

Language for Emotions & Behaviour

Parent Advice Sheet – Age 5 - 6

What Does This Mean?

Children with difficulties in emotional and behavioural language may:

- Struggle to name or describe their feelings
- React with frustration or withdrawal instead of words
- Find it hard to understand others' emotions
- Have trouble using words to solve conflicts or ask for help

At age 6, children are learning to:

- Use words like “frustrated,” “excited,” “worried,” and “calm”
- Explain why they feel a certain way
- Recognize emotions in others
- Use language to manage behaviour and solve problems
- Language skills for behaviour and emotion are incredibly important in a classroom for 5-year-olds because they help children express themselves, understand others, and navigate the social world of school with confidence and empathy.

Why These Skills Are Crucial

- **Emotional Expression:** When children can say “I’m sad,” “I’m frustrated,” or “I need help,” they’re less likely to act physically or withdraw. Language gives them a safe outlet for big feelings.
- **Self-Regulation:** Talking through emotions helps children calm down, reflect, and make better choices. For example, saying “I’m angry because he took my toy” is a step toward resolving conflict peacefully.
- **Understanding Others:** Language helps children interpret facial expressions, tone of voice, and social cues. This builds empathy and reduces misunderstandings.
- **Problem-Solving:** Instead of hitting or crying, children with strong emotional language can negotiate, ask for help, or explain what went wrong — all essential for healthy peer relationships.

- **Building Relationships:** Expressing kindness, gratitude, or apology through words helps children connect with others and feel part of the group.

In the Classroom

- Teachers often use emotion charts, storytelling, and role play to help children label and talk about their feelings. Phrases like “Use your words” or “Tell me how you feel” are common prompts that guide children toward emotional literacy.

Long-Term Impact

- Children who develop emotional and behavioural language early are more resilient, cooperative, and successful — not just academically, but socially and emotionally too.

How You Can Help at Home

1. Name Emotions Often

- Use emotion words during daily routines: “You look excited to go to the park!”
- Label your own feelings to model expression: “I feel tired after work.”

2. Use Visual Supports

- Create an emotion chart or wheel with faces and words
- Use books, photos, or drawings to talk about feelings

3. Practice Problem-Solving Language

- Teach phrases like “Can I have a turn?” or “I don’t like that”
- Role-play common situations and model calm responses

4. Validate & Rephrase

- Acknowledge feelings: “It’s okay to feel angry”
- Offer words they can use: “You can say ‘I’m upset because...’”

5. Read & Reflect Together

- Choose books that explore emotions and behaviour
- Ask questions like “How do you think she felt?” or “What could he say instead?”

Fun Activities to Build Emotional Language

Activity	What to Do	Skills Practiced
Emotion Charades	Act out feelings and guess them	Emotion recognition, vocabulary
Feelings Book	Make a scrapbook of emotions with drawings/photos	Naming, describing emotions
Puppet Talk	Use puppets to act out social situations	Problem-solving, expression
Mood Colours	Use colours to show feelings: “Blue = calm”	Emotional awareness
Calm Corner	Create a space with tools to help self-regulate	Behaviour management
“How Would You Feel?”	Ask about different scenarios: “If your toy broke...”	Perspective-taking

Conversation Starters

- “How are you feeling right now?”
- “What helps you feel better when you’re sad?”
- “Can you tell me what made you feel frustrated?”

Quick Tips

- Keep language simple and repeat key emotion words
- Use calm, supportive tone when discussing behaviour
- Praise efforts to use words instead of actions