

Exploring Emotions with Autistic Children

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How an emotion can be triggered
- How emotion affects us physically and our behaviour
- How emotions can have different words
- How we can learn to feel better



Lynn McCann explains how to use stories in the classroom to help recognise emotions

For autistic children stress can intensify emotions and make communicating difficult. Learning about emotions through stories can be a good way of beginning to examine what emotions are and all the elements that work together such as triggers and body sensations so that we can learn how to recognise emotions in ourselves.

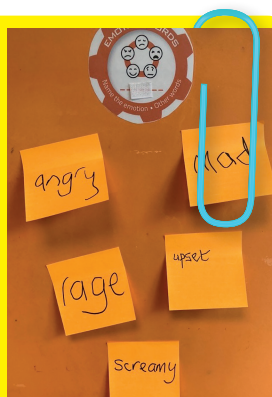
“A lot of the difficulty is because ‘emotions’ in and of themselves are abstract ideas. I actually experience many complex emotions at any one time caused by a multitude of things, it is like being asked to hear a single tune out of a cacophony of sound.”

Hilary Forbes, autistic person

START HERE

Autistic children feel emotions and have empathy. The difficulty can be in recognising and naming emotions with words that they and others can understand. This lesson introduces emotions through a story and looks at how we can differentiate between emotions based on their intensity. We look at how emotions affect our bodies and how we can use different ways to communicate what an emotion is like so that others can help us feel better. This is what you will need:

- A copy of the Marvin Gets Mad story.
- Coloured post-it notes
- Emotions word bank
- Emotions worksheet



MAIN LESSON

MARVIN GETS MAD RESOURCES

- Activity pictures and crafts: <https://bit.ly/2GUerVF>
- Summary of the elements of emotions in the story as described in this lesson from Emotion Works: <https://bit.ly/34Na0nH>
- Visual worksheet about my feelings: <https://bit.ly/2SP2oLX>
- Free emotion visuals: www.do2learn.com

Read the story through once and ask the children if they can find some emotion cards or colours that describe how Marvin was feeling at the beginning, middle and ending of the story. You are looking for an awareness that Marvin's feelings changed



throughout the story. Once you have this you are ready to continue with the main part of the lesson.

PART 1

From the introductory activity you should have some key words relating to being ‘mad’ as is described in the story. Write these on a coloured post-it (I use orange as it relates to the Emotion Works resource I use – see in the resource list).

Then we ask the children to find out “Why, and what happened to make Marvin mad?” (Use a yellow post-it) We can introduce the word ‘trigger’ to this section. At this point the children might start to tell you things that trigger their anger and if they do, then they can write or draw this on a yellow post-it note of their own.

Then we look at the behaviours that Marvin did that showed how angry he was. The children often enjoy this because he did BIG things that often