

# Emotions Playdough Activity

## Infants (Birth–12 months)

### 1) Face Match

**Materials:** taste-safe playdough, baby-safe mirror

**Directions:**

1. Sit baby facing the mirror.
2. You make one simple playdough “face” (2 dots + a smile line).
3. Say: “Happy!” and smile in the mirror.
4. Pause and watch baby’s reaction; copy baby sounds/faces.

### 2) “Feelings Hands”

**Materials:** taste-safe dough

**Directions:**

1. Give the baby a small ball of dough to pat/squeeze (supervised).
2. Narrate: “Soft... squish... calm.”
3. When the baby gets fussy, model calm breathing: “In... out...” while squeezing dough slowly.

**Goal:** early regulation language (calm/soft/gentle).

### 3) Happy/Sad Song Dough Tap

**Materials:** dough, your voice

**Directions:**



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1. Sing a simple tune: “Happy, happy, tap-tap-tap” while tapping dough.
  2. Switch: “Sad, sad, slow-slow-slow” while pressing slowly.
  3. Keep it 1–2 minutes.
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## Young Toddlers (1–2 years)

### 1) Two-Choice Emotion Faces

**Materials:** dough, 2 emotion cards (happy/mad or happy/sad)

**Directions:**

1. Show two cards: “Happy or sad?”
2. The child picks one; you help them make the mouth shape (up/down).
3. Label: “You chose happy!”

### 2) “Fix the Face” (Teacher Makes It, Child Changes It)

**Materials:** dough

**Directions:**

1. Make a “sad” face.
2. Say: “Oh no—can you help?”
3. A child changes its mouth into a smile or adds “tears” into a ball.
4. Name both: “Sad... now happy.”

### 3) Emotion Stomp & Squish

**Materials:** dough balls on a tray

**Directions:**



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1. Say: “Mad—stomp squish!” (press firmly with palm)
  2. Say: “Calm—gentle squish.” (slow squeeze)
  3. Repeat 3 emotions max.
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## Older Toddlers (2–3 years)

### 1) Emotion “Cookie Cutters”

**Materials:** dough, circle cutter, craft stick

**Directions:**

1. Children cut a circle “face.”
2. Use craft sticks to draw eyebrows/mouth.
3. Prompt: “Make a happy face. Now make surprised.”

### 2) Feelings Road Map

**Materials:** dough, small toy people/animals, picture cards (optional)

**Directions:**

1. Put a toy on the table and act out: “Toy can’t find mom.”
2. Ask: “How does it feel?” Offer choices: sad/scared.
3. The child builds the toy’s face with dough.

### 3) “Calm-Down Toolbox” Dough Cards

**Materials:** dough, simple picture cards (breathe, hug, drink water, ask for help)

**Directions:**



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1. Pick an emotion face (mad/sad).
  2. Ask: "What can we do?"
  3. The child picks a tool card and practices: squeeze dough + 3 breaths.
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## Preschool (3–5 years)

### 1) Emotions Sorting Tray

**Materials:** muffin tin, emotion labels (happy/sad/mad/scared), dough

**Directions:**

1. Put labels in the muffin tin.
2. Children create small faces and place them in the matching slot.
3. Review: "Tell me one time you felt \_\_\_\_." (optional)

### 2) Feelings Thermometer (Size = intensity)

**Materials:** dough, paper strip labeled small/medium/big, marker

**Directions:**

1. Explain: "Feelings can be small, medium, or big."
2. Children make a small mad face, then medium, then big (bigger eyebrows/mouth).
3. Ask: "What helps when feelings are BIG?"

### 3) "Problem → Feeling → Strategy" Mats

**Materials:** 3-column mat (draw it), dough

**Directions:**



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1. Give a simple problem: "A friend took a toy."
2. The child makes an emotion face (mad).
3. The child chooses a strategy (ask for help, take turns, breathe) and makes a "calm face."

#### 4) Emotion Dice + Dough Face

**Materials:** printable emotion dice (or write on a cube), dough

**Directions:**

1. Roll the dice.
2. Make the emotion face.
3. Share a matching situation: "I feel excited when..."

**Goal:** playful practice + language.

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## School Age (6+)

### 1) "Mixed Emotions" Faces

**Materials:** dough, index cards

**Directions:**

1. Give a card: "excited + nervous" or "happy + worried."
2. Students create a face showing both (one eyebrow up, half-smile, etc.).
3. Discuss: "When might you feel both?"

### 2) Comic Strip: Before / During / After

**Materials:** paper with 3 boxes, dough

**Directions:**



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1. Scenario: “Big test,” “new kid,” “argument.”
2. Box 1: before feeling face, Box 2: during, Box 3: after using a strategy.
3. Write 1 strategy under box 3.

### **3) “Emotion Sculptures” (Body language)**

**Materials:** dough, toothpicks/craft sticks (optional, supervise), mini figures

**Directions:**

1. Students sculpt a whole-body pose (slumped, tense shoulders, jumping).
2. Label the emotion and body cues.
3. Add: “What helps your body relax?”

### **4) Perspective Switch**

**Materials:** dough, two mini “faces”

**Directions:**

1. Present a conflict: “Someone cut in line.”
2. The student makes 2 faces: person who got cut (frustrated) + person who cut (in a hurry/forgot).
3. Discuss respectful solutions.

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## **Bonus: Quick Add-On Activities**

### **“Feelings Menu”**

Make 4 emotion faces, then let kids point: “Pick how you feel right now.”

### **“Guess the Feeling”**



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One child makes a face; others guess using the emotion cards.

### **“Calm Dough Recipe Moment”**

Add lavender scent (if allowed) or glitter-free texture add-ins; talk about calm choices.



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