

Strong emotions can be difficult for young children to deal with – especially if they find it hard putting their feelings into words. Let's Roll Emotions offers a gentle, child-centred and sensory way to explore emotions. As children stamp different facial expressions in dough and talk about them, you can build their emotional vocabulary, helping them to identify how they and others feel. Using the rollers will also help develop vital fine motor skills.

Emotional roller

Introduce the rollers showing children how to roll the character's body then use the stamp to add the face. The rollers show the following emotions: happy, excited, sad, worried, calm and angry.



Children will enjoy having a go themselves:

- The easiest way to use a roller is to roll it away from you, before adding the face stamp. Talk about how hard the child has to press down to make the picture come out well. What happens when they press harder or more gently?
- What does the picture feel like when they run their finger over it?
- Explore using the rollers with different substrates, such as clay, kinetic sand, sand dough or cloud dough. This will encourage children to adapt their rolling technique, pressing harder when necessary and developing their motor skills.
- Provide the rollers and dough for children to explore independently. They might enjoy combining different rollers and face stamps.
- Offer dough in different colours. Which colour suits each emotion? For example, children might choose red for angry, orange for excited, yellow for happy, green for calm, blue for sad and purple for worried.
- Make the dough multisensory by adding scent to it using spices, herbs or oils. You could even link these loosely to the colour and the emotion it suggests, such as paprika in red dough (angry), cinnamon in orange dough (excited), vanilla extract in yellow dough (happy), rosemary in green dough (calm), chamomile in blue dough (sad) and lavender in purple dough (worried).



It's good to talk



It's easier to cope with strong emotions when you can talk about them. Build children's emotional vocabulary in various ways:

- How do you feel today? Select a roller, then roll and stamp with it to see what emotion it shows – such as worried. Do you feel worried? If not, try a different roller and see if you can find one that matches how you feel.
- Can you make the same facial expression as a character on one of the rollers? What do you need to do with your eyes, eyebrows, mouth etc.?
- Just roll a body without stamping the face. What emotion could this be? Are there any clues in what the body is doing or the shapes around it and on the T-shirt? Stamp the face to see if you were right.

- Talk about how things around us affect how we feel. Some of the rollers show different types of weather. Do you feel different on a sunny day to a cold and wet day? You could use Weather Stones to support this. You might like to introduce audio clips of different types of weather or other natural sounds, such as rain, thunder or birdsong.
- Talk about how things that happen affect our feelings. You might like to describe a scenario, such as losing a favourite toy, and together find the roller that would show how you might feel in that situation.
- Use the rollers as a starting point for thinking about body language. For example, what is the child on the 'angry' roller doing? Can the children act it out? Do they ever feel like stamping their feet? To turn this into a game, children could use the roller, then copy the action for others to guess the emotion.
- Talk about how we can help ourselves to cope with strong emotions using self-calming techniques such as deep breathing or finding something from nature. You could show how it's better to take a step away from a situation for a moment, than to do something that will make someone else feel angry, sad etc.
- Use the rollers as part of a sensory table that children can access independently or when they need some special time out to focus on something calming and sensory. You might like to put each roller on a different tray with dough and other sensory resources of the same colour, such as fabrics, glass beads, textured materials and Kindness Hearts.



Tell it with feeling

Many books and stories are full of feelings, and offer an ideal way for children to develop empathy with a character:

- Use two rollers to create two characters, such as 'happy' and 'worried'. Why is one of them worried? What might have happened? How could the happy character help them to feel less worried? What might they say to each other?
- Roll the 'sad' character (or another emotion) and explain why they're feeling sad. What could we do to help them feel happier? Let's see if it's worked – use the 'happy' stamp to change the emotion.
- Use the rollers alongside a favourite book. When the main character is feeling a particular way, roll the appropriate roller in some dough to emphasise this. If the character's emotions change in the story, stamp a new face onto the dough.
- Share a book all about emotions, such as *Conker the Chameleon* or *The Colour Monster*, and each time an emotion is mentioned, roll the corresponding roller in some dough.



Get talking – useful words

Angry: cross, frown/frowning, stamp/stamping, tight/clenched hands, hot, steam, thunder, lightning

Excited: smile/smiling, open eyes, jump/jumping, joy, celebrate/celebrating, stars, spirals, party blower, fireworks

Happy: smile/smiling, open eyes, dancing, singing, joy, sunshine, sunny, flowers, stars

Calm: smile/smiling, closed eyes, lie/lying down, relaxing, floating, rainbow, cloud, bird

Worried: wrinkled brow, nervous, fear, frown/frowning, tremble/trembling, shake/shaking, quiver/quivering, jelly, wobbly

Sad: cry/crying, mouth turned down, droopy eyes, tears/rain, dark clouds, broken heart

Rolling action: roll, push, stamp, away, towards, roll gently, press harder

Books about emotions

Conker the Chameleon by Hannah Peckham
The Colour Monster by Anna Llenas

Tough Guys (Have Feelings Too) by Keith Negley
Mr Big by Ed Vere