



Theatre-Inspired Learning for Preschoolers, ages 2 – 5

Activity: Learning About Emotions ~ Inspired by Everything Is Round

The following activity can be used to either introduce the concept of **emotions and empathy** with very young children or adapted to be a review of these important observation skills for slightly older and more advanced preschool learners.

Parents, reinforcing important skills your child needs in order to be academically ready for school success are not hard to lead. You can do it right there at home! This very simple activity reinforces emotional and social development, a major component of the Texas Educational Guidelines for PreK Learning. How? Well, children who know the various range of emotions we all feel are better able to communicate those feelings to others and that makes them emotionally intelligent. They are those who are able to express themselves in a way that someone else can relate to them and seek help if it is needed. Having knowledge of our range of emotions, can also serve us best by being sensitive to what others feel. This will allow you to show empathy if needed or join in heartfelt laughter with another. Children who are well aware of what it is they feel and how to communicate that feeling will be more mindful when they perceive that someone else feels the same way. They are more likely to show sympathy for their peers and show them support if that is required. Without actually telling them verbally children will learn that there are times when you need to be empathetic towards others and there are times when empathy will be shown to you. These are skills children ages 2–5 must develop to be ready for K–12 education.

Luckily, the characters in Nick Kryah's **Everything Is Round** are doing exactly this: They are learning to understand what their friends feel by observing their facial expressions and body language and model for the young audience how to adjust behaviors in the moment based upon what their friends are feeling.

Teachers, this activity can be used to help you reach the following two learning objectives from the **Texas Pre K Guidelines**:

1.B.2.a Examples of Child Behaviors Child recognizes and expresses a range of emotions/feelings. Child begins to understand difference and connection between emotions/feelings and behaviors. The child:

- expresses emotions that are congruent with situations (disappointment when plans are changed, happiness and pride at mastering a challenging task).
- uses words to express feelings about specific events (“I feel mad when you take my toy!” “I love to paint!”).
- verbalizes understanding that all feelings are okay even though some behaviors may not be okay.

1.B.2.b. Child can communicate basic emotions/feelings The child:

- has been exposed to a variety of words to describe feelings.
- is familiar with a variety of feeling words (happy, sad, mad/angry, scared, proud, worried; excited).
- can usually label own feelings when prompted.
- can identify feelings of characters in storybooks.



There is a video to help you along with step-by-step instructions.

Start by telling the young learner that you are going to show them a short video from Pollyanna Theatre's production of **Everything Is Round** by Nicholas Kryah. If your young learner has not watched the first TWO videos from this series, start by doing so now. Watching these two videos will introduce them to the characters. Even if your child has seen these clips before, reviewing them now is a good idea.

Second, explain that all plays have a playwright that creates the story and the characters. The playwright for this play writes plays for people their age. His name is Nick. In this play, Nick created two very different people, one named Circle and the other named Square. Circle and Square are good friends. But sometimes even good friends don't agree on things.

Third, tell the young learner that you are going to show them another scene in Nick's play about Circle and Square. The friends have just been exploring triangles when suddenly, Square brings out a large rectangle shape that the two friends decide looks like a city skyline of tall buildings. Challenge them to watch the video and look for all of the ways Circle and Square use their bodies and faces to show us in the audience what they are feeling as they play together in the "city" and later in the scene, when they play pretend that they are in an underground tunnel.

Watch Scene 3 from **Everything Is Round** now.

While the child watches the video, gather the following supplies for the activity: small paper plate or circle shape, crayons, large craft stick, tape, and a hand mirror. If you do not have a hand mirror, don't worry. You can do this same activity in front of the bathroom mirror.

After the child has watched the video, ask them to tell you what kinds of things Circle and Square were feeling while they played pretend in the "city" and in the "tunnel?" In this discussion, use vocabulary that strengthens emotional recognition as well as comparing and contrasting vocabulary as you talk with the child.

The Activity: Emotion Mirrors

Next, tell your child that you are about to become their mirror. Kneel or stand in front of them so your face is level with theirs. Model the activity first and makes an emotion face and ask the child to copy what they see in the mirror. Ask them to identify the emotion and give it a name. After doing this a few times, ask the child to be the leader and you will duplicate the emotion face that they make. Expand by asking the child to remember the scene they just watched of **Everything Is Round** and what emotion faces they saw in the scene.

Expand into a Visual Art/Craft Activity: Faces

Ask your child to look in the mirror and make the happiest face they can imagine. Ask them to draw that face on one side of the plate or circle including eyes, nose, hair and smiling mouth. Next, ask the child to look in the mirror and make the saddest face that they can possibly imagine. Ask them to draw that face on the opposite side of the paper place or circle. Tape the craft stick on the bottom or "chin" of the drawings so that the child has a handle for their emotion faces. Tell the child that you are going to ask them some questions and ask them to turn their "faces" to show the side that corresponds to the question or statement. Examples: You need to go to bed early. How do you feel? You find your favorite toy that you thought was lost. How do you feel? You want to go for a ride on your bicycle but you find the tire is flat. How do you feel? You find out we are having your very favorite ice cream this afternoon. How do you feel? Make up a variety of statements that best fit your child's personality.

Last, watch the video again and ask your young learner to use their fingers to help them count and remember how many different emotions Circle and Square showed in the "city" and in the "tunnel."