

Gefühlsmonsters® – First Steps for Preschools and Daycare Centers

- Would you like to learn some games that will help you deal with emotions in a playful way?
- Do you wish sometimes that it were easier to talk with children about feelings?
- Are you looking for a tool that will help you with conflict resolution?

Then you have come to the right place!

You can decide for yourself in which situations the Gefühlsmonster® cards can be of help.

This will be achieved best by using the cards with all of its applications. For this reason we prepared this paper for you.

Let's get started:

Step 1: FAMILIARIZING YOURSELF WITH THE GEFÜHLSMONSTERS



Spread out the cards and look at them. You can do this either with a set of cards or using the free Gefühlsmonster® scan on our website (scan.gefuehlsmonster.de/ - with detailed instructions).

- Are there any Gefühlsmonsters that you spontaneously like or appeal to you?
- Maybe there are some you dislike?
- Do these representations remind you of situations that you have experienced?

- Or of other people, whom you have encountered with this attitude?
- This is exactly what the cards do. Feelings –also representations of feelings– are contagious. That is why the cards that attract your attention have something to do with your own experience.



At this point you can choose one of two options: If you feel like applying experiences to yourself move to steps 2 to 4, as many times as you like. This will give you a solid base for working with the cards with others afterward.

If you would like to move on right away to more detailed information about the work with preschool aged children, move on to step 5.

Step 2: GETTING TO KNOW ALL THE CARDS

To get to know the individual cards, you can simply play with them. Either with a set of cards or using the free Gefühlsmonster® scan on our website.

Example: You can sort the cards according to the intensity of the feelings shown, or according to those that you personally like more or like less. While playing with the cards in this way you will notice that interesting thoughts might emerge.



This way you will playfully arrive at

Step 3: WORKING WITH YOURSELF

Have a look at the cards or at the Gefühlsmonster scan in a relaxed way and ask yourself: How am I feeling right now?

Let your eyes wander in an unfocused way over the cards. You may get deeper insights if you do not look for a feeling that you already have in mind, but rather look without a specific objective and be surprised by the cards that “emerge”.

Step 4: FOCUSED SELF-RELATED WORK

Now you will work with the Gefühlsmonster® cards on a question that has been preoccupying your mind.

Pick a question related to your life that you would like to have more insight into. For example:

- a) How am I doing with the project XY?
- b) How is my teamwork with AB?
- c) How do I feel about the invitation next Saturday?

Concentrate on your chosen question. Then look at the Gefühlsmonster® cards in an unfocused way (as above) and spontaneously pick the cards that resonate with you.



We suggest that you pick all the cards first, before you think about the individual cards you chose.

Now calmly look at the separate cards you put aside and ask yourself for each card:

“What does this card mean to me?”

Probably you are a step closer to answering your original question than you were before this exercise.



HINT: If you don't feel good with your results close this exercise with the question:

“Which card would be helpful right now?”

or

“How would I like to feel right now?”

Find the right card(s) and place them in a prominent place, like carrying it on you or prop it up somewhere, where you will see them often. This can connect you with the emotion of the card you picked.

If you do this exercise with the Online Scan you have the option to write a note about the card and have it sent to yourself by email.

Now that you have familiarized yourself with the Gefühlsmonster® cards we would like to introduce you to the next step, building the foundation of your work with children and adolescents.

Step 5: BASIC KNOWLEDGE FOR YOUR WORK WITH PRESCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

The Gefühlsmonsters work on two levels: First, they remind us of situations we have experienced ourselves. Second, they speak to our own feelings. Let the children talk without interruptions. This will help you to access the cards' possibilities.

The word "monsters" doesn't suit all situations or people. Use it only if you are sure that the children understand that it is meant in a playful way. If you use just the word "cards", or instead of "monsters" use "figures" for starters, you might later find a name together that works well.

Even working with children the guiding question for your work with the cards is:

"What does this card mean to you?"

If the child doesn't understand the question

you may ask: "What can you tell me about how the little monster is feeling?"

This way you invite thoughts and conversation about the card. Besides, finding your own interpretations for the cards is more helpful than attributions by others. Encourage the children to comment on their connections to the cards. Each depiction is meant to be understood in varying ways.

This process helps the children to learn that something that appears obvious can have different interpretations.

Before you start working with the cards specifically, give the children time to "befriend" the cards.

For this the following game can be helpful:

Step 6: Game "MAKE BELIEF"



This game is suitable for play in small groups (2 – 8 children) for the purpose of easing into the topic of emotions in a fun way. With this game

children in new groups will find it easy to get to know each other. It also will make it easier for children to dare speaking in front of a group and to take their turn in such an "important exercise".

The Gefühlsmonster® cards are in a closed spread, the depiction facing down. Now everyone gets to pull one card, keeping it a secret from the other players.

The task is to tell what the monster on the selected card might have experienced.

To begin with the teacher will tell the story about their card and then asks who of the children would like to tell more.

One after the other all the children will have a turn to give a name to the monster on their

selected card and tell what it might have just experienced.

Example:



Tobias is happy, today his group will go to the pool!



Marie is very happy, because she loves the swimming lessons.



Erny is mad, because his dad forgot to pack his swimsuit.



The teacher says to him: Look, I have a cool swimsuit for you so you can come too!



Today the children are allowed to go on the slide and Peter is really scared.



Now Peter did dare to go on the slide, but he's crying because he hit his head.



Teresa comes and comforts Peter successfully.



You will notice that the children often use the monsters to tell stories from their own every day life. It would be good to let the children decide if they want to participate or not. If a child is too shy to tell their monster story, the teacher can support them by standing behind them and deciding together what they might like to say.

Variation: This is about giving a child the courage to tell their story on their own.

The cards are in an open spread in front of the child. They may pick three cards of their choice and tell the story of those.

Be aware that there are some children who love to get into crazy and deeply involved stories that sometimes cause the listening children to get impatient.

Step 7: PRESCHOOL ROUTINES WITH THE GEFÜHLSMONSTERS

Gefühlsmonsters can be incorporated into the preschool/daycare routine depending on the age of the children.

The following games and exercises have been

developed by Jana Benz and Jana Stooft, both early childhood educators and mediators.

Next you can read about their recommendations for teaching children social skills.

Step 8: RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Be present when talking with the child, appreciate their view and take care to be nonjudgmental with your answer. I.e. *"Oh, that's how you feel."* or *"Thank you for telling me."*

Recommendation 2:

Stay respectful of the children during conflict. I.e. use the expression *"Something happened."*

Recommendation 3:

Take the position that conflicts are permitted.

Recommendation 4:

For the following exercises there is no "right" or "wrong".

Recommendation 5:

Let the children decide which roles to play.

Recommendation 6:

Notice the tiniest sign of a desire in the child. Then encourage them to speak up. If they are too shy to talk, you can support them by standing behind them and compassionately encourage them to speak or speak for them. When they are ready they will find the courage to speak for themselves.

Recommendation 7:

This kind of learning is most successful, when used in a playful atmosphere and the exercises are fun. The deeper learning process is happening in the background.

Recommendation 8:

Honor the smallest progress and courage (i.e. that the child came forward, even if they then aren't ready to take the next step).

Recommendation 9:

Accept the different approaches of the children respectfully (daredevil, soft-spoken etc.).

Recommendation 10:

Get involved in the games yourself as teacher and express your emotions.

Next up are the exercises, all tried and perfected in preschools.

Step 9: BASIC EXERCISES AND GAMES

1. Morning Circle Time With the Gefühlsmonster® Cards

Almost daily: The children are sitting in a circle and with the help of the cards tell how they are feeling and guess how the child next to them might be feeling.

2. Memory

The children have two mini-sets of cards and play the memory game with them. We notice that they often have conversations about the discovered emotions and what it makes them think of.

We play memory in pairs or with the teachers in groups of up to eight children.

(Quiet game)

3. Dance Circle

The teachers pick some music and the children then choose a fitting Gefühlsmonster and dance the way as the Gefühlsmonster would.

(Movement game)



4. Pantomime

The children are divided into two groups, standing opposite of each other in two rows.

The children of group A now pick a covered card and keep it hidden from the other group's children. Each of them now act out the emotion on the card silently, one after the other. The children of group B are looking for the right card on a poster or with the help of another set of cards.

(Lively and fun)

Step 10: MOVING TOWARD CONFLICT RESOLUTION

1. Emotion Clock

In each room there is an emotion clock on the wall, a circle made of all 25 Gefühlsmonster stickers with two hands, one that says *"how am I feeling"*, the other *"I want to feel like this"*.

The children use the clock independently in pairs, often chatting about their own needs (more about this in exercise 7).



2. Independent Work With the Cards

In our daycare we have a laminated set of cards. The children are allowed to use it to work with it alone or with a partner and then have to bring it back. This way we install care and respect for the cards.

3. Dance Floor for Compassion of Self (teacher guided)

All Gefühlsmonsters are open faced in a row on the floor. The first card is #12 for the question *"What happened?"*.

One child starts with that Gefühlsmonster #12, telling what might have happened. Now they move to the Gefühlsmonster that depicts the emotion appropriate to the situation and tell how it is feeling.

During the third step they go to the card with the emotion that would feel good right now. The teacher guides them through these steps. Usually the situation feels complete after these three steps.

4. Individual Coaching

The teacher lays down all cards of a mini set. The child can now choose cards for how they are feeling and what emotion would help.

5. Post Conflict Work

All cards lay open faced. The teacher uses two or three cards to tell her observations of a conflict. Then they invite the children to try the same.

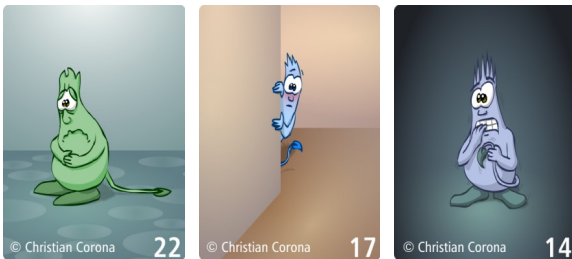
6. Post Conflict Work During the Noon Circle Time

One child picks one or two cards to describe the conflict. Then the other child that participated in the conflict takes a turn and picks the cards telling their point of view.

7. Guessing Needs

The teacher points at one of the cards that expresses a more challenging feeling and asks the children what they are thinking and what this Gefühlsmonster might need. They let more than one child speak and accept different answers.

This exercise might offer help for children who are in conflict, upset or anxious, by hearing the group's suggestions. All ideas are welcomed and the child decides if there is one that helps.



During the first step of this exercise the teacher picks a card and acts what the Gefühlsmonster would do. Then he/she helps the children who would like to play, but are too shy, by standing behind them and helping them along.

After each single card the child in the middle shares how they are feeling now.

Then they change to different children and situations.

These exercises are constantly complemented and further developed (you can find out more in our newsletter!).

We would love to hear about your ideas and experiences.

For a **beginners practice** and as **funny relaxation exercise** in between we also recommend the following game:

8. Role Play for Make Believe Conflicts in Preschool/Daycare Life (funny)

A child may volunteer to play the role of the one who caused the conflict. For example, a kid who grabbed a book from another child (alternatively: pushes one while getting ready to go outside, *"He called me a baby"*, *"She said she wasn't my friend anymore"*...).

The child sits in the center of the circle with a book (or other symbol for their role), the large set of cards are spread on the floor face down.

The child who volunteers to play the opponent in this conflict turns over one card, shows it to the others and addresses the first child as this Gefühlsmonster® would.

Step 11: GAME "EMOTIONS REVERSED"

This game is very lively. Even when the cards get first picked there is laughter, because often the cards don't suit the situation given.

The Gefühlsmonster® cards are in a closed-spread in front of you.

Pick a certain situation, for example

- Going to the playground
- Lunchtime at the daycare center
- Going to the pool
- Building a sand castle

And so on.

Now everyone pulls one card and acts out the situation with the behavior of the Gefühlsmonster® on the card.

1. In step one everyone can show their card to the others and then act out the emotion. Either you say something the way the figure on the card would say it or you can add movements as well. It is helpful if the teacher starts this exercise.



2. When everyone got to know the Gefühlsmonster® cards and there is another set or poster of them to look at, the pulled card stays hidden from the other players and is acted out. The other players then have to guess which card the player pulled.

3. As modification of this game (see exercise 8 above) children could use a specific conflict situation to act out with the cards. For example, what Gefühlsmonster® 8 would say, followed by how Gefühlsmonster® 15 would respond. Let the children observe the different effects within the situation, depending on the emotions used in the interactions.

And finally...



On our homepage you will find tips and ideas for different applications. Roam around, look for specific terms in the search field to find more ap-

plications for your work. We hope that you'll enjoy and use the cards on many levels.

The Gefühlsmonster Team