

Emotion Sharing Activities

These ideas are a framework that you can adapt depending on your environment and the specific interests of the child. Be creative and invent your own ways of relating to one another once you get the 'feel' for it.

1 Sit or kneel with the child. Start at the child's shoulders and firmly squeeze down their arms, as you move down to their hands, stretch them out and say, "POP!" You can draw out the anticipation of the pop by pausing just before this point.

2 Grab a soft toy or object and hide it under the child's shirt, in their pant leg or in their sleeve. Do this in a playful manner, moving the item slowly towards them to create drama and anticipation.

3 Place something light, like feathers in your hand. In an exaggerated manner, open your hand and blow the items off your hand towards the child, but not into his face. After a few repetitions, pause for longer to see if the child can shift his attention to watch you before you blow. WOW!

4 Lie on your back, have the child take an airplane ride on your legs – this gives a great face to face position for lots of emotion sharing. Vary the pauses and the amount of time that you let them 'fly'.

5 Hot chair / Swap Sit facing each other in beanbags or on cushions and wait until you build some anticipation using counting or a rising tone of voice. (1, 2, 3, Go or Reeaaddyyyy Go). On 'go' get up and run towards the child so that he will change places with you. It might need another person to help the child work out what to do at first. Vary the timing and the cues, aiming to only use non-verbal expressions to indicate when it's time to swap, as the child begins to watch you more closely. Flop into the other place with lots of giggles – 'We did it!'

6 Get face to face and blow up your cheeks as though you are blowing up a balloon. Help the child bring their hands up to 'POP' your cheeks while making a funny face or sound. Take turns if they can have a go by themselves.

7 Cover your face with a cloth at an unexpected time, and wait. Have the child remove the cloth for a Peek-a-boo moment. Find objects to disappear behind when you know that the child is watching you. Use your voice in a rising intonation to indicate that you're about to pop out to surprise them.

8 Have the child lie on their back on a soft pillow and stand over them with a pillow or cushion. Build up the anticipation using lots of statements (Here I come. I'm going to squish you.) before you slowly drop the pillow on top of them for a 'sandwich squish'.

9 When putting shoes and socks on, place them on your hands and use them as a puppet to give the child tickles or 'talk' in a silly voice (Hello Nicky. How are you?).

10 Sit the child on your lap facing you. Bounce them up and down singing any repetitive chant (And we bounce and we bounce and we bounce and drop.) Draw this out so you get face to face emotion sharing as you suddenly separate your legs to let the child 'fall in'.