

Show Me the Emoji!

Source: Liana Lowenstein, MSW

Recommended Age Range: Seven and Up

Treatment Modality: Individual

Goals

- Increase open communication
- Rate the intensity of various emotional states

Materials

- Smart phone, tablet, or computer with access to emojis

Description

Read the following instructions to the client:

“It can be difficult to talk about feelings so let’s do an activity to make it easier. I’m going to ask you some questions and the way to answer is by choosing an emoji that best represents the answer to each question. If you feel that way a little, you would show me one or two emojis. If you feel that way a lot you would show me 3 or 4 emojis. For example, if I ask, ‘How do you feel when it’s your birthday and you get a present?’ then you might show me three happy face emojis to show that you feel really happy when it’s your birthday and you get a present.”

Questions should be modified to suit the client’s developmental capacities and treatment issues. Below are some sample questions.

Younger children:

How do you feel when it’s your birthday and you get a present?

How do you feel when someone breaks your favorite toy on purpose?

How do you feel when you wake up during the night from a bad dream?

How do you feel when you lose a game?

How do you feel when you get to go to the park to play?

Teens:

How do you feel when it’s your birthday and you get the gift you really wanted?

How do you feel when you get a bad grade on a test?

How do you feel when other kids exclude you?

How do you feel when someone sends you a mean text?

How do you feel when someone gives you a compliment?

Discussion

Many children and teens find it difficult to verbally articulate their thoughts and feelings. Using emojis in therapy is an engaging tool to help clients express themselves.

The clinical value of this activity rests in the practitioner's ability to establish a safe therapeutic environment, normalize and validate feelings, and ask additional open-ended questions to glean more in-depth information.

About The Author

Liana Lowenstein, MSW, RSW, CPT-S, is a therapist, lecturer, and author who has been working with children and families since 1988. She is internationally recognized for her innovative work including numerous books on child and family therapy. She is winner of the Monica Herbert award for outstanding contribution to play therapy in Canada.