child can show a very powerful reaction to sadness. They may be tearful, or distant and preoccupied. They may be absent-minded and completely silent. Other people react to someone's sadness with empathy, which is helpful in terms of giving the person the help they need. Sadness can also enhance social affinity in certain situations. Just like happiness, the feeling of sadness can be contagious. In a small children's group, it is common for all children to cry when one child starts crying.

**Fear** helps us to avoid danger and make our escape if necessary. Fear can manifest itself as anxiety and restlessness. Sometimes fear can be paralysing. Children in daycare may freeze when confronted with someone they don't know. Children may also experience fear in social situations such as talking in the morning circle or trying something new.

**Anger** activates us and keeps us prepared for physical action. Anger can be a very powerful emotion that has an overall effect on both the body and mind. Anger may be very energising, too. Most of us have probably witnessed a situation where a child starts smashing objects in anger, suddenly showing the physical strength of an adult. Children can get stuck with the feeling of anger and it may be difficult for them to calm down. Sometimes anger can cause a person to feel disappointed and envious of another person. Similarly, the feelings of frustration and irritation can manifest themselves as anger.

**Disgust** helps us to turn away from what could be a harmful experience. It also warns us to back away from a situation. A child playing outside can suddenly pull their hand away from a mud pool. Disgust plays an essential role in preventing socially undesirable behaviour.

**Surprise** is not distinctly a positive or a negative emotion. Surprise can trigger the body's warning system and cause a response when necessary. A child may be very curious when something unexpected and sudden happens. Surprise is linked to our ability to learn something new, suggesting it could motivate us to search for information.

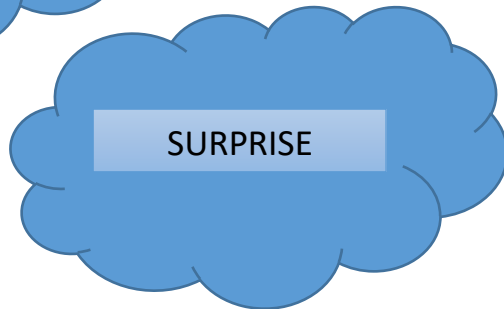
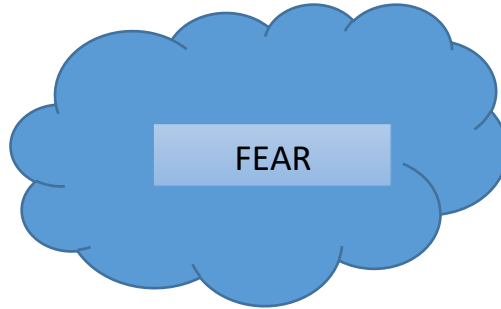
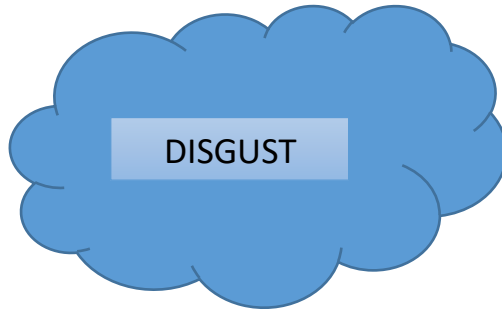
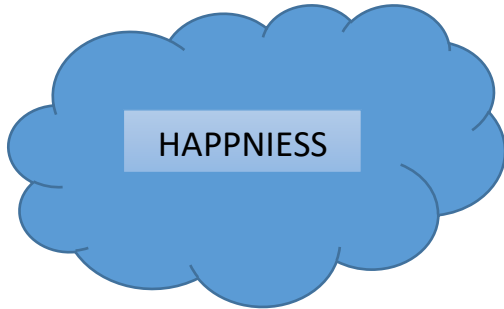
It is important for children in early childhood and pre-primary education to have an opportunity to actively practise emotional skills and to receive pedagogical support from educators. Interaction and response from other people have the strongest influence on a child's emotional development. Adults model emotions for children. Having the opportunity to learn how to identify and regulate emotions is important not only for the child's development but also because a child's ability to regulate their emotions affects the entire group of children, the child's learning and their behaviour later in life. Some children need stronger pedagogical support in their early years to regulate their emotions, in other words *to identify, verbalise, express and control emotions*. Having these skills contributes to the child's ability to function and learn new things.

It may be necessary to divide children into groups to practise emotional skills, as children may have reached very different levels in their ability to regulate their emotions. What is an appropriate level for one child may be completely unreasonable for another. Lack of flexibility and differentiation in the learning environment can cause undue stress even for very young children. The limits for what constitutes normal development in a young child are quite flexible. What an adult might consider abnormal behaviour may be perfectly normal for a young child. Individual differences in children's ability to regulate their emotions start to narrow down later.

The way we experience emotions involves both our mind and body. *Interoceptive awareness* means the ability to connect with ourselves, to recognise what is happening in our bodies and to understand what we need. Self-regulation is linked to bodily sensations. It is important to learn to know ourselves, protect our personal boundaries and fulfil our needs while respecting ourselves and others.

Emotional skills include:	Friendship skills include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to recognise and be mindful of emotions</li> <li>• The ability to foster and reinforce positive emotions and emotional experiences</li> <li>• The ability to accept, tolerate and regulate difficult emotions (at an age-appropriate level)</li> <li>• The ability to understand and empathise with the feelings of others (empathy and compassion)</li> <li>• Understanding emotions includes the ability to identify their causes and consequences; this prevents us from being left at the mercy of emotions.</li> <li>• The ability to express an inner emotion by verbalising it, through movement and/or creative expression</li> <li>• The ability to release emotions from both body and mind, and the ability to explore and regulate emotions through creative and bodily means</li> <li>• It is important to know we can influence our lives and feelings, and to know how to respond to various situations (e.g. how to empower ourselves in stressful situations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to recognise our boundaries and those of others (the ability to say no and ask for help, personal space)</li> <li>• The ability to take part in play and invite others</li> <li>• The ability to behave in a socially acceptable way (listening to others, greeting, making eye contact, etc.)</li> <li>• The ability to take others into account and feel empathy</li> <li>• The ability to apologise / make up</li> <li>• The ability to take turns and share</li> <li>• The ability to interpret facial expressions and body language</li> <li>• The ability to accept the views of others</li> <li>• The ability to resolve conflicts (asking for help, negotiating)</li> <li>• The ability to follow the agreed rules</li> </ul>

# FEELINGS ARE LIKE CLOUDS



## EMOTIONAL- AND FRIENDSHIP SKILLS ARE PRACTICED THROUGH INTERACTION

The skills of regulating emotions are learned by modelling in close human contacts. The core of learning emotional skills is a safe atmosphere, and everyone is allowed to know and practice emotional- and friendship skills. All emotions are equally valuable, by accepting our own feelings and those of the children. You don't learn emotional skills overnight; it requires training through successes and mistakes. The parts of the brain responsible for regulation, develop in us up to the age of 25. So, the child is only at the beginning of this learning journey and the connections to self-reassurance are only just taking shape.

### Interaction between an adult and a child is needed to learn emotional skills:

- Behind a behaviour there is always a feeling and behind the feeling is a need. The feeling has come to tell us something. When we accept a child with his/her feelings, experiences and needs, he/she gets from that empathy and the confidence to be who he/she really is.
- When you wonder and express a feeling together through different senses, the child gets the experience - I am valuable and interesting!
- Detect and admire the child's emotions and his/her ability to cope with them!
- Emotions are like the wind - they come and go. Slow down for a moment and listen: this feeling was very strong for me! What need do I have/does the child have behind this feeling? The child is not aware of his/her own feelings until someone else mirrors them to him/her.

The teaching of emotional skills to others is based on the educator's ability to cope with his/her own emotions. An adult always models how to deal with different emotions by their own example. In the role of educator, we give a lot of ourselves and support those in need around us. In order to cope with this task well enough, we ourselves need support, compassion, wonder and resources to draw into everyday life.

*You don't always have to find a concrete solution to the situation, just seeing and listening to an acute feeling will help you get over the feeling*

*Although emotional reactions are sometimes strong, they also pass when the child is allowed to express them and gets the feeling, he/she is being heard*

*Listening to emotions doesn't mean giving up on a child in everything. It is about receiving a child's feeling, hearing and, at the same time, putting up a safe border if the situation so requires*

## DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONAL SKILLS BY AGE

0-1 years	1-2 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotions are holistic, and the child is almost entirely dependent on an adult's ability to regulate his/her emotions</li> <li>• The child learns to seek safety from an adult</li> <li>• The child also needs an adult to share and strengthen positive emotions</li> <li>• Even a small baby recognizes another's emotions on the face and reacts by crying to another baby's crying.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age of defiance and will</li> <li>• Emotions are already more clearly visible in different situations</li> <li>• Children explore the world more courageously &gt; children sometimes need to be limited</li> <li>• The child shows his dissatisfaction with e.g., shouting or getting into a fit of rage</li> <li>• The child may treat others aggressively in search of their own interests</li> <li>• On the other hand, a child can be unreservedly loving towards their loved ones</li> <li>• The child needs the immediate reassuring, support and assistance of an adult when experiencing strong emotions</li> <li>• Self-knowledge is strengthened (safe feeling and confidence)</li> </ul>
2-4 years	4-6 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The age of defiance and will continues to be wavy</li> <li>• Tantrums and defiance are common when the child is stressed or under strain</li> <li>• It is common for a play-age child who is completely upset to sometimes be limited by holding</li> <li>• At the age of about three years, the child understands that other people have a different mind from him/her</li> <li>• A three-year-old develops the ability to imagine how someone feels. Empathy, able to comfort others</li> <li>• The development of speech is progressing &gt; the child can discuss matters more</li> <li>• An adult must continue to support the child when experiencing strong emotions or nervousness &gt; is usually unable to calm down independently</li> <li>• At the age of three, children often play side-by-side games, but some are also capable of genuine co-play</li> <li>• <b>Learning how to name and tolerate one's own emotions with the support of an adult is an important goal of the age period</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child begins to adopt social rules (manners, rule games)</li> <li>• The child usually has friends of their own with whom engages in mutual play</li> <li>• The child can negotiate with his/her friends in easy situations</li> <li>• A four-year-old already knows how to hide one's own emotions (different from managing emotions &gt; an adult must be sensitively present and talk about emotions and their acceptance)</li> <li>• The social skills of children under the age of 5 are only just beginning. In his activities, he is still me-central, and he doesn't always know how to take others into account. Especially situations where self-control is required or someone who likes to give up are difficult.</li> <li>• The child begins to learn that sometimes he/she has to wait a while before his/her needs are satisfied</li> <li>• Defiance decreases (close to 6 years usually a short period where there are more tantrums - &gt; the progression of the child's cognitive development)</li> <li>• The child still needs adult support to calm down but may manage the smaller tantrums more independently.</li> </ul>

### **Age 0-1 years**

The child needs an adult to share and reinforce positive feelings as well as negative ones.

Although children have very few if any conscious memories of their first years, emotional memories remain in their body. Early childhood experiences significantly influence the development of self-regulation. The adult's role is to mirror the child's feelings and to use words, tone of voice, facial expressions or touch to communicate to the child that they are able to connect with the child's emotions and experiences.

When a young child becomes seen and heard, and their physical and non-verbal messages are responded to, they feel secure, which in turn helps the child develop a positive self-image.

### **Age 1-2 years**

When experiencing strong emotions, the child needs immediate soothing, encouragement and support from an adult.

When a child becomes overwhelmed by an emotion, they rely on adults for **emotional regulation**. By remaining calm and caring despite the child's powerful emotions, the adult shows that there is nothing to worry about.

It is particularly important to remain empathetic and calm when a child is emotionally overwhelmed or has a row with someone, is testing boundaries or is bullying others. When you notice a situation building up, it's advisable to take action immediately and not wait until the last minute when emotions are running high.

Adults provide the child a model for self-regulation. Since children model adults and follow their example, it is important for adults to have good self-regulation skills. No one has to be perfect, but everyone should consider the ways in which they regulate and express their emotions.

### **Age 2-4 years**

In this age group, an important goal is to learn, with support from adults, how to name emotions and tolerate them.

When processing and accepting emotions, the most important skill is the ability to tolerate and live with the emotion. Children learn to deal with their emotions when parents and other carers share their feelings with them. Tolerating and accepting emotions is the most difficult emotional skill, because emotions are not always pleasant. During a day, emotions come and go countless times. A great deal of compassion is needed when dealing with challenging emotions. This includes thoughts and actions that help the body calm down.

In addition to emotions, we experience many physical sensations (hunger, tiredness, heat, tight clothes). Physical discomfort can easily trigger negative emotions.

Children can easily mix sensations with emotions as both are powerful bodily experiences. Sensations and emotions are different things, but both have a strong effect on emotional skills. When speaking to children, it is important that adults make a clear distinction between the two. For instance, they could say "You seem to be really irritated, do you think it's because you are hot and tired?"



### **Age 4-6 years**

A four-year-old is good at hiding their feelings (different from managing emotions -> sensitive presence of an adult is required to help the child verbalise feelings and ways of accepting them).

When an adult models emotions, children learn that everyone experiences different emotions during the day, that we all practice emotional skills, and that no-one is able to deal with emotions in a constructive way all the time.

In situations that raise uncomfortable feelings, being compassionate and merciful towards ourselves provides an alternative way of dealing with the situation. Having compassion for ourselves helps us calm down and explore alternative responses. We can accept what we are feeling at that moment. When we learn to recognise an emotion such as anger and accept it, we learn how to regulate it without feeling a need to take it out on others.

## LÄHTEET:

Carolyn Webster- Stratton: Utveckla barns emotionella och sociala kompetens (Epago)

Hyvinvoivaperhe.fi

Jääskinen -Pelliccioni: Mitä sä rageet – Lapsen ja nuoren tunnetaitojen tukeminen (Lasten Keskus 2020)

Kerola Kyllikki, Kujanpää Sari, Kallio Anja. Tunteesta tunteeseen. Ihmisielen tarina kuvin ja sanoin Oppilaiden harjoituskirja. (2021 viides painos. Kustantaja OPH)

Leea Mattila & Janna Rantala: Mitä ihmettä? -opi ymmärtämään lapsesi mieltä (gummerus 2019)

Lotta Uusitalo-Malmivaara & Kaisa Vuorinen: Se det goda (PS-Kustanus)

Mieli ry: Djurbarnens liv- färdigheter inom psykisk hälsa med hjälp av dockteater

Mäkelä- Trogen: Tunteita päästä varpasiin ( Kirjapaja 2022)

Pöyhönen-Livingston: Tunnetaitojen käsikirja (Mäkelä 2020)

Riihonen, R. ja Koskinen, M. Kuinka kiukku kesytetään? Lasten aggressiokasvatus. (PS-kustannus 2020)

Sainio – Pajulahti – Sajaniemi: Näin tuet lapsen itsesäätelyä. Hyvinvoinnin pedagogiikka varhaiskasvatuksessa. (PS-kustannus 2020)

Sandberg, E. Pedagoginen tuki varhaiskasvatuksessa ja esiopetuksessa. (PS-kustannus 2021)

Siira Juha, Saarinen Mikael : Tunteet kehossa ( kirjapaja 2022)

Suntio: kesytä jännitys- opas kasvattajalle (PS-kustannus 2015)

Tunne-, turva- ja sosiaaliset taidot varhaiskasvatuksessa ja koulussa –koulutus, JAMK

[Tunteesta tunteeseen | Opetushallitus \(oph.fi\)](https://oph.fi)

## 2. Tip box

WELL-BEING IN EVERYDAY LIFE	SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND RECOGNITION OF EMOTION	SOCIAL SKILLS	TUNNESÄÄTELYKEINOT
<p><b>Well-being in everyday life:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults are always responsible for the child's well-being</li> <li>• Smallgroup activities</li> <li>• Predictive everyday life, routines, use of images (papunet), discuss events in advance</li> <li>• Unhurriedness, flexibility, adult plan (let children play out)</li> <li>• Nutrition</li> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Sleep, rest, storytelling</li> <li>• Quiet corner/ room, possibility to rest/ calm down in daycare everyday life</li> <li>• Emotional atmosphere-common rules of comfort with children</li> <li>• Proximity, touch</li> </ul>	<p><b>Self-knowledge:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are all different</li> <li>• Awareness of own strengths</li> <li>• Family power play (downloadable from ellipsi.me)</li> <li>• Note good-action cards (positive.fi)</li> <li>• Mindfulness</li> <li>• Social stories and problem solving cards (viitotturakkaus.fi)</li> <li>• Life of animal children - puppet theatre. Mental health skills through table theatre (Mieli ry)</li> <li>• Eetu and litu books (Leena Mäkinen, Anne Suvanto, Soile Ukkola)</li> <li>• Tsembalo game / cards (available for download, available by googling)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Friendship skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power emotional cards (downloadable tukiliitto.fi)</li> <li>• Social stories and problem solving cards (viitotturakkaus.fi)</li> <li>• Life of animal children - Theatre. Mental health skills through table theatre. (Mieli Ry)</li> <li>• Eetu and litu books (Leena Mäkinen, Anne Suvanto, Soile Ukkola)</li> <li>• Tuliko tunne?-book (Valteri)</li> <li>• YKI-yhdessä card game (Valteri)</li> <li>• Tsembalo game / cards (available for download, available by googling)</li> <li>• FunFriends material. Aseman lapset ry (in Swedish and Finnish, required instructor training to order the material)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Regulation of emotional state:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imagery exercises</li> <li>• Relaxation/ relaxation exercises</li> <li>• Breathing exercises e.g., Feather breathing and Anger Buddy (hyvinvoivaperhe.fi)</li> <li>• Fairytale massage (satuhieronta.fi, metsaemo.fi)</li> <li>• Adult model: good touch and presence</li> <li>• Foresight</li> <li>• Possibility of silence: hearing protectors, quiet place/nest/room</li> <li>• Different emotional indicators</li> <li>• Emotional cards: Power emotional cards, The Bears</li> <li>• Worry eater</li> <li>• Creative and motion methods painting, clay work, dancing, singing, writing, running, jumping</li> </ul>

<p><b>Grouping:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different grouping games</li> <li>• Creating the US spirit</li> <li>• Common rules for the group</li> <li>• Community and inclusion also visible in the learning environment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Identify and name emotions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Step-by-step material</li> <li>• Emotional robot (Mieli ry)</li> <li>• Different emotional cards (e.g. Konkreettistavarhaiskasvatussta.com, viitotturakkaus.fi, mieli.fi, pukstaavi.fi)</li> <li>• MokaMera Emotions app</li> <li>• Piki-material</li> <li>• Jukka Hukka-Books</li> <li>• Fanni-Books</li> <li>• Ympyriäiset-book</li> <li>• Roihusten arjessa-material</li> <li>• Home deer manual books (for escalators)</li> <li>• Väriinutit- website</li> </ul>	<p><b>Manners:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult model</li> <li>• Social stories</li> <li>• Different children's books e.g. Pieni kaverukirja- series or Ympyriäiset- series, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Regulation of alertness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foresight</li> <li>• Possibility of silence, a pleasant activity</li> <li>• Possibility of movement</li> <li>• Relaxation /relaxation exercises</li> <li>• Paw action cards</li> <li>• Viitottu rakkaus website, children's mindfulness cards</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://www.lizs-early-learning-spot.com">Anger Management: 23 Free Calming Strategy Cards (lizs-early-learning-spot.com)</a></p>
	<p><b>Expressing emotions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dance/exercise</li> <li>• Drama</li> <li>• Art education (e.g. painting, clay work, etc.)</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Talking</li> <li>• Feelings Lost - forest adventure material (suomenlatu.fi)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Safety skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Own limits</li> <li>• Respect for other people's personal boundaries</li> <li>• The ability to say NO</li> <li>• Emotional and safety skills for children</li> <li>• Vaestoliitto.fi</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>Feel the body connection:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tsembalo game / cards (available for download, available by googling)</li> <li>• Safety Skills Book</li> <li>• Fairytale massage (satuhieronta.fi and metsaemo.fi)</li> <li>• Tassun- action cards (PS kustannus)</li> </ul> <p>The home of emotions is in the body. Where in the body do you feel the emotion/s?</p>	<p><b>Problem solving skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life of animal children (Mieli ry table theatre)</li> <li>• Social stories</li> <li>• Drama</li> <li>• Pairing, small group work</li> <li>• Problem solving cards (viitotturakkaus.fi)</li> </ul>	
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