

Activity Ideas



Nesting Bears

L1005 and L1006

Help children recognise, accept and talk about their emotions with these adorable Nesting Bears. There is something very satisfying about placing one bear inside another or taking the top off and discovering another bear hidden inside! With endless possibilities for talking about emotions (for example, excited on the outside but anxious on the inside), as well as, stacking, nesting, filling, and shaking them; these bears will be a favourite in settings and homes for years to come.



Feelings and why they are important

These Nesting Bears can be a great way to talk about feelings with your child. Being able to experience, express and think about feelings is a part of good mental health. Having feelings is healthy and they have important messages for us. For example, it is healthy to feel angry if we think we are on the receiving end of injustice, or if our boundaries have been violated; it is healthy to feel sad if we are bereaved of someone we love or experience another kind of loss. Jealousy tells us what we want in life and fear alerts us to danger. Feelings are essential for our survival and our sense of self; they tell us the kind of people we are. They motivate us to act. All feelings are valid, rather than good or bad, but undeniably, some are more pleasant to experience than others!



Here are some ideas for learning through play:

Let's talk about feelings

Nesting Bears are a fabulous resource that can help you initiate conversations to promote children's healthy emotional development. To do this you need to have the time to listen because it is unhelpful to ask a child about their feelings and not respond with a real understanding. The most important thing you can do to support the emotional development of children is to be accepting, empathic, warm and playful.



You can, for example, talk about what the bears might be feeling. You can ask about when the child has felt like the bear, what happened and what did they feel?



In these conversations you can:

- help children recognise and name feelings
- raise awareness and understanding of feelings

In these conversations your role is to:

- be accepting of a child's emotional experience
- offer your empathy for their feelings
- be authentic in your relationships with the child
- help the child think about their emotional experience



Goldilocks and the three bears

The Nesting Bears are perfect for story time play. Bring this classic tale to life with the bears and a tray full of oats, plus some different sized spoons are a wonderful addition. You could make a bed for each of the bears, a big one, a small one, and one that is just right!

Talk about how the bears might have felt when Goldilocks ate their porridge? Happy, sad, angry, mad? How did Goldilocks feel? Scared, anxious, hungry?! How do the children feel when they are hungry?



Sprinkle maths into story time play

Seize the chance to sprinkle some magical maths into story-time play by talking about size – too big, too small, just right. Too big – bring a huge mixing bowl and ladle from the kitchen. Set it alongside the tiniest bowl and spoon you can find.

Think about which characters would like to use the huge spoon – the giant from Jack and the Beanstalk, the BFG, the bear in 'Where's going on a bear hunt', the Gruffalo, etc.

Who would use the tiniest spoon? A mouse, a fairy, Piglet (from Winnie the Pooh), the snail from Snail and the Whale?

- ★ Explore alternative words for small – tiny, minute, little, miniature, petite, etc. Try taking tiny steps around the room.
- ★ Fit the bears together and ask the children to put them in order – biggest to smallest. Put the spoons in order of size too. Can they give each bear a spoon?
- ★ Can the children work out who is the tallest child? Can they line up in order of size – tallest to shortest.



Fill me up!

A tray full of oats, or maybe some sand, and a collection of spoons and scoops will make the perfect invitation to play for children enjoying the enveloping schema. Plus, those little hands and fingers will get a fine motor work out!

There's lots of hand-eye coordination involved in carefully scooping up some oats and filling the bear's base, especially the little one.

Filling up the bears one spoonful at a time, gives opportunities for sprinkling maths language into play: one more, how many, too many, full, empty, half full, biggest, smallest, etc.

Find me a rainbow

Each bear is a different colour. Create a sorting activity by cutting up small pieces of paper, card, fabric, in lots of different colours. Ask the children to collect all of the red pieces and put them inside the Angry Bear. And then find all of the yellow pieces and put them inside the Happy Bear. You could also do this with different coloured beads or buttons. Add tweezers to make it even more of a challenge! They are beautifully designed for little hands and promote the development of fine motor skills.

For older children you could talk about something that makes you feel angry, or a time when you felt angry, as you put the pieces in the bear. But, as we said in the introduction, only do this if you have time to respond with warmth and understanding.

Get talking - useful words:

size	full	sad
big	empty	angry
biggest	more	worried
small	less	excited
smallest	too big	scared
inside	too small	calm
outside	happy	jealous



How does your bear feel today?