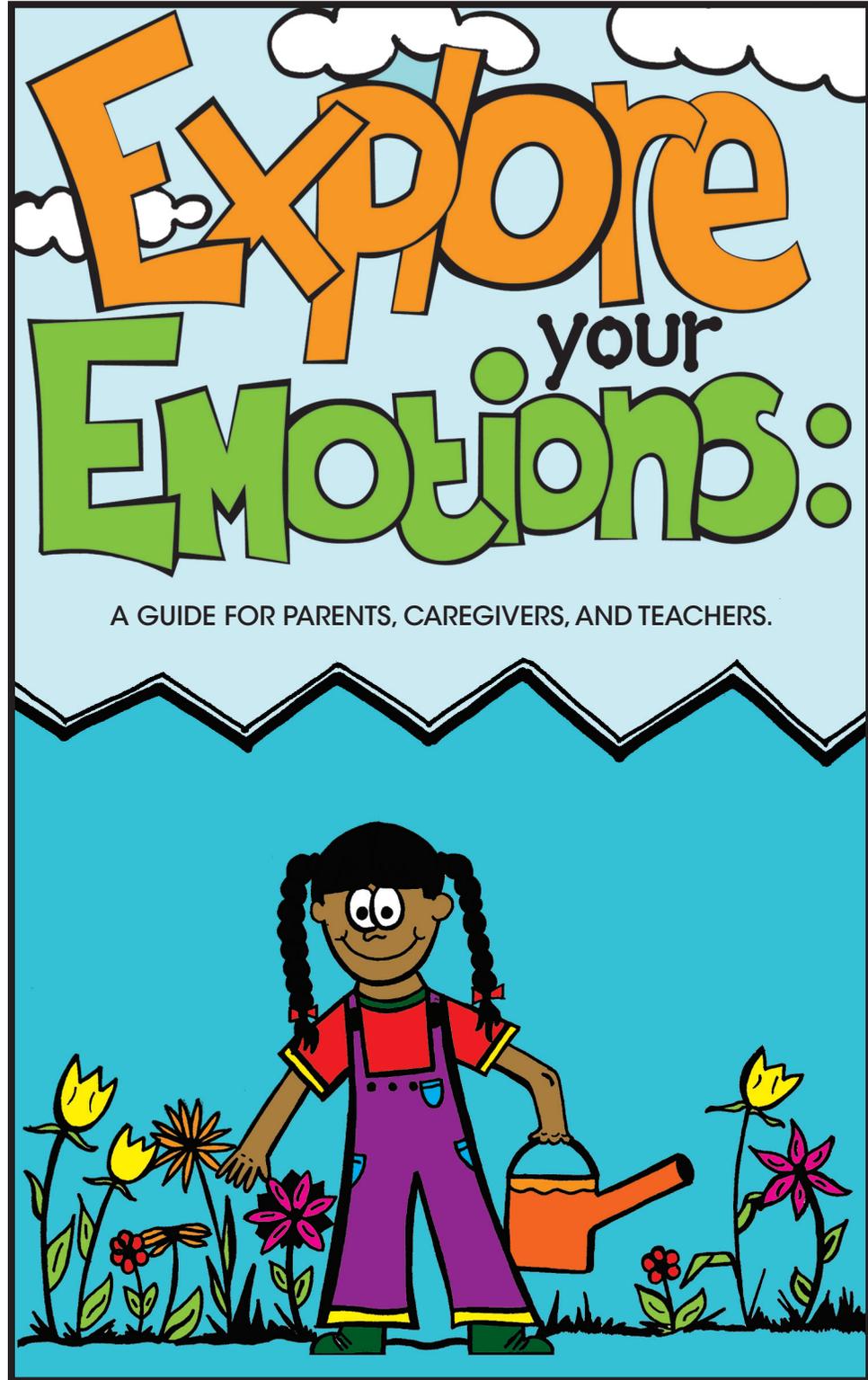


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# Explore your EMOTIONS:

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND TEACHERS.



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ental health is how we think, feel, and act when facing life's situations. Like physical health, mental health is important at every stage of life. Even children experience a wide range of feelings every day.

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services Offices of Behavioral Health and Community Relations created the "Explore Your Emotions" coloring book, in conjunction with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration materials and activities, to aid parents, teachers, and caregivers in encouraging young children to use art to recognize and better understand their own feelings. You can use art every day to enrich the social and emotional development of the children in your home, childcare facility, school, and numerous other child-centered places in your community.

Here are a few tips:

## 1.

Choose an art activity that is appropriate for:

- the age of the children who will be participating;
- the time available for the activity itself as well as time to have each child talk about his/her artwork; and, whenever possible,
- the participation of parents, caregivers, or other caring adults.

## 2.

Set aside time each day or each week for your children to explore and express their feelings through art. Have books on feelings and emotions available for adults to read to children or show movies that feature stories about children and their emotional lives. Check with your local library on appropriate titles.

## 3.

Decorate the space in which you will conduct the art activity with pictures, posters, and other items that express emotions. You can download the "My Feelings Are a Work of Art" materials available at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Web site, [www.samhsa.gov/children](http://www.samhsa.gov/children).

## 4.

Encourage children to understand the wide range of feelings by having them create a piece of art for each emotion. For example, they may choose to create art around the theme of "happy," or they may want to explore what it means to feel sad through an art activity.

## 5.

Appreciate the effort that each child puts into his or her art by taking the time to discuss what the artwork means to each little artist.



## 6.

If a child creates a drawing or paints a picture that causes concern, don't panic. Children often recreate scenes from television or other media that do not reflect their personal experiences. However, do let participating children know that everyone experiences pain, fear, anger, and anxiety. Try to learn the source of these feelings by asking about the meaning of their artwork and why they chose to create it. If you continue to have concerns, inform the parent or caregiver. If you are the parent or guardian, you may want to contact the child's pediatrician.

# "Explore your Emotions"

## THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

- Find out more about enriching the social/emotional development of young children by visiting SAMHSA's Web site at [www.samhsa.gov/children](http://www.samhsa.gov/children).
- Create opportunities throughout the year for young children to express their feelings by encouraging them to create a piece of art each week that expresses how they are feeling. Use this opportunity each week to discuss why they are feeling that way.
- Find out how your child's day care, preschool, or school system uses art as an opportunity to discuss feelings and emotions with children. Take time at home to look at the art that your child and his or her classmates create in a childcare or school setting.
- Have fun learning more about social/emotional development and positive mental health throughout the year.