

# MUTTIGREES AT HOME®



RAISING HAPPY AND COMPASSIONATE CHILDREN

An initiative of The Pet Savers Foundation,  
the program development arm of  
North Shore Animal League America

Developed in collaboration with  
Yale University School of the 21st Century

**Check in  
Often!**

Be sure to check our website  
at [www.muttigrees.org](http://www.muttigrees.org) for  
additional activities, Yip Tips and  
information on upcoming events.

**YIP TIP**



You've heard it said before: You are your child's first and best teacher, not only in infancy and the early years, but throughout childhood and adolescence.

Every moment with your child is a teaching moment. Children are observant, watching you and learning from your actions. They see how you talk to other people, how you act when you're upset or stressed, and how caring you are.

While other role models will emerge, none will be as influential as you — the parent — on their behaviors, choices, and abilities. In the pages that follow, we provide you with directions and activities to teach your child to care. It is also vitally important that you set a good example for your child to model.

When you treat people the way you want your child to treat people, they will learn just by watching you. Realize that everything you do and say sets an example they will follow. You are essential to their development!





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>INTRODUCTION</u> .....	1
<u>THE RESEARCH BASE</u> .....	3
<u>OUR APPROACH</u> .....	7
<u>WHAT'S INSIDE</u> .....	8
<u>SECTION 1: ACHIEVING AWARENESS</u> .....	11
<u>What Makes Me Me, What Makes You You</u> .....	13
<u>What I Like About Me, What I Like About You</u> .....	15
<u>The "I" Challenge</u> .....	18
<u>SECTION 2: FINDING FEELINGS</u> .....	22
<u>How Do You Feel?</u> .....	25
<u>That's Appropriate, That's Inappropriate</u> .....	30
<u>Let's Feel Better</u> .....	34
<u>SECTION 3: ENCOURAGING EMPATHY</u> .....	39
<u>How Would You Feel?</u> .....	42
<u>Whoops!</u> .....	45
<u>I'm Really Sorry</u> .....	48
<u>SECTION 4: CULTIVATING COOPERATION</u> .....	52
<u>Can I Get Some Help, Please?</u> .....	55
<u>Please Listen to Me</u> .....	59
<u>We Are a Team</u> .....	62
<u>SECTION 5: DEALING WITH DECISIONS</u> .....	66
<u>The 4 Paws of Problem Solving</u> .....	68
<u>It's Your Choice</u> .....	71
<u>When We Fail, It's Not All Bad</u> .....	74
<u>REFERENCES</u> .....	79



# INTRODUCTION

## What Is It?



**Muttigrees® At Home** is a resource for families who want their children to grow up to be caring and compassionate. It is part of the Mutt-i-grees initiative — a collaboration of North Shore Animal League America and Yale University’s School of the 21st Century (Yale 21C). The two organizations, one concerned with the welfare of companion animals and the other with the education and social and emotional development of children, developed this unique initiative to support the growth of confident and caring children while creating a more humane future for all.



There are several facets to the initiative: *The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum*, implemented in Pre-K to Grade 12 classrooms nationwide; *Mutt-i-grees in the Library*; and the *Shelter Guide to the Mutt-i-grees Curriculum* are three prominent components of the initiative. There are also several ancillary publications: *Paws Down Tails Up: Physical Fitness With Mutt-i-grees*, and *Cats Are Mutt-i-grees 2*, all available at [www.education.muttigrees.org](http://www.education.muttigrees.org).

The first to be developed was *The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum*, launched in 2010. It was an instant hit, not only with teachers and students, but also with parents, who were thrilled — and surprised — to see their children so excited about what they learned in school about Mutt-i-grees and wanted to become involved as well. Children especially loved the word Mutt-i-grees. It’s a new word that describes the positive attributes of shelter pets. Some of the younger children had trouble pronouncing the word, but they got the concept of the desirability of shelter pets — both dogs and cats — who are homeless.



# INTRODUCTION

Following the enthusiastic response to the Curriculum, we developed ***Muttigrees At Home***. Our overall goal in ***Muttigrees At Home*** is to provide you with guidelines on how you can enhance children's social and emotional skills, increase their ability to communicate and manage emotions, and foster empathy. In other words, to help children become effective and caring individuals who are inspired to make a difference in the lives of people, animals, and in the environment.

## What It Means to You and Your Children

***Muttigrees At Home*** offers opportunities for parents and other family members, as well as care providers, to become involved in promoting a caring world. We live in a fast-paced society. Information is instantaneously available and is literally at our fingertips. We don't have to see or hear each other's voices to communicate — we can simply text. It's no wonder we may, at times, feel disconnected. Stress is the inevitable outcome. It robs us of our sleep, it makes us short-tempered, it saps our confidence, and it takes a physical toll on our bodies. It affects children as well, but for them, it may be reflected in a lack of interest in school and an



inability to focus on learning and peer interactions. Some children may become anxious or misbehave, while others become withdrawn. Do you recognize some of these symptoms?

Society will likely continue to become more and more complex, and our lives even more harried. But the good news is we can do something about this! A study published in the journal *Psychiatry Research* has shown that you — and your children — can learn to become mindful and use coping skills. These skills are not only antidotes to stress, they are the cornerstones of good mental health. In ***Muttigrees At Home*** we show you how to use these, providing guidance and activities to enhance social and emotional competence.



# THE RESEARCH BASE

Our work on all aspects of the Muttigrees initiative, including **Muttigrees At Home**, is based on principles drawn from the research of several different but complementary disciplines, as follows:

## Resiliency Model

Resiliency refers to the ability to adapt and bounce back from adversity. At the Animal League, we see dogs who are rescued from the horrors of puppy mills. Some haven't been outside of a small cage their entire lives. Yet, with medical care and the loving support of our staff, they bounce back and happily join their adoptive families.

At Yale 21C, the resiliency model has been part of our work with children and families, reflecting current thinking among educators regarding the importance of a holistic approach to education. We view education in the broadest sense, with the overall goal of promoting children's optimal growth and physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and academic development. Our use of the resiliency model recognizes the importance of providing families with support services to help them cope during times of stress. Now, through our collaboration with the Animal League in the development of Muttigrees, we focus on providing programs that promote resiliency in children.



There are risks as well as protective factors in resiliency, and our goal in **Muttigrees At Home** is to show you how you can promote protective factors. An example: A crucial component of resiliency is the ability to seek help. It's amazing how many children — and adults — feel they cannot ask anyone for help. Practice in asking for help, and naming the people one can go to for help, are simple, but highly effective activities that promote resiliency.

**We cannot predict or prepare for every problem children may encounter. We can, however, provide children and families with an emotional tool kit full of strategies to bolster resilience, overcome and cope with stress, and bounce back from difficulties.**



# THE RESEARCH BASE

## Emotional Intelligence and Social-Emotional Learning

The notion that emotions influence children's ability to learn has its roots in the work of Peter Salovey, now President of Yale, and John Mayer (1990), who coined the term *emotional intelligence*, defining it as the ability to "monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions." Daniel Goleman (1995, 2006) further popularized the notion. Building on the research on emotional intelligence, researchers, educators, and policy makers acknowledge that academic achievement reflects mastery of a range of competencies and behaviors, not just knowledge of subjects. To cultivate successful students and citizens, schools must educate children to use critical thinking skills, make responsible and ethical decisions, and engage in healthy and pro-social behaviors.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) represents the process of developing these fundamental social and emotional competencies or skills (Zins & Elias, 2006). Such skills enable children to recognize and manage emotions, experience empathy, develop positive relationships, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, and avoid negative behaviors (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003). Moreover, when children master these skills, they become better learners.



**A growing body of research evidence has shown that social and emotional skills not only build character, but also enhance academic achievement (Durlak, et al., 2011). Social and emotional skills also benefit children's relationships with peers, parents, and teachers, and enable children to manage stress more effectively, engage in more skillful problem-**

**solving, and employ more adept communication skills (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2007).**

**Hence, social-emotional skills form the basis for educational success and can be taught and mastered akin to traditional academic skills.**



# THE RESEARCH BASE

## Focus on Empathy

One of the goals of teaching social and emotional skills, and the *Muttigrees At Home* program in particular, is to encourage empathy. Empathy refers to the ability to understand how others feel and respond in caring ways.

The capacity for empathy is innate, and its development is dependent on aspects of brain development (Greenberg & Snell, 1997). Empathy has been shown to be present in infancy and to increase with age (Zahn-Wexler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). When children comfort and help others who may be in distress or apologize for hurting someone, they exhibit empathy and express an understanding of how others feel. Children who lack empathy are more likely to act without regard for others and engage in anti-social behaviors.

Although innate, the capacity for empathy has to be nurtured through the environment in which children live and the interactions children have with the adults in their lives. Educators and parents are advised to encourage empathy at a young age by showing children they care, being warm and affectionate in their interactions with children, and modeling empathic behavior. Children who experience nurturing relationships are more likely to develop compassion and confidence, which are essential precursors to empathy.

## Humane Education and Human-Animal Interaction

*Muttigrees At Home* builds and nurtures the skills that lead to empathy and compassion, encouraging children to take care of themselves, others, the environment, and animals. And we do this, in part, by focusing attention on lovable shelter dogs.

Recent research on the interaction between humans and animals demonstrates the social, emotional, behavioral, and physical benefits of human-animal interaction. Children in particular demonstrate a natural affinity for animals, and increased contact with animals may foster more nurturing behavior and social skills (McCardle et al., 2011). Studies show that children who own pets or who participate in programs that focus on pets display higher levels of empathy and pro-social behavior than children who do not (McCardle et al., 2011; Rivera, 2004).





# THE RESEARCH BASE

Research with therapy animals demonstrates that children with low self-esteem and/or skill deficits are more often willing to interact with an animal than with another person. Children also display physiological benefits from interacting with animals, such as lower blood pressure, increased relaxation, and improved social interactions. This occurs with most animals — big or small — but especially dogs, who are so tuned in to our emotions. Accordingly, dogs are used in multiple ways with children, including providing support and comfort to those who are hospitalized or critically ill, assisting children with autism communicate and engage with others, and promoting literacy and other academic skills.



**Evidence shows that the presence of, or focus on, dogs — whether they are real or virtual (for example, during discussions or reading about dogs, or seeing videos and pictures of dogs) — contributes to happy, calm feelings. This is partly done by lowering cortisol levels and contributing to an increase in oxytocin.**

**Oxytocin is a naturally occurring hormone which evokes a feeling of contentment, and promotes the learning of socially responsive behaviors (Olmert, 2010). Given our focus on dogs, these benefits can be realized through frequently practicing activities in the *Muttigrees At Home* program.**

"I absolutely LOVE the Daily Routines sheet! This is truly on target with daily interactions that we have with our children. These are great learning times, and it is perfect timing for parents ... I will also say that I think it is helpful for fathers who may enjoy looking at simple but effective ways to interact with their child. It is helpful to the parent who may struggle completing an entire lesson. The kids loved [my husband] coming to each of them last night purposefully to give them a praise for the day. Their eyes lit up with happiness!"

***Natalie, school counselor and parent, children ages 3, 9, and 11***



# OUR APPROACH

**Muttigrees At Home** is designed as a fun resource for families, offering everyday routines and activities that build resiliency, emotional health, and vocabulary, as well as teaching empathy, kindness, and compassion to the family as a whole. We do this in part by focusing on dogs, in particular, endearing shelter dogs, known as Muttigrees! However, it's not necessary for your family to have a dog to use **Muttigrees At Home**.

Scientists have documented significant health benefits when people interact with animals, and particularly with dogs. Dogs have a long history of relationship and interdependence with people, and have a unique ability to tune in to our emotions. Dogs play a vitally important role in our mental health. Studies have shown that any interaction with a dog, including looking at pictures of a dog, or even reading a story about a dog, raises the level of the feel-good hormone oxytocin in the body.

Dogs especially help children tap into their emotions and raise their kindness levels. Some children with autism, who may avoid eye contact and interaction with people, will happily participate in activities that involve a dog. Children become engaged in learning, and become kinder and more accepting of each other as they progress through the sections in this program and begin to use the tools they have learned.

Kindness is critically important to good mental health. However, kindness takes lots of practice. This is where **Muttigrees At Home** comes in. We provide families with daily opportunities to build and nurture the skills underlying kindness and positive mental health. We also provide the tools for creating a mindset of caring and compassion.

How? By showing how routine activities done at certain times — in the morning, at mealtime, traveling in the car, and at bedtime — can become transformative. Throughout the following five sections you will find activities with vocabulary words and discussion points that correspond to children's social and emotional skills and build on each other — you don't have to do them all, just choose one or two to start.

We have developed a series of activities called **Muttigrees Yip Tips**, named for the quick, happy barks of dogs. These two-to-five minute activities are designed to teach children ways to appropriately express their emotions, and change negative behaviors into positive behaviors that work better. Look for our eye-catching dog and his thought-balloon throughout the sections, and use them whenever and wherever an opportunity arises for a teaching moment — in the car, waiting at a doctor's office or restaurant, or before bedtime.

Each **Muttigrees At Home** section contains three activities designed to develop tools of good mental health. We know that time is precious, and designed the program with this in mind. We provide some of the activities now, and additional activities and tips will be added in the future.





# WHAT'S INSIDE

Now that you know the science and psychology that led to the development of **Muttigrees At Home**, let's take a look at the **five sections** of the program. Within each of these sections there are **three activities**, as you can see below:



## 1 Achieving Awareness

What Makes Me Me, What Makes You You  
What I Like About Me, What I Like About You  
The "I" Challenge



## 2 Finding Feelings

How Do You Feel?  
That's Appropriate, That's Inappropriate  
Let's Feel Better



## 3 Encouraging Empathy

How Would You Feel?  
Whoops!  
I'm Really Sorry



## 4 Cultivating Cooperation

Can I Get Some Help, Please?  
Please Listen to Me  
We Are a Team



## 5 Dealing with Decisions

The 4 Paws of Problem Solving  
It's Your Choice  
When We Fail, It's Not All Bad



# WHAT'S INSIDE

Each of the activities may be implemented in various ways, either as part of a daily routine or, for example, by reading a book. We provide five different options to select from in each activity.

## 1 Daily Routines:

Research shows that by creating daily routines with your child you help alleviate anxiety and strengthen your relationship. At the beginning of each section you'll find a **Daily Routines** chart, with ideas for discussions designed to build and enhance your child's skills.

## Daily Routines



### MORNING

Beginning-of-the-day routines create a positive mindset, and set the tone for your child's day.



### MEALTIME

Interactions with your child at mealtime create open channels for communication about what happened during the day, and offer insight into what your child is thinking and feeling.



### IN THE CAR

Keep your child from getting bored by interacting and playing games that teach important social and emotional skills in a fun way.



### BEDTIME

Take time to listen and connect with your child at the end of the day to strengthen your relationship.



# WHAT'S INSIDE

## 2 The Activity Title

Each activity begins here; explained fully under each subhead below:

### What's It About?

Here you'll learn the what and why underlying each lesson to give you an understanding of what will be covered.

### Let's Talk About It

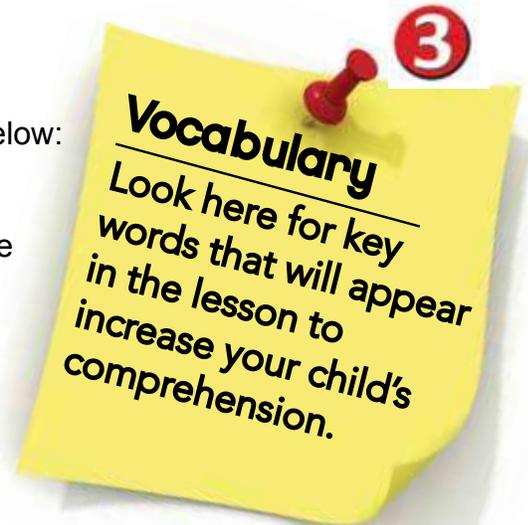
Here you'll get a scripted outline to initiate discussions to teach your child specific social-emotional skills. This section gives you easy-to-use discussion points to talk about with your child.

### Taking It Further

Each of these advanced activities will have its own title. Here you'll be able to dive deeper into each topic for older kids, or get ideas for further discussions with younger kids who are eager to learn more.

### What About You?

It's easy to overlook our own emotional needs in this busy, stressful, never-enough-time world, so here parents and caregivers will find helpful information focused specifically on them. Both children and adults can benefit from the social and emotional skills included in **Muttigrees At Home**. To effectively teach children these skills, you need to possess these abilities yourself.



## 4 Great Books to Check Out

Here you'll find a carefully selected list of books that support the social-emotional skills in each lesson. Find them at your local library, or on the web.

5



### Yip Tip™

Try these Yip Tips out whenever and wherever an opportunity arises, or when you need to amuse your child while you are waiting somewhere.

Try coming up with your own Yip Tips too — the goal is for your children to have fun while they're learning new social and emotional skills.



# Achieving Awareness

Here we will share ideas on ways to initiate discussions with your children about what makes each person in your family different and special. The **Muttigrees At Home** program integrates your family pets, and/or your child's favorite toys and characters, into conversations about what it means to be unique.

- Among the many topics you can incorporate are feelings (excited, scared, happy, or mad); desires (to play, rest quietly, cuddle, talk, or take a walk), and needs (for food, water, sleep, or medicine).
- You can talk about ways in which all people and pets are alike (breathing, eating, or drinking), and contrast these observations with ways everyone may be different.
- You might also play a game using all five senses. One by one, consider the sensory experiences of pets and people. Close your eyes and just listen together, notice any smells, touch different textures, and describe how these make you feel.
- Yet another way to explore this theme is with inside/outside comparisons. Some animals are white, or black, or have spots; some are big, while others are small. Together you can come up with words to describe yourselves and your pet — or toys or puppets — on the outside. Then think about what words might describe all of you on the inside.

Achieving Awareness is the first of the five sections in the **Muttigrees At Home** program. Thinking, talking about, and imagining the experiences of shelter pets is a fun and enlightening way to have conversations with your children about the value of differences. We are all alike in many ways, but each one of us is unique! It's the same with cats and dogs.

Muttigrees — or shelter pets — may be a mixture of many different breeds. Just like people, dogs come in all shapes, sizes, and colors, and are from many different places. Shelter pets deserve special attention. They are hoping to be adopted. Some shelters, such as North Shore Animal League America, keep homeless pets until someone adopts them. Other shelters may lack space and are forced to euthanize pets that don't get adopted.

Some families already own a dog or cat. Some are unable to adopt. But there are other opportunities to help shelters — by visiting them, donating, championing their cause, and letting others know about the needs of local shelters. Can you and your child think of other ways to help?

Families without a Muttigree can always substitute a stuffed animal or a puppet. This is not only fun, but it can also become a key element that directs many of the conversations in **Muttigrees At Home**.



# Achieving Awareness

## Daily Routines



### MORNING

Ask your child what they are excited or anxious about for the coming day. This gives you an opportunity to help them sort out why they feel anxious, and gives them ideas of things they can do to help them feel calmer.



### MEALTIME

Talk about events that happened in your life when you were your child's age:

- Tell them how you felt and what the circumstances were — times in your life when you might have felt happy, sad, scared, grateful, or proud.
- Tell them how you remember acting when you felt these different emotions.
- What did you do to feel better when you were feeling sad or scared?
- Ask if they have ever experienced any similar situations or feelings.

Hearing stories about your childhood strengthens your relationship, and gives your child confidence you can understand what he or she is going through. You also gain insight into what is going on in their lives that can help you spot areas where they might be struggling.



### IN THE CAR

Challenge your child to see how many people in other cars they can get to smile and wave back to them on your trip. They can wave, smile and laugh, or make silly faces to get a reaction.



### BEDTIME

- Think of something your child did during the day that deserves special mention. It may be as simple as "You were kind to your friends today — I was really proud of you!" or "You looked great in your new shirt." Think about how good it feels for your child to hear words of praise from you just before they go to sleep.
- Remember what your child told you in the morning when they were excited or anxious, and ask them how everything went. Did it turn out like they were expecting, or did it happen differently? How do they feel about it? Did what you talked about in the morning help them?



# Achieving Awareness

## What Makes Me Me, What Makes You You What's It About?

Children enjoy talking about themselves. Finding the right words to label key **characteristics**, inside and out, is a natural way to help them learn about themselves and describe what makes them **unique** and feel special. It's also a way for them to explore the notion of **diversity**: Ways they are similar to or different from other family members. These conversations help children gain self-awareness and strengthen their sense of self and connection with the family.

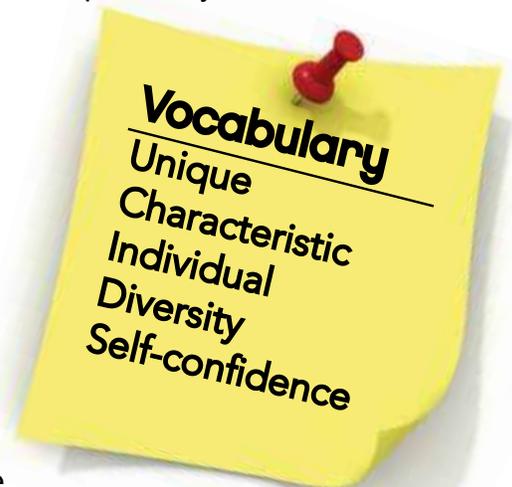
This leads to **self-confidence**, the foundation for success in life and in school. Think of it as a tool — it will help you and your child become able to do more things and think positively even in the face of failure. The important thing is to always keep trying.

### Let's Talk About It

Together let's make a list of all the things that make us who we are. Every person in our family is a **unique individual**, and we have some things that are alike and some things that are different. Here are some things to put on the list:

-  How we look on the outside — if we are a girl or a boy, how tall we are, what color eyes we have, and if our hair is curly or straight, long or short.
-  Who is part of our family — how many brothers and sisters we have, where we live, if we have a pet.
-  What are your favorite foods?
-  What games or sports do you like to play?
-  What are your favorite things to do together?

All of these things are like pieces of a puzzle that make each of us a **unique individual!** Who in your family are you most like?



### It's Just Like Me

Try a comparison game to hone your child's self-awareness. Have your child find something in the house that is like him or her — A pillow because it is soft and comfortable, or maybe a computer because it can be used to find answers. There is no "right" or "wrong" answer; it's just an exercise to expand their thinking and self-awareness.



# Achieving Awareness

## Taking It Further

### I Am Part of the Pack

Look at family photos together. This is a great way to teach your family history to your children, and help them connect to special people they never had a chance to meet. Many online resources are available — like [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) — to delve into your family history. Each one of us is part of a family. In the dog's world, it's called a pack.

-  Ask your child to point out **characteristics** about themselves that they can see even in their baby pictures. Talk about where those qualities came from — did your grandmother have the same nose?
-  Can they think of other members of the family that share similar **characteristics**? Make sure to ask them to think about common likes/dislikes and interests, not just physical traits.
-  Talk about how **characteristics** and interests can be passed down through the generations of a family. Tell them things you remember about ancestors that they may not have known about.
-  Share photographs of relatives and let children see if they find any similar facial features when they look in the mirror.

## What About You?

According to family dynamics theory, kids often take on their parents' emotions and fears out of love and loyalty. Think back on some of the emotions or fears you remember in your childhood, and consider whether those feelings first belonged to a parent or loved one. You can identify generational emotions by how they stick. For instance, if you accidentally pay a bill late, you may be mad at yourself for a few minutes and then set a better reminder for next time. But if your childhood was marked by high anxiety around paying bills on time and having utilities turned off, your feelings of failure may be far out of proportion to the situation, and are more difficult to let go.

## Great Books to Check Out

*Doggies* by Sandra Boynton

*Dog* by Matthew Van Fleet and Brian Stanton

*Shaggy Dogs, Waggy Dogs* by Patricia Hubbell

*Mutts* by Sharon Montrose

*If Only You Knew How Much I Smell You: True Portraits of Dogs* by Valerie

Shaff and Roy Blount

*Dogtationary: Meaningful Portraits of Dog* by Sharon Montrose

*Dogs* by Lewis Blackwell and Tim Flach

*Shelter Dogs* by Traer Scott

*Animal Shelter Portraits* by Mark Ross



# Achieving Awareness

## What I Like About Me, What I Like About You What's It About?

You already know there are lots of things to love and **admire** about your child. Helping them discover the things they like or **admire** about themselves and others will:

- 🐾 Enhance their self-acceptance and self-confidence.
- 🐾 Give them awareness of their **strengths** and importance in the family.
- 🐾 Grow their appreciation of the other people in the family.
- 🐾 Help them be more aware of their behavior.
- 🐾 Improve their interactions with others.

Learning how other members of their family perceive them, particularly hearing about their **strengths** and **talents**, will increase their self-esteem and improve family relationships.

## Let's Talk About It

We've learned how to describe our traits and characteristics, and what makes each of us special. Now let's talk about what we like about ourselves and what we like about each other.

Think about the things you like about yourself.

- 🐾 You might like something about the way you look on the outside — how long your hair is, your cool glasses, or your great smile.
- 🐾 You might be really proud of a **talent** or something you can do — playing soccer, riding your bike, how well you can draw, or being a really good reader.
- 🐾 You could be proud of what a good friend you are, or that you share toys and games with your brother or sister.

Now, think about the things you like and **admire** about the other people in your family.

- 🐾 It might be how they behave, how they look, or the things they can do.
- 🐾 It's nice to let members of your family know when you like something about them. Hearing from someone in your family that you do something well and are appreciated can really mean a lot.





# Achieving Awareness

## Taking It Further

### Phew ... I Did It!

Discuss how sometimes we are most proud of ourselves after **accomplishing** something that was hard or scary. Being brave is doing something that makes you feel scared.

- 🐾 Ask your child to tell you about a time they felt afraid.
- 🐾 Were they able to overcome these feelings? What techniques did they use?
- 🐾 Help them think of strategies to use next time they are afraid.
- 🐾 **Encourage** them to feel proud of their **accomplishment**.
- 🐾 Tell them how proud you are of them!



## What About You?

Take some time to really look at yourself in the mirror and acknowledge the things you like about the way you look. Though this might feel weird at first, it's very important to identify things you love about yourself. If you have trouble doing this, try looking back on your view of yourself when you were growing up. How did you think of your body and appearance when you were younger? Thinking about these things can help you see the times when you might have developed a negative body image, and help you change how you view yourself today.

Children notice everything you say and do, and they act on the cues they pick up. A great rule of thumb: If you wouldn't criticize your child for the way they look, don't criticize yourself.

Practice **admiring** and respecting the things that make you unique.

List your **strengths** and **accomplishments** and review them regularly.



### What I Like About You ... A-Z

Play this back-and-forth compliment game with your child: "Tell me one thing that starts with an A you like about me, and I'll tell you one thing that starts with a B I like about you." It can be a physical trait you **admire**, a behavior you like — get creative!

Go as far as you can alternating through the alphabet. Or, you can start at Z and go backwards.

**YIP TIP™**



# Achieving Awareness

## Great Books to Check Out

*Snuggle Puppy: A Little Love Song* by Sandra Boynton

*Dogku* by Andrew Clements and Tim Bowers

*Absolutely Lucy* series by Ilene Cooper

*National Geographic Kids — Everything Dogs: All the Canine Facts, Photos, and Fun You Can Get Your Paws On!* by Becky Baines

*Dog Breath* by Dav Pilkey

*Dog Diaries* series by Kate Klimo

*Meet the Dogs of Bedlam Farm* by Jon Katz

*Otto Has a Birthday Party* by Todd Parr

*McDuff Saves the Day* by Rosemary Wells

*The Adventures of Taxi Dog* by Debra & Sal Barracca

*The Puppy Place* series by Ellen Miles

*How Rocket Learned to Read* by Tad Hills

*Rocket Writes a Story* by Tad Hills

*Arlo Needs Glasses* by Barney Saltzberg





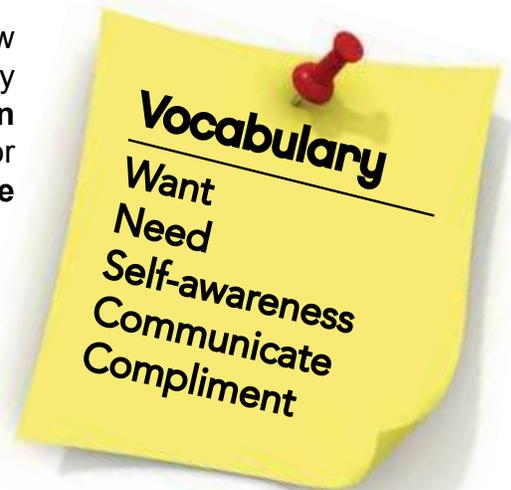
# Achieving Awareness

## The “I” Challenge

### What’s It About?

Learning to use simple words to say what you **want** or **need**, or how you feel is a very important skill. Children gain confidence when they can tell you what they **need** and you respond. This **communication** skill will increase their **self-awareness** and improve their behavior and interactions with others. Teach your children to **communicate** with you using effective “I” statements:

- 🐾 I need...
- 🐾 I want...
- 🐾 I feel...



### Let’s Talk About It

Sometimes it can be hard to say how you feel or ask for help with something. Your parents make the rules and tell you what to do at home, but that might make you frustrated if you think they aren’t listening to you. So you need to let them know how you are feeling without getting upset or mad.

Let’s practice talking about how we feel and asking for help when we need it:

- 🐾 Start by saying the word “I” at the beginning — like “I **want** chicken nuggets,” “I **need** to go to the bathroom,” or “I feel mad at you.”
- 🐾 Say how you feel in a calm voice, without yelling or being mean.
- 🐾 Remember to say “please,” and “thank you,” when you ask for something.
- 🐾 It feels really good when you can tell an adult how you feel, and they listen to you.
- 🐾 Even though you express yourself very well with an “I” statement and ask politely, sometimes the answer is still “no.”





# Achieving Awareness

## Taking It Further

### Want vs. Need

What is a **need**? A **need** is something we must have in order to survive or stay healthy. There are some things we don't actually **need**, but we really **want** them. Sometimes you have to be patient and wait to get the things you **want**.

- 🐾 What are some things our family **needs**?
- 🐾 What are some things you **want**?
- 🐾 What are some things people in your family **want**?
- 🐾 What are some things your pet might **want** or **need**?



## What About You?

Positive **communication** of your **wants** and **needs** is an important life skill. The secret to being understood is being **self-aware** and saying how a situation is for you, not how you think the other person should act or what they should do.

- 🐾 "I" statements require you to think about how you feel and realize that you are important and deserve to be heard.
- 🐾 "I" statements are useful when we feel mistreated or underappreciated, when we **need** to confront someone about their behavior, or when we are telling others about decisions we have made.
- 🐾 Using "I" statements opens up channels of discussion, and often paves the way to finding a resolution everyone can accept. Using them builds relationships and helps you become a good listener and problem solver.

DO	DON'T
Be clear and direct about how you feel, or are being affected by a situation.	Expect the other person to fix the situation for you.
State how you feel, or what you <b>need</b> as simply as possible.	Put the blame on the other person for your feelings, or the situation.
Tell your perspective.	Tell the other person how they should act, or feel, or what they should do.



# Achieving Awareness

## Great Books to Check Out

*Fancy Nancy & the Posh Puppy* by Jane O'Connor

*Ball* by Mary Sullivan

*Drop It, Rocket!* by Tad Hills

### Give a Compliment

**YIP TIP™**

A **compliment** goes a long way toward making us feel good about ourselves, and boosting our self-confidence. Challenge yourself, and your child, to give at least one **compliment** to someone every day. Start by really looking at the people around you, and noticing something about them that you like. It could be something you admire about them, their behavior, or something they did. Then tell them what you like, and see what happens. It feels really good when someone tells you something they like about you!





# Achieving Awareness



## SHOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE Your Story/Their Story

When children are asked to tell a story about themselves, they get a chance to reflect about what they like, what they aspire to do, or what they are good at. This kind of an activity enhances their self-esteem. On separate sheets of paper, ask your child to tell his or her story in words or pictures. Next, ask your child to write a story about their pet, or a dog or cat who may be in a shelter waiting to be adopted. What would their story be like? It can be anything your child imagines for them.

### My Story

**Tell us something about yourself** — What you like to do with your family, what you are really good at, who your friends are — anything you can think of that will help us to know you better.

### A Dog's or Cat's Story

**If you have a pet, tell us their story** — In words or drawings tell us or show us what your pet looks like, and what makes them special. Or, imagine a pet waiting at the local shelter to be adopted and tell us their story.



# Finding Feelings

**A**s adults we know how complicated feelings are. But for a child, feelings can be overwhelming. The younger the child, the more common this is, but age is only part of the equation. Both children and adults can have trouble understanding and expressing feelings.

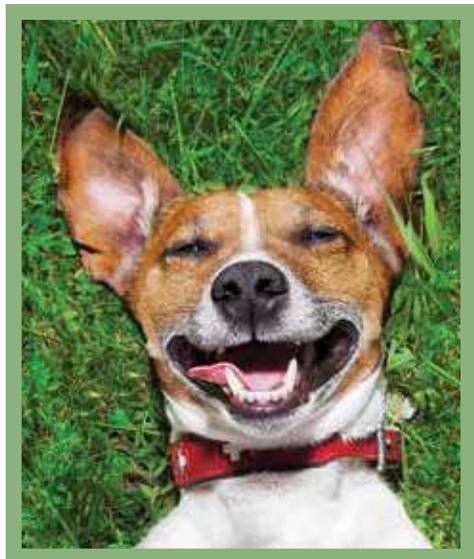
Communication skills are the key. The more words we have at our command, the easier it is to figure out what it is we are actually feeling. Is it anger, or can we better describe it as frustration? Help your child express themselves by increasing their vocabulary of feeling words. Start with simple words to identify their emotions — happy, sad, mad, scared — and gradually introduce more precise words. Happy is a basic word, but how much more expressive is the word joyous, or elated?

An angry child with few vocabulary words may resort to behaviors — like hitting or biting — as a way to express their feelings. However, with help from a caring adult, they can learn to think things through and use words to communicate what they are feeling. If your child can tell you with words when they are angry, then they are less likely to resort to problem behaviors.

Try these simple things at home to grow your child's ability to understand and express feelings:

- 🐾 Talk with your children daily about how they show and share their feelings.
- 🐾 Tell them about your most challenging feelings and how you cope with them.
- 🐾 Teach your children a larger vocabulary of more complicated feeling words, like frustrated, amazed, terrified, and appreciative. It's often difficult to remember just how many different words can describe emotions. So we've created a **Feelings Vocabulary Chart** on page 23 you can print out for easy reference.
- 🐾 Get into the habit of labeling your own emotions for your children. Tell them when you are happy or angry, and why you are feeling that way. It's a good way to help children feel that you will also understand and respect their feelings.
- 🐾 Check in with their feelings to see if you are reading them correctly — "From your face I think you're feeling frustrated. Am I right?"
- 🐾 It's easier for children to have some distance when discussing emotions. Try talking about dogs as examples — How do they feel? How do you know how they feel? How do they show us their feelings?

Learning to identify and express emotions appropriately is an important first step in teaching your children to empathize and respond to other people's feelings.





# Finding Feelings

## Feelings Vocabulary Chart

Happy	Curious	Thrilled	Interested	Eager
Surprised	Startled	Dull	Quaking	Fearful
Glad	Afraid	Distressed	Fascinated	Angry
Ashamed	Frustrated	Disgusted	Ecstatic	Affectionate
Thankful	Joyful	Unhappy	Down	Blue
Excited	Joyous	Bored	Terrified	Rebellious
Anguished	Lonely	Sad	Humiliated	Indifferent
Tired	Amazed	Desolate	Comfortable	Considerate
Satisfied	Astonished	Impressed	Fearless	Uncomfortable
Blown Away	Unsure	Brave	Confident	Trusting
Hopeful	Anxious	Nervous	Calm	Courageous
Heartbroken	Protected	Safe	Reassured	Tormented
Loving	At Peace	Bitter	Friendly	Disagreeable
Agreeable	Irritated	Tenacious	Indignant	Boiling Mad
Enraged	Discouraged	Guilty	Shy	Self-conscious
Proud	Self-assured	Alienated	Embarrassed	Disgraced
Overjoyed	Disrespected	Smug	Tolerant	Envious
Suspicious	Lonely	Isolated	Upbeat	Edgy
Uneasy	Tense	Panicky	Worried	Jumpy
Tranquil	Serene	Agitated	Cool	Peaceful
Composed	Quiet	Relaxed	Delighted	Deserted
Blissful	Jubilant	Elated	Shocked	Stunned
Flabbergasted	Taken Aback	Blessed	Resentful	Hostile
Pleasant	Furious	Friendly	Gloomy	Miserable
Fed Up	Hesitant	Open	Doubtful	Undecided
Skeptical	Content	Pleased	Lucky	Grateful
Appreciative	Hopeless	Powerless	Heroic	Powerful
Daring	Superhuman	Cowardly	Fortunate	Insecure
Shaky	Skittish	Ignored	Jealous	Appalled



# Finding Feelings

## Daily Routines



### MORNING

- When your child is looking in the bathroom mirror have them practice emotion faces, and try to guess what they are feeling.
- How one feels is often expressed not only facially, but with the entire body. Take turns having your child express how they feel without using words, by only using facial expressions and body language.
- Start the day with a word! As they learn more feeling words, give your child a more complicated emotion — a “Word of the Day” — then ask them to think of other words that also express that same feeling.
- Give your child a word challenge — Select a feeling word for them to use in a sentence that day. Words like grateful, proud, disappointed, embarrassed, surprised, pleasant, irritated, and insecure are just a few examples.



### MEALTIME

- Tell your child about a situation that happened during the day that made you feel a particular emotion — examples are happy, frustrated, tense, sad, worried, or upbeat. Then ask your child if anything happened during their day that made them feel the same emotion.
- Talk about events during the day that made you feel happy, times you felt angry or frustrated, and work you did that made you feel proud. Ask your children if there were any things that happened during their day that made them feel the same emotions.
- Ask each person at the table to tell one thing that happened during the day that made them feel happy, and one thing that made them feel sad. Substitute different emotions every day.



### IN THE CAR

This is a great back-and-forth vocabulary game that you can play with one or several children. It can be made simple or more difficult depending on the age of the children. Here’s how it goes: What feeling words start with the letter A? — Angry, anxious, and apathetic are some examples. Then, continue hopscotching through the rest of the alphabet as time allows. Check out the **Feelings Vocabulary Chart** on page 23 for many more emotion words.



# Finding Feelings

## Daily Routines



### BEDTIME

- Ask your child if he or she used the feeling word you gave them in the morning, and if so, how they used it. Praise them for learning new emotion words!
- If you read a story at bedtime, have your child guess how the characters in the story are feeling. What clues let them know the characters are feeling that way? Can they make a face that shows the same feeling?
- Many families make it a nightly routine to end the day on a positive note. Can you and your child think about a pleasant emotion? Do you know the word to describe it?

## How Do You Feel?

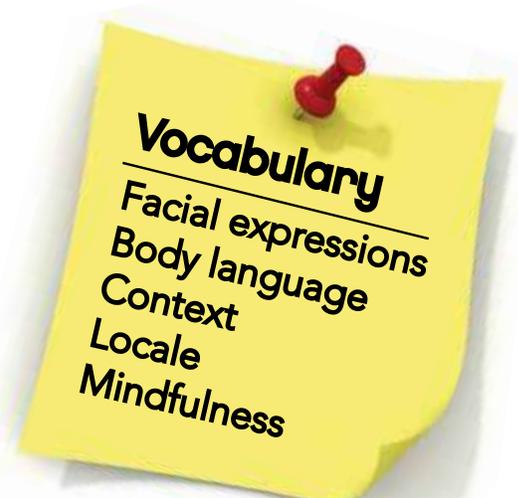
### What's It About?

How do you know what another person is feeling if they don't tell you? It can be really hard to figure out. Luckily, our faces and bodies often give clues to the emotions we are feeling on the inside. Paying attention and focusing on **body language** and **facial expressions** to figure out what people are feeling is an important life skill that takes lots of practice. Demonstrating how people look and act when they feel different emotions helps children learn to self-regulate their own feelings.

### Let's Talk About It

We all experience the same feelings, but different people can show the same emotion in different ways. You feel emotions on the inside, but you show them on the outside by the expression on your face and the way you move your body — your **body language**. Try practicing in the mirror using **facial expressions** and **body language** to show different feelings.

- 🐾 How do your face and body look when you're feeling happy?
- 🐾 How do they look when you're frustrated?
- 🐾 Now try showing you're scared, or proud.





# Finding Feelings

## Taking It Further

### Can You Tell What I'm Feeling?

Make a word bank of all the feelings you've discussed and turn it into a game! Feelings Charades is a simple game of acting out a feeling using your **facial expressions** and **body language** for the other players to guess the feeling. Get creative and have fun!

-  You might demonstrate feeling happy by smiling, jumping up and down, and clapping your hands.
-  Think about extreme levels of emotions. If you felt really happy you might describe that feeling as elated — what would that feeling look like? Think of a situation that would make you feel elated — maybe you aced the test you studied really hard for, or you found out where you're going on vacation.
-  Pretend to be mad by frowning, putting your hands on hips, and stomping your feet. How would you react if you felt exasperated?

After each turn, ask what cues and clues each person used to guess the feeling.

-  What was it about the **facial expression** or **body language** that gave clues about the feeling they were showing?
-  Sometimes knowing **locale** and **context** — where someone is and what they are doing — can give us more clues to how they might be feeling.
-  Add complexity to the game for older children by giving them a **locale** — like the doctor's office, or a sporting event — then give them the feeling to express in that specific situation.



Use your mobile phone to take pictures of you and your child showing different emotions. Start with basic emotions (happy, sad, mad, afraid, or surprised), and add more as their Feelings Vocabulary grows. You can also add photos of other family members showing the same emotions to help your child learn how other people in your family might be feeling from their facial expressions.



# Finding Feelings

## What About You?

Your children learn about expressing and managing their feelings from the behavior you model for them.

- 🐾 **Facial expressions, body language**, and the words you choose are strong communicators — be aware of the effect you have on your child.
- 🐾 Are you stressed about finances, your job, or a relative's health? Your children will pick up on your feelings, and may be affected their entire day worrying about you.
- 🐾 Observe yourself in a mirror when you are feeling strongly about something, and see the impression you give to others.
- 🐾 Have you learned to mask your emotions, so you are harder to read? Maybe it's time to let your guard down, and let your real feelings show.
- 🐾 When you share your feelings, it helps your family understand your point of view, and will ultimately make you feel better. Sharing something of yourself is also a way to make them feel that you respect and trust them.
- 🐾 Use a journal to write down your thoughts when you are feeling emotional, then go back later and read what you wrote to reflect on your feelings when you are calmer.

Practice really listening to your own body when you're experiencing a physical reaction.

- 🐾 The body feels emotions in different places — fear is often felt in the belly, sadness is felt as tightness in the chest or throat, and anger rests in the shoulders, back, and face.
- 🐾 Learn to recognize your body's signals, then take the next step of searching out the underlying emotional cause.
- 🐾 Share your insights by teaching these same **mindfulness** skills to your children.



## Did You Know?

**Research has shown that simply engaging the facial muscles — like smiling for no reason — can make you feel good. Smiling is a great antidote to stress and can help you relax when you're feeling tense.**



## Finding Feelings

**YIP TIP™**

### You Are the Sunshine

Congratulate good behavior at every opportunity. Praising kids when they express feelings appropriately reinforces that behavior. Focus on the specific behavior when praising: "You were really patient when your sister took your doll. I love how you were kind, and didn't get angry with her." Praise from you is like sunshine — it makes positive behaviors grow and flourish.



## Great Books to Check Out

*Spot Loves His Mommy* by Eric Hill

*Spot Loves His Daddy* by Eric Hill

*Buster: The Very Shy Dog* by Lisze Bechtold

*BOOM!: Big, Big Thunder & One Small Dog* by Mary Lyn Ray & Steven Salerno

*Wag!* by Patrick McDonnell

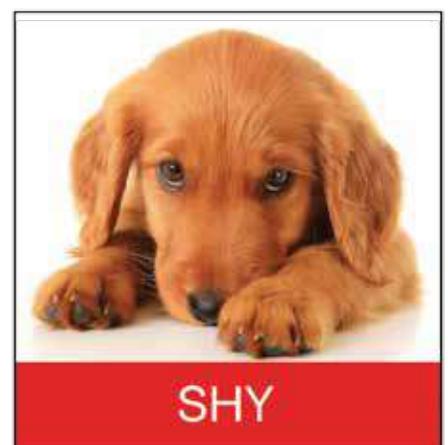
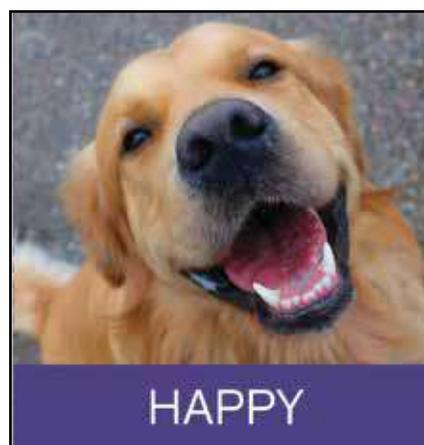
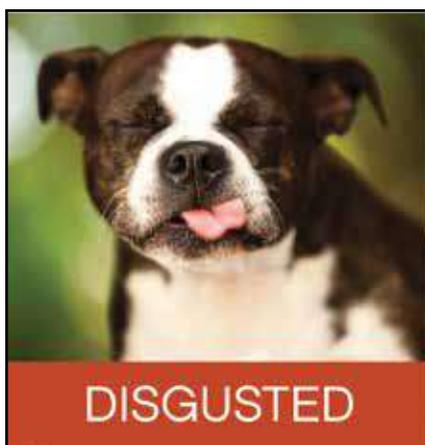
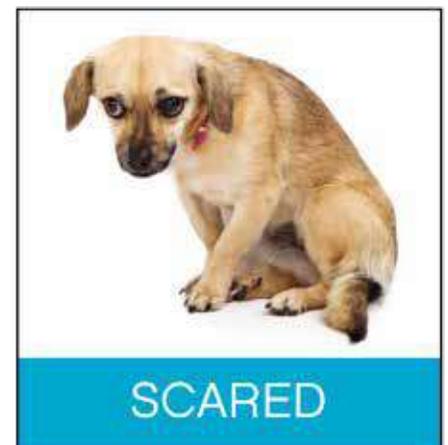
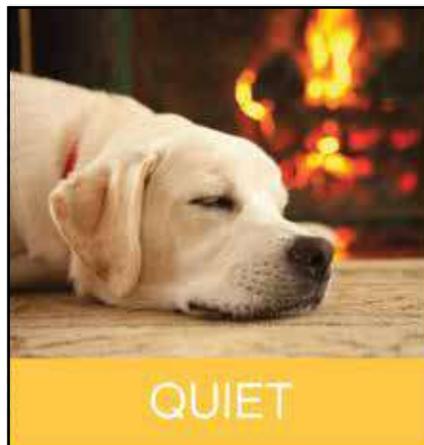
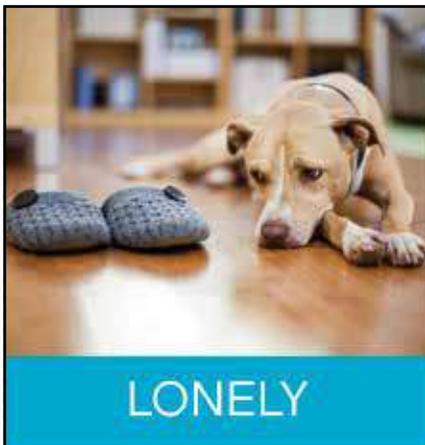
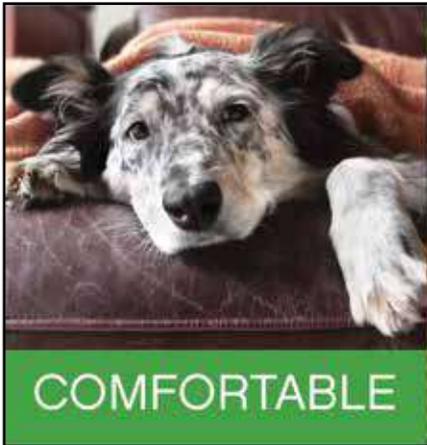
*Max Talks to Me* by Claire Buchwald

*Dogs Have the Strangest Friends & Other True Stories of Animal Feelings* by Shirley Felts & Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson



# Finding Feelings

Dogs really do laugh! Research shows that dogs experience all the same emotions as a human toddler at 2-1/2 years old. That's a lot of different feelings! We've created **Muttigrees Dog Emotion Cards**, to show some of the many feelings dogs experience.





# Finding Feelings

## That's Appropriate, That's Inappropriate

### What's It About?

Learning **appropriate** ways to share and express their negative feelings will improve your child's interactions with family members, teachers, and friends. Understanding what triggers angry feelings, and learning how to express those feelings without hurting others, will help your child communicate more effectively.

### Let's Talk About It

Help your child understand that using their words is the best way to let someone else know how they're feeling.

-  If you need help doing something, use your words and ask for help.
-  If you hit, yell, or throw things when you get **frustrated** you might hurt someone.
-  **Inappropriate** behavior doesn't solve the problem; it only gets you into trouble.
-  When you see your child struggling with an emotion, give them simple words to use to express their feelings **appropriately**.
-  Remember to praise your child every time they express negative emotions **appropriately**.



Discuss the different levels of anger with your children. Look at the **Feelings Vocabulary Chart** on page 23 for words that express different intensities of anger.

-  Sometimes you get just a little mad, like when someone bumps into you, or when playtime is over — that's irritated, gloomy, down, blue, or resentful.
-  Sometimes you get mad when you don't get what you want — that's a special type of mad called **frustrated**, or annoyed.
-  Sometimes you might get really, really mad, like when a project gets ruined by your baby brother, or mom says you can't do something you really want to do — that's furious, enraged, miserable, boiling mad, or seeing red.

Talk about how that emotion feels on the inside, and the **appropriate** way to behave on the outside. Help your children find ways of calming down so they don't behave **inappropriately**.

-  Offer them some time-out alternatives. Some children do well calming down if they can be alone for a few minutes.
-  Teach them to take deep, slow breaths to calm down when they feel **frustrated** or angry.
-  A calm brain is better able to figure out the words to use, instead of acting out.



# Finding Feelings

## Taking It Further Behavior Consequences

Notice when your child is having a difficult time expressing an emotion, and model **appropriate** responses for them to use instead.

1. Name the emotion you believe your child is feeling — Say: “I see that you are really mad at your brother because he ruined your book.”
2. Identify any **inappropriate** reaction by your child — Say: “It’s not okay to hit/bite/throw things/ call him names.”
3. Model an **appropriate** response — “Instead, try this: Say ‘I feel angry/**frustrated**/sad that you tore my book.’ ”
4. Model an apology for the offending child — “Say, ‘I’m sorry I ripped your book.’ ”
5. Assist in making **restitution** — Offer suggestions, and make sure the offending child accomplishes a solution for fixing or replacing the damaged item.

Though sometimes it’s just easier to do Step 5 yourself, having to fix or replace the damaged property is a critically important final step for your child to learn that bad behavior has **consequences**.

## What About You?

As parents and caregivers, it’s important to know your own anger triggers and to recognize times when you might have a shorter fuse than usual. When dealing with a child who is angry or **frustrated**, the best way to de-escalate the situation is for you to stay calm and rational. By staying calm, you model the behavior you want your child to display, and they will calm down faster.

Acknowledging your child’s anger will help them refocus, and begin calming down. Often, the things that make us angry are beyond our control. It can be empowering in these situations to realize that the one thing we can actually control is our response. We can take a mental time out just by thinking about something else. For example, think about a calming place or situation, and imagine yourself there for a few moments.

You can adopt practices to help build your calm quotient, including:

-  Yoga
-  Meditation
-  Journaling
-  Exercise
-  Getting outside in nature and taking a walk
-  Talking to friends





## Finding Feelings

### Great Books to Check Out

*Harry and the Lady Next Door* by Gene Zion

*Clifford and the Grouchy Neighbors* by Norman Bridwell

*Bow Wow Yoga* by Gerry Greengrass

*Barking Buddha: Simple Soul Stretches for Yogi and Dogi* by Brenda Bryan

## Staying Calm-Assertive



When we get mad or upset, it changes not only how we feel, but also how we react and interact with other people and animals. We may be sending a signal that has a little — or a lot — more stress in it, and we may even raise our voices, stamp our feet, or yell.

How do you think these stressed signals “sound” to a dog, or other animal? Not good. Dogs like their pack leaders to be calm, assertive, and confident — they don’t understand yelling. Dogs’ ears are very sensitive, so they can hear you even when you whisper! Dogs are confused by yelling and listen much better when you speak softly.

Sometimes a dog may simply be focusing on something else, and not listening to you. Instead of yelling, try snapping your fingers, or whistling to get their attention. When our words and actions show we are calm, assertive pack leaders, dogs will listen and obey!



## Finding Feelings

**YIP TIP™**

### Give Your Child Words

Model the way for your child to use words to express their feelings when they're upset, angry, or **frustrated**. When a young child gets **frustrated** or angry, their first instinct is often to hit or bite. Respond to **inappropriate** behavior immediately, calmly saying, "We don't bite or hit — no thank you." Then, quickly model **appropriate** words they can use instead to express how they're feeling.



## Grow Good Behavior

Remember, any behavior that receives your attention — either positive or negative — will increase that behavior, because your child craves your attention. Rewarding good behavior with praise and attention every time you see it will grow the good behavior.

When your child misbehaves and you respond by yelling, threatening or getting upset, this is actually negative attention that will likely increase the misbehavior. Instead of getting mad when children act out in anger, model an alternative positive behavior for them to try. Say something like, "I can see you're frustrated because you threw that toy. Try using your words instead to tell me how you feel." Be aware of how you respond when you're upset so you model the behavior you want your child to learn. You are their best teacher!





# Finding Feelings

## Let's Feel Better

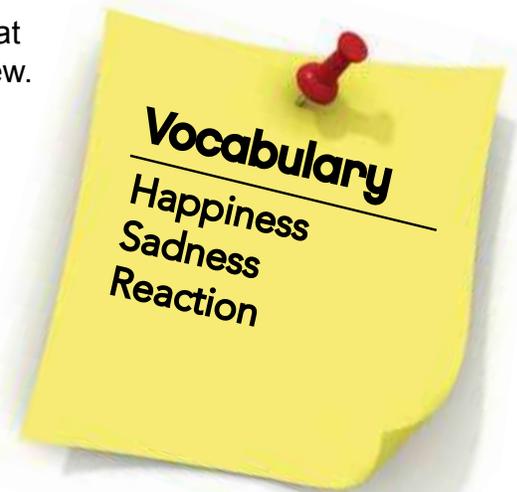
### What's It About?

There is a wide spectrum of feelings related to **happiness** and **sadness**, and what things trigger and contribute to experiencing these feelings. Let's look at ways to help your child effectively express these emotions.

### Let's Talk About It

**Happiness** is a wonderful feeling. Can you think of other words that mean happy? Joyful, ecstatic, excited, elated, and blissful are a few. Let's see what we know about this feeling:

-  Why do people feel happy?
-  What does **happiness** look like on the inside?
-  How about on the outside? What does your face look like when you're happy — what does your mouth do, and how do your eyes look?
-  How can you tell if someone is happy?
-  What things make you happy?



Some things make almost everyone happy — like getting a gift, or going somewhere fun. But some things might make you happy, but not make me happy — these are person-specific — like swimming, or eating ice cream, or playing with trains.

-  What things or activities make the people in our family happy?

Now let's talk about the feeling that's the opposite of **happiness** — **sadness**. Can you think of other words that mean sad — like upset, miserable, or gloomy? How do people look and act when they are sad?

-  What does **sadness** feel like on the inside?
-  What else does your body do when you feel sad? Do you cry, curl up on the couch, or just get quiet?
-  What helps you feel happy again when you've been sad? Is it a special person or pet, or maybe a favorite activity?



*(Continued on next page)*



# Finding Feelings

## Let's Talk About It (continued)

Sometimes, something may happen to make us feel sad. Feeling sad can be awful, but if we can figure out what makes us sad, we can figure out a way to feel better.

If you have a dog or other pet:

- 🐾 How can you tell how your pet is feeling?
- 🐾 How do dogs show **happiness** — they might wag their tail, jump up, or bark excitedly?
- 🐾 What about **sadness** — they might cry, whine, lie around, or put their tail between their legs?
- 🐾 What things make a dog happy or sad?
- 🐾 Is it the same as what makes you happy or sad?
- 🐾 Would not having anyone to play with make both children and dogs feel sad?
- 🐾 Would being able to run and play in the park make both children and dogs feel happy?

## Taking It Further

### Can You Catch Happiness?

Sometimes you can feel better by catching someone else's **happiness**. Laughing is contagious! Test this out by having one child or adult stand as still and straight-faced as they can, then have another child or adult act really happy — smile, laugh, dance around, and do silly things. See how long it takes for the straight-faced child or adult to smile or laugh, and start to act silly, too. Have each person pay attention to how they are feeling in **reaction** to the happy person. Talk about how seeing someone else laugh and smile can make you feel happy, too.





# Finding Feelings

## What About You?

Simply put, **happiness** is the best cure for **sadness**. Don't passively wait for **happiness** to come to you, pursue it by doing things that bring you joy.

Ways to cultivate **happiness** include:

- 🐾 Volunteering your time to others.
- 🐾 Being open-minded, curious, and eager to learn new things.
- 🐾 Focusing on what you can do, rather than on what you can't do. For example, having a pet may be out of the question for your family right now. Can you think of a way to help a shelter dog or cat in the meantime?
- 🐾 Showing the people in your life how much they mean to you.

**Sadness** is a normal **reaction** when you've experienced a significant loss — of a loved one, a relationship, or a job. The thing **sadness** should always do is make us truly appreciate **happiness**.

Normal **sadness** is not the same as depression. **Sadness** can actually enrich your emotional life and build resilience as you progress through it. Ways to work through **sadness** naturally, without getting stuck, include:

- 🐾 Allow yourself a day or two to feel sad without trying to snap out of it.
- 🐾 Cry as much as you want — you'll feel much better after a good cry.
- 🐾 Play sad music, or watch a sad movie.
- 🐾 Journal your thoughts and feelings to help you work through them.
- 🐾 You might want to be alone and quiet, or you might seek out friends or family and talk to process your feelings with them.
- 🐾 Get outside in nature, or go to the gym for a workout.

As you progress through your **sadness**, you will start to feel glimmers of **happiness** again. Encourage the return of **happiness** by:

- 🐾 Watching a favorite comedy movie, or funny YouTube animal videos.
- 🐾 Be kind to yourself by doing some of your favorite things.
- 🐾 Talk to, or go out with, friends and family.
- 🐾 Focus on the positive things in your life.

If you still find yourself feeling sad, and you are not able to move beyond it after two weeks, **sadness** may be turning into depression. It's time to seek professional help.



# Finding Feelings

## Great Books to Check Out

*I, Trixie, Who Is Dog* by Dean Koontz

*Taking a Bath with the Dog, and Other Things That Make Me Happy*  
by Scott Menchin

*Happy Dog* by Lisa Grubb

*Unlovable* by Dan Yaccarino

*Henry and Mudge: The First Book of Their Adventures* by Cynthia Rylant

*The Big Little Book of Happy Sadness* by Colin Thompson

*Bobo and the New Neighbor* by Gail Page

*Black Dog* by Levi Pinfold

*Otis and the Puppy* by Loren Long

*The Next-Door Dogs* by Colby Rodowsky

*Clifford's First School Day* by Norman Bridwell



**YIP TIP™**

### Find the Feeling

When you're sitting in a waiting room, use books or magazines to find pictures of people and ask children to name the emotion they think the person or character is feeling. Prompt them to look for clues in the person's face and body, and to notice where the person is and what they are doing. Games like this raise awareness of others, and help children hone their emotion-labeling skills.



## Finding Feelings



# SHOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE

## Wear Your Heart on Your Wrist!

This activity is a fun way to let people know how you feel. We use it here to help children get practice letting people know how they feel about something they believe in. One way to do this is to create a thought-provoking wrist band. You can use Velcro and ribbon and simply write a message about your cause. For example, if you are promoting shelter pets, you can use one of the examples below.

**Adoption Is the Best Option**

**Adopt Don't Shop**

**Adopt a Dog — Save a Life**

When you or your child wear the wrist band you can let people know how you feel about an issue. You can also gauge people's responses: How many people at school or the mall noticed the wrist band? What questions did they ask? What did they say in support of rescuing shelter pets?

Having a cause you are passionate about and enjoy working on makes a big difference, both in academics and in life. Researchers have found that students who have "grit" — defined as having passion for something they believe in and the persistence to do something about it — do better in school than those without a passion. The same is true for adults. What about you? Is there a cause that you're passionate about?



## Encouraging Empathy

**T**he capacity for empathy is innate, and is evident not only in humans, but also in many other species. We often see evidence of this at the Animal League: A dog will take care of another dog who is blind, or a cat — despite having some limitations himself — will reach out to be near and offer warmth to newborn kittens that lost their mother.

However, there are times when children seem anything but empathetic, and are solely focused on how they are feeling. Some children may laugh at another child in distress, for example. And then, there is the caring child who shows concern, and rushes over to help the distressed child.

Experts point out that empathy needs to be nurtured, and can be taught by sharpening our observation and listening skills. Empathy is closely related to sympathy, but goes beyond having compassion for a person, to actually being able to see and understand things from their perspective. Since every person is unique, and may react differently to the same situation, we have to build the skill of putting ourselves in someone else's shoes, to recognize and respond to what they may be feeling.

Being aware of how other people feel is the flip side of self-awareness. To nurture empathy in children, we should first help them identify and label their own feelings. We put the parts together by using communication skills developed in the earlier sections to help children be aware of, and sensitive to, the emotional states of others. Healthy self-awareness is essential to empathy, so when children feel good about themselves they will be better empathizers. As children develop empathy skills they also become more effective communicators.

Although they may be unaware of it, children learn to be caring by watching their parents and teachers. In other words, you model empathetic behavior by how you react to your own children, and to other people — what you say and do when someone is upset, and when you take the opportunity to help people. When you volunteer at a soup kitchen, donate clothes to Goodwill, or visit or donate to animal shelters, children take notice, and will grow up to show similar caring behaviors.

You can also help children by nurturing skills associated with empathy. One of the most important skills is the ability to listen effectively. It makes sense — listening helps us get to know people. Listening does not mean waiting for your turn to speak, or thinking about what you are going to say while someone else is talking. To really listen well you have to:

- 🐾 Look at the other person, including their body language.
- 🐾 Think about what they are saying, and what they may not be saying.
- 🐾 Consider how they might be feeling physically.

Research shows that children learn empathy by being empathized with. When you identify and label their feelings and help them understand why they are feeling that way you enable them to better recognize the same feelings in other people.





# Encouraging Empathy

Praise children when you notice their positive behavior, and they'll learn that you recognize and value their responsiveness to others. Clearly explain to young children how and why their negative behavior affects other people to help them become more empathetic.

Be aware that you are your child's primary role model, and they are always watching what you do. Demonstrate how to be caring and compassionate by your behavior toward your children, especially when they misbehave. When you are trying to correct bad behavior:

- 🐾 Stay calm and rational yourself; don't get agitated or yell.
- 🐾 Look for the underlying feelings or reasons that may be causing the bad behavior.
- 🐾 Help them recognize and label those motivating feelings or reasons.

Keep doing this consistently, and they will learn from you how to think beyond themselves and respond to others with compassion and empathy.

## Lend a Helping Hand

Volunteer work, or simply lending a hand to someone, is immensely rewarding. Studies show that this is one of the best ways to move from thinking about yourself to thinking about others. The Animal League is blessed to have a dedicated volunteer corps who are recognized each year for their invaluable efforts. During these occasions, the volunteers stress how much their volunteer work means to them, and how they treasure the opportunity to help animals in need. You don't need to devote a lot of time to make a real difference — a commitment of an hour a week goes a long way.



A less formal approach is simply being aware of people who may need your help. The open-hearted, generous gesture of a child is a powerful thing. See how a four-year-old girl, by simply asking to give a hug to a lonely elderly man in a grocery store, had a wonderfully transformative effect on both the man, and on the girl and her family ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=2d2vZV87YJM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2d2vZV87YJM)).



# Encouraging Empathy

## Daily Routines

### MORNING



Encourage your child to look for ways to be kind to others during the day. Ways to be kind include looking at, and smiling at a person while saying “please” and “thank you”; helping someone out, or just smiling at other people. Simply ask your child: “Do you think you will have a chance to be kind, or to smile at people today?” This is a reminder for both you and your child to start your day off on a positive note.

### MEALTIME



Ask your child how his or her day was, and listen to any stories they have about things that happened. When you listen to their answers you show your interest, and also may get clues as to what may be going on with them. It’s often hard to get kids to talk, so try asking them to tell you the best, the most surprising, or the worst thing that happened today.

### IN THE CAR



- Our facial expressions show how we are feeling, but they also have an impact on how we actually feel, and how others feel. A game you can try in the car is making different facial expressions, and asking how each one makes us feel. Smiling is one of the most popular expressions in this game, but make sure to try negative emotions as well. How will people react if you walk around with a mean face, or looking sad?
- When you’re on a long car trip, make a game of imagining how people long ago felt when they were traveling great distances in horse-drawn wagons, by stagecoach, or even on foot. If you know your family’s ancestry, you can help your children with the details of geography and history linked to your ancestors.

### BEDTIME



- Recognize any acts of kindness your child showed during the day, and tell them the things they did right. Be as specific as possible, for example: “You were really generous when you shared your trains with Joey. He was smiling, and was so happy to play with you.”
- Talk about any feelings your child might have experienced during the day, and actively listen to understand why they might have felt that way. You can also share your feelings, and help them think about how their behavior affects you. When you share how you feel, children get the message that they are important, while giving them an opportunity to empathize.



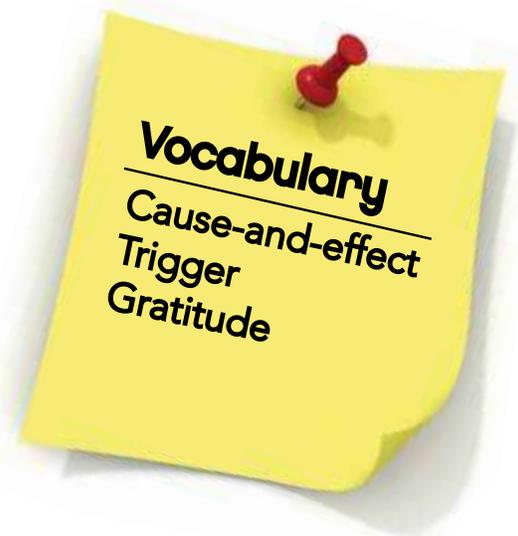
# Encouraging Empathy

## How Would You Feel?

### What's It About?

Feelings drive actions, especially in younger children.

- 🐾 As children learn to see how their feelings are **triggered** by certain situations, they can better manage their emotions — “When my sister screams it hurts my ears, and then I get mad!”
- 🐾 Talking through upcoming situations and debriefing past ones gives children the power to recognize conditions that **trigger** emotional reactions.
- 🐾 Learning these **cause-and-effect** relationships helps children take responsibility for the consequences of their actions.
- 🐾 This self-knowledge will help children be more empathetic by recognizing how their behavior might **trigger** someone else's emotions — “My brother gets mad when I scream because it hurts his ears.”



### Let's Talk About It

In previous sections, we've talked about what makes people and animals feel different emotions, and how we show and share these feelings. Let's talk about and imagine how things that could happen might make us feel, and what our reaction might be.

- 🐾 How would you feel if your brother or sister took your favorite toy without asking?
- 🐾 How would you feel if your friend stopped playing with you to play with someone else?
- 🐾 How would you feel if your dog chewed up your favorite book, or toy?
- 🐾 How would you feel if mom or dad blamed you for something you didn't do?
- 🐾 Your own pet may be safely snug in its bed. But what about homeless pets at the animal shelter? Are there ways we can make them feel safe and comfortable?

This activity is more meaningful if you custom-tailor it to past events, and to behaviors and/or relationships you are working to improve.





# Encouraging Empathy

## Taking It Further That Changes Everything!

Sometimes we can be pretty sure about how we would react. If someone wrecked a picture you drew, or broke your favorite toy you would be upset. Would you feel differently if:

- 🐾 A baby did it accidentally?
- 🐾 An older child did it on purpose?
- 🐾 You left it on the floor, and then your dog chewed it up?
- 🐾 You left it on the floor, and then your mom stepped on it?



Sometimes, considering the reason something happened changes how we feel about it. An accident, or something that happened because we were careless or messy, is easier to forgive than damage that's done on purpose. Usually, there are reasons behind a person's behavior, so it's always a good idea to ask what happened before you get upset or angry. Maybe it's *your* behavior that needs to change — like putting your toys away when you finish playing!

## What About You?

Empathy is the ability to tune into another's feelings and understand them, without having experienced the same thing yourself. Each of us is unique, and we may not react to, or feel the same way about the same experience, especially once we become adults.

- 🐾 Your capacity to empathize is directly related to your ability to tap into your own emotions.
- 🐾 All the life experiences you've gathered have expanded your ability to empathize with others. Think back to times when someone was kind to you. How did you feel?

Some years ago you were a child, so you do have the capability to understand their feelings. Do you remember a time when you did something — broke your mom's favorite vase, for example? What **reactions** did that generate? You mom might have been very upset, and may have punished you even though it was an accident. Or, she might have been upset, but was understanding that accidents happen. Which would have been the more empathetic response?

- 🐾 It's easy to get upset at your children, but practice taking the time to actively listen to your child, remember yourself at that age, and put yourself in their shoes. Not taking action can often have more of an impact on a child, and will also model empathy.
- 🐾 These may be new emotions a child is experiencing for the first time, so the correct way to **react** has to be taught.
- 🐾 Recognize and address the feelings behind your child's behavior.
- 🐾 Empathy is innate, so you only have to practice to become an expert.

*(Continued on next page)*



# Encouraging Empathy

## What About You? (continued)

You set the best example of empathetic behavior by how you behave yourself.

-  Research shows that children become more empathetic with caregivers who show caring behavior toward them.
-  Be sympathetic to the feelings of others, especially when it isn't in your own self-interest.
-  Go out of your way to pay attention and respond in a caring way when other people need help and encouragement.

Even when you have very young children, treat them as intelligent individuals by explaining how you are feeling in different situations, and you will increase their ability to empathize.



## Great Books to Check Out

*Yoda: The Story of Cat and His Kittens* by Beth Stern

*Carl's Masquerade, Carl's Afternoon in the Park, or Carl Goes to Daycare*

by Alexandra Day

*McDuff and the Baby* by Rosemary Wells

*Buddy Unchained* by Daisy Bix

*Otto Goes to Camp* (or any of the *Otto* series) by Todd Parr

*Max Talks to Me* by Claire Buchwald

*White Fur Flying* by Patricia MacLachlan

*Mister Bud Wears the Cone* by Carter Goodrich

*Dear Mrs. LaRue: Letters from Obedience School* by Mark Teague

*Help Me, Mr. Mutt!: Expert Answers for Dogs with People Problems*

by Jack Stevens



# Encouraging Empathy

## Collect Grateful Pennies

There are several known benefits to expressing **gratitude**, including good physical health, enhanced relationships, and higher self-esteem. **Gratitude** also promotes empathy. Try this with your child to promote **gratitude**: Every time you or your child see a penny on the ground, pick it up and think of something you are grateful for. You can collect the **gratitude** pennies in a jar — the more pennies you collect, the more you realize the myriad number of things you have to be grateful for.

**YIP TIP™**



## Whoops!

### What's It About?

**Mistakes** happen. And sometimes **mistakes** even hurt someone else. Children need to know it's important to make **amends** when it's their fault. Learning to see things from another person's **perspective** is the foundation of empathy. This understanding helps children:

- 🐾 Take responsibility for their actions.
- 🐾 Forgive themselves when they make **mistakes**.
- 🐾 Not blame others for their **mistakes**.
- 🐾 Learn the value of a sincere apology.





# Encouraging Empathy

## Let's Talk About It

What can we say or do when we make a **mistake**, or an **accident** happens? What is the best way to say you're sorry? Here is a sample discussion of the steps to make **amends** when an **accident** happens, or a behavior accidentally hurts someone:

1. Can you think of a time you made a **mistake** that hurt someone else? — "Remember when you poked your sister in the eye when you were playing?"
2. How did they feel? — "It really hurt and she cried and cried."
3. How did you feel? — "I didn't mean to do it and I was really sad because she got hurt."
4. What did you do to make it better? — "I ran and got you to help, and then I got her a tissue."
5. How did you apologize for the **mistake**? — "I said I was sorry and told her I didn't mean to poke her in the eye."
6. What can you do differently next time? — "Be more careful and not play with sharp sticks."



## Taking It Further Muttigree Mistakes

Owning a dog or cat is a big responsibility. Sometimes, after adopting a pet, a person might realize they made a **mistake**, and can't properly care for it. What could someone do if they realized they made a **mistake** in getting a dog or cat? They could ask a relative or friend to adopt the pet, or they could surrender it to a shelter. Although this would be a really hard decision, sometimes it's the best thing to do to make sure every Muttigree gets the love and care they deserve.

## What About You?

Parents are the pack leaders and role models for their family. Empathy is an essential leadership skill, and the emotional energy you create in your home impacts your family in a big way. To be an empathetic pack leader, practice these skills:

-  Show your children you can see things from their **perspective**. Understanding what they need and how they are feeling will give them confidence and security.
-  Increase respect and cooperation by being willing to listen to them.
-  Consider their opinions and feelings when making decisions.
-  Admit when you make **mistakes**, or hurt others by **accident** — your child learns you won't judge them harshly, and they can trust you with their **mistakes**.



# Encouraging Empathy

**YIP TIP™**

## Keep an Eye Out for the Wounded

Whenever you see someone being wronged or hurt in some way — on the news, on a TV show, on Facebook, in a book, or in real life — point it out to your child, and talk about what is happening to that person and how they might feel. Also, think about what **amends** might make the injured person feel better.



## Great Books to Check Out

*Big Dog and Little Dog Making a Mistake* by Dav Pilkey

*The Best Mistake Ever!* by Richard Scarry

*Carl's Snowy Afternoon* (or any of the *Carl* series) by Alexandra Day

*Oops, Clifford!* (or any of the *Clifford* series) by Norman Bridwell



# Encouraging Empathy

## I'm Really Sorry

### What's It About?

A **genuine** apology has to come from the heart. Even though it can be embarrassing to do, children need to learn how to **apologize sincerely** and effectively. They also might have to do more than just saying words; they might have to make restitution for something they did. Considering how our words and actions impact others is a critical component to developing empathy.

### Let's Talk About It

Discuss the A, B, C, and D's of **apologies** during a quiet conversation time — like during a meal, or at bedtime.

-  **A — Apologize:** Just say, “I’m sorry.” This is a very clear way to communicate empathy.
-  **B — Be Sincere and Honest:** The words you use to **apologize** can sound very different depending on how you say them. Use your face, voice, and body to show you are **genuinely** sorry, and want to make amends for your mistake.
-  **C — Consider How the Other Person Feels:** Tell the person how you would feel if this happened to you. Show them you also empathize when you **apologize**.
-  **D — Do Something:** If you need to make amends, do it immediately. If something got broken or damaged, fixing it will show the other person how sorry you are.



### Taking It Further Apologies in Action

Remember the old adage: Actions speak louder than words. A verbal apology is important, but making restitution is even more significant. Your child might need to make amends by:

-  **Repairing** something that got broken.
-  Cleaning up any mess they made.
-  Replacing a damaged item.

*(Continued on next page)*





# Encouraging Empathy

## Taking It Further (continued)

### Apologies in Action

You may have to help your child figure out what needs to be done to make amends, but don't make the mistake of fixing it for them.

- 🐾 It's very important for children to **repair** the damage they did on their own, so they understand their actions have consequences to them directly.
- 🐾 If you clean it up for them, or you replace a broken toy, then you experience the consequence, but they don't feel any effects from their actions.
- 🐾 If your child doesn't feel any effects, then they will most likely exhibit the same behavior again.

Sometimes, mistakes can be pretty big and may need the cooperation of a lot of people to **repair** them. There could also be acts of nature that call for collective action. Together with your child, see if you can think of a mistake, accident, or natural disaster in the community that needs to be **repaired** — like an oil spill, a house fire, or storm damage that devastated the community, including the local food bank and animal shelter.

## What About You?

Why is it sometimes so hard to tell someone you love that you're sorry? Because of pride or embarrassment, **apologizing** is one of the hardest actions to take. A **genuine**, heartfelt apology:

- 🐾 Is actually a gift to yourself as well as the other person.
- 🐾 Will make you both feel better and clear the air.
- 🐾 Accepts responsibility for causing harm, without making excuses.
- 🐾 Doesn't require the other person's forgiveness.

After you **sincerely apologize**, it's up to the other person to move past the hurt feelings. Try to end every apology with a hug in your family — it's hard to stay mad after a good hug, no matter how far apart you feel beforehand.





# Encouraging Empathy

**YIP TIP™**

## Monkey See, Monkey Feel

Grow empathy skills in young children by having them try to imagine how people and animals in books or magazines are feeling from looking at their facial expressions and body language. Next, ask your child to imagine they are in the same situation, then make the same facial expression, and see if they can feel the same emotion.



## Great Books to Check Out

*Olivia and the Missing Toy* by Ian Falconer

*Sorry I Pooped in Your Shoe: (and Other Heartwarming Letters from Doggie)*

by Jeremy Greenberg

*Wet Dog!* by Elise Broach and David Catrow

*I'm Sorry, Blue's Clues* by Justin Chanda

*The Digging-Est Dog* by Al Perkins

*Big Dog and Little Dog Making a Mistake* by Dav Pilkey



# Encouraging Empathy



## SHOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE

### Dear Muttigree

Imagine a dog or cat waiting to be adopted at the local animal shelter. This Muttigree decides he or she should write a letter and hang it on the kennel door for all to see. Will you write a short letter for Muttigree, telling how they feel, where they come from, and what kind of family they would like to live with? Use the words happy, sad, frustrated, and joyous in your letter. You can also add a drawing.

P.S.: To find out something that can inspire you to write about shelter pets, visit your local shelter's website or [www.animalleague.org](http://www.animalleague.org).

After having written the letter, imagine getting a similar letter from a Muttigree. How would you feel? What would you think? Write a Dear Muttigree letter responding to the Muttigree. Try to use the words wish, hope, excited, and future in your response. If you like, you can include a drawing.

If you send us your child's letter and we post it on our website, we will send you a small prize. Entries should be handwritten or drawn, and include your child's first name and age. Scan and send them to us at [info@muttigrees.org](mailto:info@muttigrees.org). Please write "Dear Muttigree" in the subject line.





# Cultivating Cooperation

In school, children learn academic skills that will eventually help them get a job. Technology and globalization have created a need for students to have more than basic academic skills. Your children will need what educators and researchers refer to as 21st Century Skills. Four critical 21st Century Skills are:

-  Technological Awareness
-  Creative Thinking
-  Critical Thinking — being able to research, evaluate and interpret information
-  Cooperation and Collaboration

The ability to cooperate and collaborate is not included in the school curriculum, but is essential for the workplace, as most jobs require teamwork. Developing self-awareness and empathy are essential to developing good behavior and skills of cooperation.

Other key elements of cooperation are good listening, communication skills, and feeling like a valued part of a family team. Here we will focus on helping children learn how to ask for help, how to give help, and how to successfully work with others in the family to accomplish shared tasks.

-  How can you help your child acquire the ability to work as part of a team?
-  Talk about how your family is a team, with each member of the family having an important role.
-  Talk about what it's like for you when you need help.
-  Model active listening and reflecting for your child.
-  Explain the cooperation qualities that make a good friend.

Children need to have a strong sense of their own identity to feel confident of their place in the family dynamic. Belonging to a family group broadens a child's focus from only thinking of themselves, to thinking of the family's needs. Understanding that they belong to a family group gives your child a broader perspective of how their actions and behavior affect everyone in the family.

When children feel they are valued and accepted by their family, they gain the ability to value and accept other people. Show your children you appreciate the things they do to help the family, and they will cooperate more to gain your appreciation.

Helping each other accomplish tasks teaches the value of cooperation. When you ask a child to do something, how big the job feels can be overwhelming. But working together shows children that even though something looks really hard and feels overwhelming, cooperation makes it much easier.





# Cultivating Cooperation

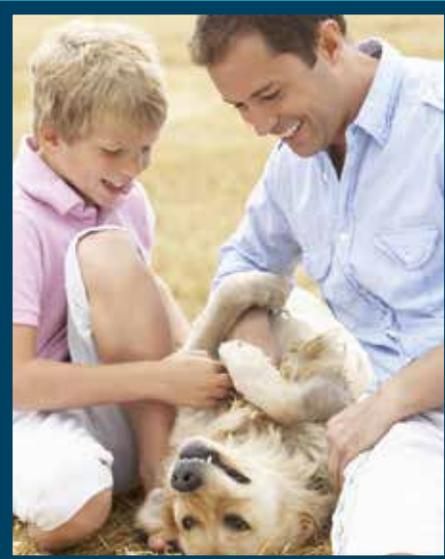
Teach the value of cooperating with each other when your children are young by doing household chores as a team. For example, you can include children by:

- 🐾 Doing the dishes together.
- 🐾 Working together to make the grocery list and buy food at the store.
- 🐾 Cooking meals together.
- 🐾 Feeding your pets together.
- 🐾 Folding laundry together.
- 🐾 Doing yard work and gardening together.

Teamwork and cooperation can make every task easier. Children can work together to clean up toys, rake leaves, and pick up trash. Older children can help parents by playing with younger siblings, feeding the pets, folding laundry, and putting away dishes or groceries. Getting help and giving help to other people both feel good!

You get the idea ... the opportunities to work together with your children to help the family succeed are endless. Children see themselves as valuable and necessary when they can be helpful and contribute. Tell them how much you appreciate them, and that you couldn't have done it without them, and you'll increase their willingness to help. Start when they are young, and the foundation for cooperation will be solid when they get older.

## Praise Is the Best Reward



**Kids are quite capable of being spontaneously helpful, but research studies show that, surprisingly, kids become less helpful when given material rewards. This is especially true if they are already motivated to do the task, if a reward is promised ahead of time, or if they get rewards regardless of whether they do a good job or not. However, verbally rewarding children with praise is very important. Giving kids compliments on good work they do encourages helpfulness.**



# Cultivating Cooperation

## Daily Routines

### MORNING



- Ask your child whether they need anything from you today to make their day easier. If they're feeling anxious, is there anything you can do to help them feel more confident?
- Tell your child something you really need their help to accomplish. If it's a difficult task, tell them that their assistance will help break it up into manageable pieces. If it's time consuming, let them know their help will make the job go much faster.

### MEALTIME



- Talk about times during the day when you worked together with someone to get a task done. If conflicts arose for either one of you, talk about strategies you each used to resolve the disagreement.
- If your child helped you during the day, discuss how their assistance improved your day and made it go more smoothly.

### IN THE CAR



Try this game to hone listening skills on your next car ride. This can be done with any two people — one person is the talker and one is the listener (assign a topic like a favorite book, song, or movie). The listener has to respond to three sentences the talker says. For example, the listener could say "I like that book, too," or ask a question like "Can you tell me what happens in that movie, because I never saw it?" After several responses you can switch roles and topics.

### BEDTIME



- Ask if your child received help from someone during the day. Who helped them, and what did they learn from it? Ask how they felt when other people were supportive. Do they feel better able to do the task on their own next time?
- Think of something your child did during the day to help a person or animal that deserves special mention. Giving your child positive feedback at bedtime really sinks in!



# Cultivating Cooperation

## Can I Get Some Help, Please?

### What's It About?

Sometimes we all need a little help. An infant's only way to communicate when he or she needs help is to cry. But as children learn to talk, they acquire more verbal skills to ask for help when they need it. They might need your help reaching something high up, or reading a new word. Learning to ask for help decreases problem behaviors that can result from frustration, and increases cooperation skills and confidence — knowing that we are worthy of receiving help is **invaluable**.

### Let's Talk About It

The ability to ask for help is one of the most important skills to master, especially if the problem is an emotional one, or seems insurmountable and personal. The less confident and **resilient** we are, the less likely we are to ask for help. Hence, the ability to ask for help is one of the skills that can strengthen **resiliency** — the ability to bounce back.

Children — and adults as well — may need practice asking for help, so it's easier to begin with small requests. The best way to get help is simply to ask for it. There are different ways to ask for help depending on what kind of **assistance** you need.

Sometimes you might only need a little help, or for someone to show you how to do something yourself. For example:

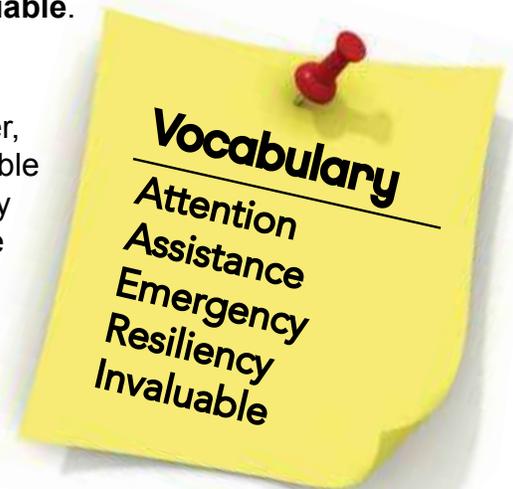
- 🐾 Zipping your coat, or tying a shoe.
- 🐾 Putting the straw in a juice pouch, or opening a milk carton.

When you're asking for help like this you can use a quiet voice, and remember to say "please," and "thank you." Once you learn how, you'll be able to do these things yourself and show other kids who need help!

Sometimes you might need a little more help from an adult. For example:

- 🐾 If you or a friend falls and gets hurt on the playground.
- 🐾 If you accidentally break something, or make a big mess.
- 🐾 If you are lost, or feel like you are not safe.

*(Continued on next page)*





# Cultivating Cooperation

## Let's Talk About It (continued)

It's okay to yell for help when you need to get an adult's **attention** quickly. It's important to let the adult who helps you know what happened, and where you are hurt.

Sometimes, you might need help to come really fast in a scary situation. Usually, an adult would be the one to call for **emergency** help. But if mom or dad ever got really sick or hurt, you might need to call for help. The best way to get **emergency** help is to use a phone and dial 9-1-1, and tell them what happened. The 9-1-1 operator will send help right away, and tell you what to do. It's important to know:

-  The address where you live.
-  Your mom and dad's names.

Sometimes, you are upset and don't know what kind of help you need, or if you need help at all. But taking the first step, and talking about how you feel to a trusted individual — a friend, parent, or teacher — will relieve anxious feelings.



## Taking It Further We Can Do This

There are some things about yourself that you can't change — like your height, or your shoe size — but there are some things you can change.

-  Have each person in your family identify three of their strengths — things they are good at or they like about themselves.
-  Next, each person thinks of a weakness — something they would like to improve.
-  Brainstorm ways you might be able to help each other improve. How can your strength help another? What help can you get from others?
-  Discuss how you complement each other to make a good team — do you have a strength that balances another's weakness?

Knowing your family's strengths and weaknesses helps you support each other, and become an even stronger family team.





# Cultivating Cooperation

## What About You?

Resourceful and **resilient** people know that giving and receiving help is how individuals, families, and communities stay strong and connected. Regardless of how independent and self-sufficient you may be, sometimes you may need some temporary **assistance**.

However, we do have individual differences. Some people function best when they complete a task by themselves from start to finish. Some are really good at breaking down a task, and getting help to do parts of it. Think about your own temperament — do you prefer to complete tasks alone or with help from others?

There may be times when you feel overwhelmed. Never be ashamed to ask for help when you need it. If such a situation arises, do you know who would be there to help you? Make a mental note of potential helpers — a neighbor, relative, or friend — and think about when and how you would ask for their help.

Talk to your children and let them know when other people are helping your family, and how grateful you feel. They will be more likely to ask for help when they really need it if you model this skill for your children.

You can help your children see how good it feels to help other people and animals by volunteering with them at a local charity, or animal shelter. Your family may not need help right now, but there are plenty of places where you can be part of a helping team!

## Great Books to Check Out

*Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog* by Cynthia Rylant

*Heave Ho!* by Heinz Janisch

*Help Me, Mr. Mutt!: Expert Answers for Dogs with People Problems* by Susan Stevens Crummell & Janet Stevens

*Walter the Farting Dog: Banned from the Beach* by William Kotzwindle, Elizabeth Gundy & Glenn Murray

*Ben: The Very Best Furry Friend* by Holly Raus

*Waiting for Wings: Angel's Journey from Shelter Dog to Therapy Dog* by Stacy Musick

*Tuesday Tucks Me In: The Loyal Bond Between a Soldier and His Service Dog* by Luis Carlos Montalvan



# Cultivating Cooperation

**YIP TIP™**

## Can You Give Me a Hand?

Next time you're in a restaurant or store, ask for your child's help. In the grocery store they can help you find items on your list, unload the cart at checkout, and put bags in the car. You can show them how to figure out how much tip to leave at the restaurant, give them money to pay the bill, and have them leave the tip. Show them how important their help is to you. They will not only feel good, they'll also learn that asking for help is easy, and often necessary.



## Find Help When You Need It

There is a great resource for finding every kind of help that's available anywhere in the United States — [www.helpwhenyouneedit.org](http://www.helpwhenyouneedit.org). You just enter your zip code, and pick a category: Food, Housing, Healthcare, Mental Health, Legal, or Financial issues. There are many agencies and sources of assistance in your area to give you help when you need it, so don't be afraid to take advantage of these resources.





# Cultivating Cooperation

## Please Listen to Me

### What's It About?

The ability to cooperate is dependent on other skills, one of these being the ability to listen effectively. Really listening to someone means paying attention — not just to the words a person is saying, but also to clues in their facial expressions and body language. Effective listening is the foundation of communication with other people. But you listen with more than just your ears — you need your ears, eyes, and head! You need to think about what you're seeing and hearing.

### Let's Talk About It

To really listen well, you need to pay attention.

- 🐾 Use your ears — let the person who is talking know you are listening, for example, by nodding your head.
- 🐾 Use your eyes — watch the talker's face and body for clues about how they are feeling.
- 🐾 Use your head — show the person you are listening and understand what they're saying by answering or asking questions.



### Taking It Further

#### A Simple Strategy to Improve Transitions

**Transitioning** smoothly between activities eliminates power struggles, and builds your child's skills of self-regulation. A proven way to make it easier for your child to **transition** from one activity to the next is to give a five-minute warning. This is especially helpful when you're trying to move from a **preferred activity** — like playing a video game — to a **non-preferred activity** — like going to school or getting ready for bed.

Giving your child a five-minute countdown to finish up what they're doing, or to find a good stopping place, gives them some control over the situation. Even though they might still complain or argue, the **transition** will be much easier to accept because they know it's coming.

Once the **transition** has been successfully made, be sure to compliment the behavior that you liked — “You put on your shoes when it was time to go. You were really cooperative.” Be consistent in giving five-minute warnings and in praising cooperation, and **transitions** will become much easier.





# Cultivating Cooperation

## What About You?

It can be really frustrating when you feel like your kids are ignoring you. You find yourself giving the same instructions multiple times, and always feel like you end up yelling and threatening before they finally listen. To help encourage good listening, start by making eye contact, and touching their shoulder or hand to make sure you're connecting. Try using these ideas, and change the way you give instructions to help fix this exasperating problem.

Don't forget to praise your child's good behavior, and tell them you're proud of how well they follow directions. ***Behavior you praise will increase.***

INSTRUCTION	DON'T	DO
<b>Keep It Short and Clear</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preach, lecture, or go on and on with the reasons they need to follow your instructions — they'll just tune you out.</li> <li>• State your direction as a question — instead of "Can you pick up ... ?," say "Please pick up ... "</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After your initial explanation of the instruction, only give clear one- or two-word directions to jog their memory — they know what to do.</li> <li>• Give one direction at a time.</li> </ul>
<b>Tell Them Why</b>	Issue commands when you want them to do something — kids rebel against constantly being told what to do.	Turn your instruction into a teaching moment by reminding them of the reason for the rule — Instead of "Pick up your toys," try saying: "Trains belong in the blue bin so you can find them next time you want to play with them." Let them make the connection.
<b>Give Them a Choice in How They Do It</b>	Repeatedly try to persuade or threaten punishment — it will often make them more stubborn.	Empower them by giving a choice as part of your direction — "Do you want to put on your hat or your coat first?"
<b>State Your Expectations</b>	Get into power struggles with your child, or over-explain things.	Clearly tell your child what you expect ahead of time — "You can watch TV for five more minutes until dinner" — give a time warning as the end approaches, and then follow through if a consequence is necessary.



# Cultivating Cooperation

## Great Books to Check Out

*One Dog Canoe* by Mary Casanova

*Officer Buckle and Gloria* by Peggy Rathmann

*Clifford Barks!* and *Clifford Cares* by Norman Bridwell

*Listen Up, Pup!* by Steve Smallman

*Biscuit Visits the Big City* by Alyssa Satin Capucilli

*Finding Susie* by Sandra Day O'Connor

*Hip Hop Dog* by Chris Raschka

*Wag!* by Patrick McDonnell

*Morris and Buddy: The Story of the First Seeing Eye Dog* by Becky Hall & Doris Ettlinger

*Right Dog for the Job: Ira's Path from Service Dog to Guide Dog* by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent

*Tornado* by Betsy Byars

*McDuff and the Baby* by Rosemary Wells

*Jack and Jill and Big Dog Bill* by Martha Weston

*Hot Dog* by Molly Coxe

### What Happens Next?

Create an imaginative story with your child by alternating back and forth, each adding details to build the narrative. You can use members of your family and friends as the main characters, or your characters can be a shelter dog or cat. Together you can look up a shelter website with descriptions of adoptable animals. Select one or two that spark your imagination, and feel free to wildly **embellish** the details! This is a great way to teach cooperation — you and your child working together — and can be easily picked up again if you get interrupted.

**YIP TIP™**





# Cultivating Cooperation

## We Are a Team

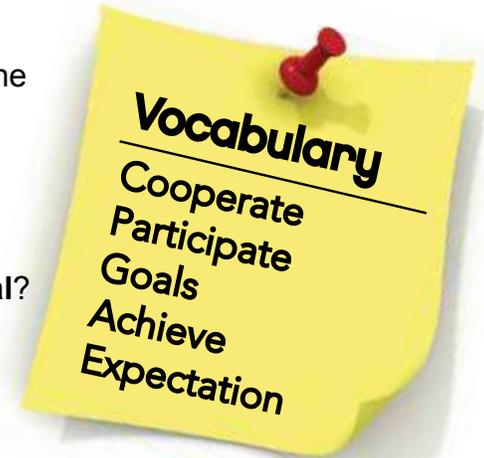
### What's It About?

Each individual on a team contributes and **cooperates** to make the team stronger. Developing these skills will enable children to fully **participate** and **cooperate** with their family team to solve problems and **achieve** shared **goals**. **Cooperation** helps children succeed in the world, both academically and socially. Skills needed on a team include communication and empathy.

### Let's Talk About It

The best way to be a great team player is to put others first. Discuss the best ways to be a team player by asking some of these questions:

- 🐾 Think of a time when everyone working together helped a job get done faster. What happened?
- 🐾 What was the reward for the team when they **achieved** their **goal**?
- 🐾 What would happen if no one ever put the toys away?
- 🐾 What if nobody cleaned up the food and dishes after meals?
- 🐾 How would you feel if you had to do all the cleaning and washing by yourself?
- 🐾 What rules do we have in our family to help us keep our house clean and organized?
- 🐾 What rules do we have about being polite to each other?
- 🐾 Can you think of other rules that might help our family work better together as a team?
- 🐾 How does our family pet benefit from teamwork?



### Taking It Further

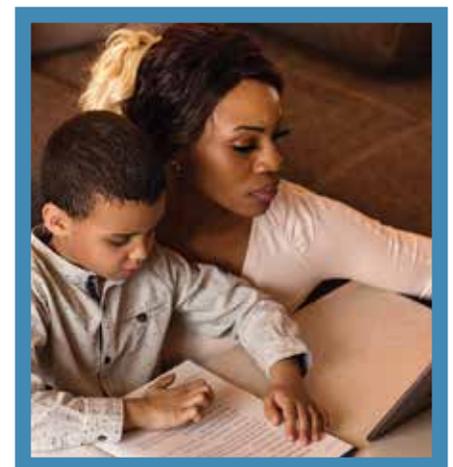
#### Team Family

When dogs live with us, they become members of the family pack. This is instinctive — dogs living in the wild often form a pack, with a pack leader who maintains the rules. We've talked previously about how our family is like a pack. As a pack, the family is also a team — each one of its members contributes to the family's success.

Let's talk about how our family works as a team. What are the rules, who does what job? Rules could state how we share tasks, and establish expected behaviors.

Sometimes, working as a family means actively helping each other. Other times it means getting along without fighting. The secret to great teamwork is good communication — talking to each other, and being clear about **expectations** and consequences.

*(Continued on next page)*





# Cultivating Cooperation

## Taking It Further (continued)

### Team Family

Establishing rules could be a family affair — each family member helping develop important and meaningful rules that benefit your family as a whole. Write down each person's ideas, and then work together to come up with your family's **Top 10 Rules**. Examples might be:

- 🐾 Listen when another person is talking.
- 🐾 Say “please” and “thank you.”
- 🐾 Always be kind, and don't say mean things.
- 🐾 Ask before you take another person's things.
- 🐾 Always say goodnight to each other.
- 🐾 Apologize when you hurt someone's feelings.

Post them where you can see them every day, and remind children when they forget. Children who have a voice in creating family rules become invested in following them, and helping other family members do the same.

## What About You?

Whether you are ready for it or not, as a parent you are the pack or team leader! You create the environment where your children learn positive teamwork skills. Conflict is natural to all relationships — team leaders who model effective strategies that help solve problems or resolve disputes teach their children by example.

If you work outside of the home:

- 🐾 Are you part of a team at your workplace?
- 🐾 How do you contribute to the team?
- 🐾 How does your workplace team function?
- 🐾 Can you learn lessons from your workplace team that would be helpful at home?





# Cultivating Cooperation

**YIP TIP™**

## Who Am I?

Take turns quizzing each other on facts about members of the family, and see how much you know about each other. You can ask questions about a particular family member's birth date, what city/town they were born in, a favorite color, what high school/college mom or dad went to, favorite sports team, favorite book or movie. The more you learn about the members of your family the stronger your family team will become!



## Great Books to Check Out

*Always in Trouble* by Corinne Demas

*Henry Helps with the Dog* by Beth Bracken

*Clifford's Good Deeds* by Norman Bridwell

*Marley: Strike Three, Marley!* by John Grogan

*Bash and Lucy Fetch Confidence* by Lisa Cohn & Michael Cohn

*Bob, No Ordinary Cat* by James Bowen



# Cultivating Cooperation

Use this worksheet to empower you and your children to ask for help when it's needed.



## SHOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE

### Who Is There for Me?

Draw or write — it can be a narrative, poem, or picture — that shows the people you know you can go to if you need help. List several people:

### Who Is There for Muttigrees?

Muttigrees — dogs and cats waiting to be adopted from an animal shelter — need help sometimes, just like people do. Draw or write a list of organizations and people in the community who are there to help Muttigrees:



# 5

## Dealing with Decisions

**W**e make so many decisions every day. Some are routine — like deciding what to wear, or whether to take an umbrella in case it rains — and some may have profound implications that can affect our future well-being.

Often the words decision and choice are used interchangeably. If you only have one clean shirt, there is no decision to be made — you have to wear that shirt. However, our lives are full of lots of choices, and we can't have them all — we need to decide! One of the most important skills parents can teach their children is how to make decisions.

There are several key strategies to aid in decision-making, including thinking through the problem, considering options, and reflecting on consequences. Children also need to learn how to deal with feelings of disappointment and frustration that can occur when decision outcomes are unexpected. As we teach children to consider how their actions affect other people, it's important to model caring behaviors and provide guidance.

Here are some suggestions for things you can do to help your child acquire decision-making skills:

-  Provide your child with opportunities to make choices — even simple choices can include reflective thinking and will provide the child with good practice.
-  Help your child think through the consequences of their choices by discussing the possible outcomes of a decision. Start small — “Will wearing your good white shirt to play outside be a problem? Will you need that white shirt for an upcoming event?”
-  Practice problem-solving with your child — talk through decisions as a team, and together try to identify the problem and think of possible solutions to choose from.

Some of the decisions we make have societal impact. Encourage your children to think broadly, and identify a cause they are passionate about. Or, decide to do something as a family to make a difference in the lives of other people, animals, or the environment — for example, volunteering or donating to a cause. These kinds of activities can have lasting implications for you and your child, as they have the potential to broaden your experience, reveal new interests and talents, and allow you to learn from — and about — others in your community.





# Dealing with Decisions

## Daily Routines



### MORNING

Talk about choices your child might like to make today, and discuss options for them to consider. An example might be what to take for snack or lunch. You can show them how to check the labels for nutritional information, and explain why this is important to consider when deciding which choice to make.



### MEALTIME

Ask your child about the choices they made during the course of the day, and how they felt about these decisions. Is there anything they'd go back and change if they could? Do they feel more confident because they were able to make their own choices? How did people react to the choices they made?



### IN THE CAR

Some days feel like constant conflict. You can help avoid emotional struggles when you're trying to get the kids into the car if you offer them choices. Maybe you can let them choose their seat or take turns choosing first; let them buckle themselves in; choose what music you listen to for the first ten minutes of your trip, or allow them to choose a movie to watch.



### BEDTIME

To avoid power struggles when it's time to go to bed:

- Establish clear and consistent rules for behavior and must-do activities.
- Give choices whenever possible within the context of rules and must-do's — which pajamas to wear, what story to read.
- Give children control over the order of their must-do tasks — Do you want to pick up the toys first, or brush your teeth?

The more choices you can give a child, the better they will get at self-regulating their behavior. Eventually, they will get used to the process of making informed decisions. As the parent you are in charge, but you can allow them to make their own decisions within that framework.



# Dealing with Decisions

## The 4 Paws of Problem Solving

### What's It About?

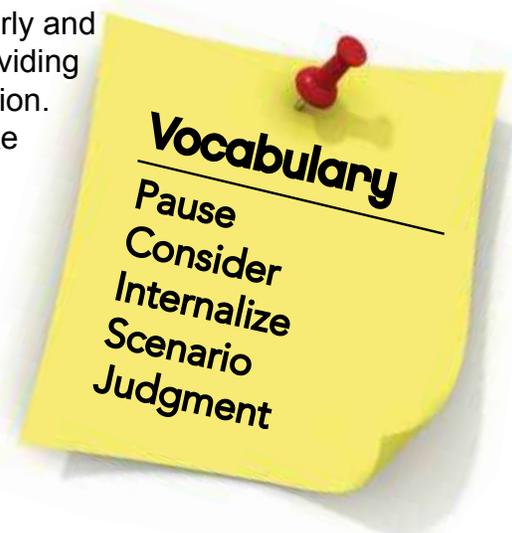
Encouraging children to **pause** and **consider** possible options and likely consequences before making a decision will help them make informed choices and enhance their problem-solving skills. Strong feelings can cloud rational thinking, so we provide a set of four reminders to help children slow down when they are feeling emotional to enable them to make clearer **judgments**.

### Let's Talk About It

Emotions can make it hard for a child — or an adult — to think clearly and make good decisions. The four-step process is calming in itself, providing time to think through the problem or situation before making a decision. With time and practice, children will **internalize** this process — make it personal to them — and begin to use the **4 Paws** automatically.

The **4 Paws of Problem Solving** are:

-  Take **1** minute — this helps us stop, calm down, and think.
-  It helps **2** identify the goal or problem before you do anything.
-  Come up with **3** possible choices and their consequences.
-  Go **4**-ward with the option you **consider** to be the best choice.



Take the time to calm your mind and figure out what the problem is before you do anything. You have to understand what you want or need before you can decide what to do! Next, come up with three possible choices or solutions and think through the consequences of each one. That's not always easy, but the time required to think of three choices is well spent — it's helpful to **consider** a few ideas before you pick one. Finally, make the best decision and go forward. If you don't like the result, you can always start again — repeat the steps and make a different choice.

The **4 Paws** is a fun teaching activity you can do with your child. It can be done whenever there is an actual situation where a decision needs to be made. You can also make it a game to practice decision-making, using possible realistic or imaginary situations they might encounter. Listed below are a few examples, but feel free to come up with examples or imaginary **scenarios** specific to your family.

-  Borrows a book from the library, and then loses it.
-  Playing with a friend's or sibling's toy, and breaks it.
-  Wants to have a friend come over and play, but mom has other plans that interfere.
-  While saving the world from bad guys, their superhero power fails.





# Dealing with Decisions

## Taking It Further

### Pause When You Put Up Your Paws

Sometimes, the most important thing we can do to make a good decision is to **pause** — stop and wait a little before we say or do anything. Or better yet, “sleep on it.” You can use your paws — hands — to remind yourself to **pause**. When you feel yourself getting worried or nervous about a decision, put both hands up, palms facing out, fingers slightly spread — to let people see you are taking a minute to think.

You can role-play various **scenarios** your child might encounter, and remind them about “paws up,” as a signal they are pausing to think. This simple act can be an important visual cue for both child and parent.

## What About You?

As adults, many of us have developed the expertise to do the right thing based on our ability to weigh the options and choose the best course of action. But even as adults, we can get caught up in emotions that cloud our **judgment**, or force a snap decision that turns out to be wrong. For some people, the opposite is true — they become so anxious about making the wrong decision, they fail to make any decision at all.

Making snap **judgments** or no decision at all can become habitual. Think about your decision-making style. Try the **4 Paws** approach, or the adult version of the **4 Paws** below. For practice, use it with a decision you already made — or didn't make — recently, and see how the approach could have made a difference:

1. Why do I want to do this?
2. What are my available options?
3. What are the possible consequences of each one of the options?
4. How will my decision — selecting one of the options — affect other people, or my family?

Making a rational, informed decision is no guarantee that it will work out, but you will feel confident that you did all you could do under the circumstances.





# Dealing with Decisions

**YIP TIP™**

## Thinking Out Loud

Even though it may feel odd to think out loud, it's helpful for children to see the thought process involved in making decisions — even small ones. For example, when you're in the grocery store deciding which cereal to buy, you can talk through how you choose between so many options, and show your child how to read the nutrition facts box and the ingredients to see which choice is healthier.

Alert your child to this process by saying:  
"OK, let's think this through..."



## Great Books to Check Out

*Henry and Mudge and the Big Sleepover* by Cynthia Rylant

*Martha Walks the Dog* by Susan Meddaugh

*Help Me, Mr. Mutt!: Expert Answers for Dogs with People Problems* by Susan Stevens Crummel & Janet Stevens

*Tails Are Not for Pulling* by Elizabeth Verdick

*Detective LaRue: Letters from the Investigation* by Mark Teague

*Henry and Mudge and the Tall Treehouse* by Cynthia Rylant

*Humphrey's Playful Puppy Problem* by Better G. Birney

*The Puppy Problem* by Carolyn Keene



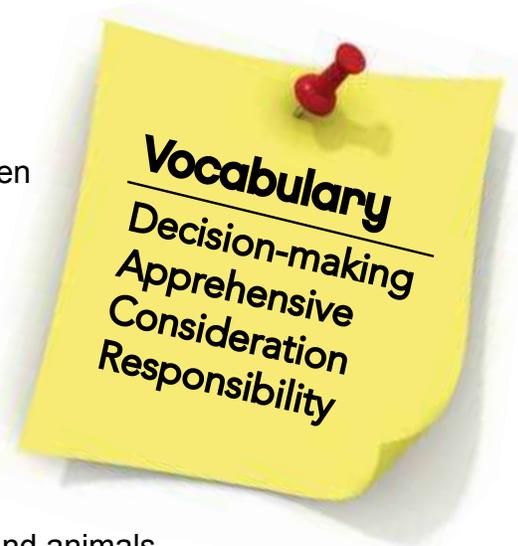
# Dealing with Decisions

## It's Your Choice

### What's It About?

Parents can help children understand that different levels of decisions — a routine choice, or a really critical one — may require more or less time to consider options depending how important the choice is.

-  Giving children frequent opportunities to make simple choices will empower them and build effective **decision-making** skills.
-  Providing opportunities to make bigger decisions helps children learn to consider consequences, and the importance of taking **responsibility** for those consequences.
-  Equally critical is helping children take the fear out of **decision making** — it's important to consider the situation and make an informed decision, but if it doesn't work out, learn from it and move forward.



### Let's Talk About It

We have lots of choices in how we respond to situations, people, and animals.

In math there is usually just one right answer, but with most decisions there isn't just one right choice. A good decision will help you achieve a goal or solve a problem. But how do you know if you've made a good decision?

Sometimes our decisions are good because they have a positive impact on you as well as on others — like helping clean up the kitchen after dinner, or taking the dog for a walk. After you make a decision, check to see:

-  Did the decision solve your problem?
-  Did the decision have a negative impact on another person or animal?

It's important to use empathy to consider everyone involved in the scenario, and how your decision might impact other people or animals. Sometimes, the best decision is not necessarily the best one for you, but rather is the best for everyone involved.





# Dealing with Decisions

## Taking It Further Let Me Choose!

There are different levels of decisions that require more thought and **consideration** to make as they increase in importance.

- 🐾 Some decisions are small and can be made quickly — like what kind of juice to drink, what video game to play, or which chore to do first. With these choices you don't have to worry about making a mistake.
- 🐾 Other decisions are a bit more important, and require stopping to take a minute and think — like which book to check out at the library, or which friend to invite over for a playdate.
- 🐾 Then there are the really important decisions that parents usually make for the family. They have to think really hard about all the options because the decision affects the whole family — like deciding where to live, or which job to take. Older children also make important decisions — like choosing to study for a test instead of playing a video game — because they've had lots of practice.



As children make more and bigger decisions, they'll earn your trust in their ability to make solid choices, and you may decide to give them more input in future decisions. Maintain parental veto power as they develop their skills, but use it sparingly. Making mistakes and having to deal with the consequences teaches them to make better decisions.

## What About You?

Even for adults, making decisions can be difficult. Some choices that seem simple can still cause anxiety, and research shows that feeling anxious makes it harder to make a good decision. This anxiety can be so crippling that fear of possible outcomes prevents any decision.

When you're feeling **apprehensive**, investigate the source of the anxiety:

- 🐾 Ask yourself what specific thing is causing you to feel anxious.
- 🐾 Focus on the positive aspects — for example, decide your nerves mean you're facing something new and exciting, rather than something overwhelming that you won't be able to handle.
- 🐾 Realizing that it's actually okay to make a mistake can help ease the worry.
- 🐾 Each time you face down your fear you lessen the anxiety you'll feel at the next decision.





# Dealing with Decisions

**YIP TIP™**

## What If...?

Sharpen your child's critical-thinking skills by inventing an imaginary scenario where he or she has to really consider all the options before making a decision.

- What if they are invited to two really fun birthday parties on the same day and could only choose one?
- What superhero power would they choose if they could have any one?
- Where would they pick to go on the family vacation if they were in charge of the decision?

Help them in the **decision-making** process by asking questions, then comparing and considering several possibilities.



## Great Books to Check Out

*My Dog: A Kids' Guide to Keeping a Happy & Healthy Pet* by Michael J. Rosen

*Healthy Snacks with Blue!* by J.P. Chanda

*Are You Ready for Me?* by Claire Buchwald

## What About Animals?

Let's think about dogs and cats that live in shelters. What kinds of choices do you think they get to make? Or, does someone make every choice for them? A great movie to watch about dogs making choices and accepting the consequences is Disney's *Lady and the Tramp*. How did Tramp change after he met Lady and her friends? Did he learn to make better choices?



# Dealing with Decisions

## Choose Between Two Options

Generally, it's advisable to list three choices to choose from, but for very young children, giving too many choices can be overwhelming, and kids can get frustrated. For practice, narrow the choices down to two equally acceptable options as often as you can to make decisions easier for young children. The important element in building self-confidence and self-determination is the act of choosing. Do this throughout the day and you'll be amazed at how resistance and non-compliance will lessen.

Examples might be:

- Do you want the green cup or the blue cup?
- Do you want apple juice or milk?
- Do you want to brush your teeth or brush your hair first?
- Do you want to make the bed or pick up your toys first?

Sometimes your child may come up with another option; if it's acceptable to you, allow them to make that choice. If the choice you offer is between two chores, not doing the task is NOT an option. Praise their decision-making skills by saying "good choice" each time.



## When We Fail, It's Not All Bad

### What's It About?

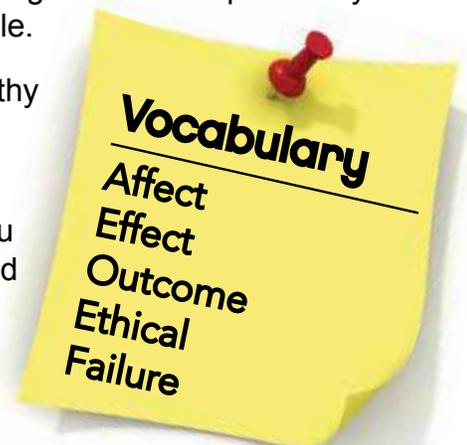
Some decisions can have positive or negative **outcomes**, with consequences for the person who made the decision, and possibly for other people in the family.

- 🐾 Recognizing that decisions have consequences will help children begin to take responsibility for their actions, and consider how their choices **affect** other people.
- 🐾 Learning to take a wider perspective will enhance children's empathy and develop their ability to make informed decisions that benefit their family, other people, animals, and the environment.

Sometimes you cannot predict the **outcome** of a decision. The best you can do is to carefully think through the pros and cons of each option, and make a decision based on what you know and how you feel. But, even when we think carefully about our options and make a good, informed decision, the **outcome** may not always turn out the way we expect.

One of the most important lessons a child can learn is that sometimes you fail even when you've done your best. The good news is that **failure** almost always teaches us something that helps us make a better decision the next time.

Many families celebrate when children get good grades, but some take the time to make children feel good even when they fail a test or get a low grade. Why? They *tried* — that's the important thing — and next time they will try again and do better. Think of athletes in any sport — they don't always succeed, but even in **failure** they learn!





# Dealing with Decisions

## Let's Talk About It

We've talked about the many choices we make, and how to make good choices. Now, we are going to talk about how every decision or choice we make has an **effect** on someone or something. The meanings of the words **effect** and **affect** are easy to confuse:

-  **Effect** is usually a noun, and means the consequence or result of a choice on you or someone in your family.
-  **Affect** is usually a verb, and means to make a difference to someone or something.

Some decisions only **affect** us individually — if I choose to have cereal or a waffle for breakfast, it doesn't really make a difference to anyone but me — unless it's the last waffle and someone else in the family wants one, too! Other decisions can have an **effect** on people, animals, or the environment — if you pick up all the crayons when you are finished coloring, then mom won't step on them and break them when they roll off the table; you can find them when you want to color again, and the dog won't eat them and get sick!

## Taking It Further Making Ethical Decisions

Once they are in elementary school, many children become passionate about social injustices and adopt a cause. Some who have a concern about animals may adopt a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. Some become passionate about others who have less than they do, so they may canvass the neighborhood to collect canned food for the homeless.

Encourage children to make these kinds of **ethical** decisions, and provide them with opportunities to think of ways they can help. A visit to the local animal shelter often inspires empathy and compassion. Take this a step further, and have a discussion about:

-  What can we do now to help these homeless pets have a better life?
-  How did these pets end up in shelters?
-  Were they part of a puppy mill?

Find out about this either through an internet search or by asking the animal shelter staff, then think about what you can do — individually or as a family — to help.

You can see how **ethical** decision-making — standing up for a cause — enhances the skills of self-awareness, empathy, and cooperation, and helps children think about how their actions can **affect** others.





# Dealing with Decisions

## What About You?

According to a Columbia University study, Americans make on average 70 decisions a day. Some studies indicate that the number may be even higher — upwards of 200. Some of these decisions may be routine, but some choices might be game-changers for you and your family, like accepting a new job in a different city, or deciding to have another child.

Some of your everyday choices might provide an opportunity to make an **ethical** decision. For example, did you know that some cosmetics, skin care, hair care, and even household cleaning products are made by testing the chemicals in them on helpless laboratory animals? There are cruelty-free options that are great products — would you consider selecting from these choices? You can do an internet search to find out which products are made by companies that practice cruelty-free manufacturing.

There are many other examples to think about: The t-shirt you want may be from a well-known designer brand, but do you know if it's manufactured using child labor because it's cheap?

## Improving Behavior Using Reinforcers

**The majority of the decisions children make have to do with their behavior. Using reinforcers to encourage good behavior is a tested method that works. Your child earns reinforcers by choosing to engage in behaviors you want, or by not doing problem behaviors. Ask your child what small items or activities he or she would like to work for as a reinforcer. These will be specific to each child — what works for one won't necessarily work for another.**

**Examples of reinforcers could be stickers on a chart for each instance of the behavior you are encouraging, along with a larger reward after a set number of stickers earned, such as:**

- **A trip to the park for 30 minutes to play on the swings.**
- **French fries from their favorite restaurant while you're running errands.**
- **30 minutes playing on the iPad or video game.**
- **A gift card to use in a favorite store.**
- **Hosting a sleepover with a friend (for a longer stretch of good behavior).**

**Over time, you will be able to phase out the reinforcers as your child becomes accustomed to choosing the preferred behavior. The goal is to give your child strategies to help them choose a behavior that gets the result they want. If they want your attention, they have new, positive ways to get praise from you. Making better decisions will become routine.**



# Dealing with Decisions

**YIP TIP™**

## Don't Fix Everything

What if your child doesn't like how the choice they made turned out, or the consequences of their choice? Resist the temptation to jump in and rescue them, or fix things for them. Doing this undermines natural consequences, and hinders them developing the ability to solve their own problems.

Let them experience **failure** so they grow up to be resilient, resourceful adults.



## Great Books to Check Out

*McDuff Comes Home* by Rosemary Wells

*May I Pet Your Dog?: The How-To Guide for Kids Meeting Dogs (and Dogs*

*Meeting Kids)* by Stephanie Calmenson

*Madeline's Rescue* by Ludwig Bemelmans

*"Let's Get a Pup!" Said Kate* by Bob Graham



# Dealing with Decisions



## SHOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE Unintended Consequences

Sometimes, a decision we make has consequences that we never predicted. This happened to the producers of the Disney movie *Beverly Hills Chihuahua*. It was such a great movie that many people — especially in Los Angeles — wanted their own lovable Chihuahua. Many of the adorable little dogs were bought from pet stores right after the movie came out.

But dogs come with responsibilities, and taking care of a dog — even a small one — is time-consuming and difficult. So, many people simply discarded the dogs in the streets to fend for themselves. There were so many that animal control personnel were unable to rescue all of them. Some shelters have a no-kill policy, but tragically, small local shelters with limited resources may resort to euthanasia.

The producers of the movie certainly didn't mean for this to happen — that is an unintended consequence. The movie *101 Dalmatians* had similar unintended consequences for that wonderful dog breed.

On a piece of paper, write or draw your answers to these three questions:

1. Can you think of something to do to alert movie producers to the fact that some actions can lead to an increase in homeless pets and senseless euthanasia?
2. Can you think of a decision you made that had an unintended consequence?
3. Can you think of a decision that someone else made that had an unintended consequence?



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# NOTES

# Three national organizations collaborated on the development of the innovative Muttigrees At Home program for families:

The North Shore Animal League America is the world's largest no-kill animal rescue and adoption organization. Animal League America adopts close to 20,000 animals into homes each year, and has saved more than one million dogs and cats to date.

The Pet Savers Foundation has been an industry leader and innovator in the field of companion animal welfare by creating mission-driven, groundbreaking national programs that are piloted and adopted by shelters nationwide. The Pet Savers Foundation is the program development arm of North Shore Animal League America, which in 2008 began a new course of action with the Mutt-i-grees initiative that seeks to raise awareness of the plight of shelter animals and elevate the status of mixed-breed dogs. Three out of every four shelter dogs are mixed-breed, so adopting a Mutt-i-gree helps save a life.

Yale School of the 21st Century collaborated with The Pet Savers Foundation in developing The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum. We seek to involve children through a variety of educational programs focusing on compassion and ethical decision making, while drawing attention to the unique qualities of shelter animals and the value of pet adoption. Muttigrees At Home is based on The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum, now used in over 4,000 schools and libraries nationwide.

The Cesar Millan Foundation was the founding funder of The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum.



[www.education.muttigrees.org](http://www.education.muttigrees.org)