

Discussion Guide

Discussion Guide for Module 5: Understanding Emotions

Module run time: 25 min

Estimated time to complete the module with discussion guide: 40-55 min

Below are recommended stopping points and suggested questions to use in your group's discussion. Please feel free to follow your group's lead and discuss topics and questions that are of greatest value to them! If you're working with a larger group, you may find it useful to discuss these questions in smaller groups and then reunite to summarize.

Key points:

- Children take cues from other people to guide their emotions and behavior, especially in new situations (**social referencing**).
- Children even learn from interactions they're not directly involved in – they pick up on emotional states of others just from watching and listening.
- In their second year of life, children begin managing their own emotions or behaviors (**self-regulation**), often using others' reactions to guide their actions.

Module synopsis:

Page 1: *Understanding Emotions*

Page 2: *Acknowledgments*

Page 3: *Universal Emotions*

Page 4: *The Puzzle of "Other Minds"*

🕒 Recommended stopping point

- The narrator prompted you to think about emotional cues a young child might use to understand other people's emotions. What do you think helps children understand others' emotions?
- As you reflect on your experiences with children, in what circumstances would be helpful for children to be able to interpret others' emotions?

Page 5: *Using Social Cues to Understand Emotions*

Page 6: *Social Referencing*

Page 7: *Visual Cliff Experiment*

Page 8: *Other People as Sources of Knowledge*

🕒 Recommended stopping point

- **Dyadic interactions** involve a child and caregiver, whereas **triadic interactions** involve a child, caregiver, and a third party or object. Can you think of instances in which you've engaged in triadic interactions? What happens during these interactions? How might they contribute to your relationship with a child?
- Why do you think dyadic interactions typically take place before triadic interactions?

Discussion Guide

- **Social referencing** is the process of looking to a familiar adult for emotional information if you are unsure of how to respond in a given situation. Did you evidence of this in children's behavior in the visual cliff video?
- Why is understanding how infants respond to other people's emotions important?

Page 9: *Infants as Onlookers*

Page 10: *Learning from Overheard Conversations: Video*

✦ Recommended stopping point

- On the last page, you watched a video of two children and their mother. What did you observe about the younger child?
- Given a chance to play with the stuffed shark, how do you think the younger child will behave? Why?

Page 11: *Understanding Emotions: Research Videos*

Page 12: *Importance of Eyes*

Page 13: *Self-Regulation*

Page 14: *Overhearing Positive and Negative Emotions*

✦ Recommended stopping point

- **Self-regulation** is the ability to control our behaviors, emotions, and impulses. The girl you saw in the video was 18 months old, and her ability to regulate her behaviors will grow and change over time. In your work, have you experienced situations in which children have had difficulty regulating their emotions? What did you do? With what you've learned in this module, how might you want to adjust your behavior in the future?
- On Page 13, we learned that conflict can provide valuable learning experiences. How might you work to turn a negative situation into a positive one?
- Self-regulation is an important skill we use often, even as adults. Can you think of a time you've recently regulated your own behavior or emotions? How will children use this skill later in their lives (e.g. in a school setting)?

Page 15: *Emotions and School Success*

Page 16: *A Growing Understanding of Emotions*

Discussion Guide

To learn more about emotional development, take a look at these resources:

[Vroom](#)

[ZERO TO THREE | Help Your Child Develop Self-Control](#)

[ZERO TO THREE | Social and Emotional Development](#)

We are constantly working to improve our materials. Do you have suggestions about topics to add to this guide? Did your group discuss something we didn't suggest? We'd love to hear from you! Please email your thoughts to us at ilabsout@uw.edu.

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