

THE GEFÜHLSMONSTER SET FOR SPECIAL TIMES

PARENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

*"Our little daughter comes every night with the Gefühlsmonsters now and says: Shall we talk about our feelings now? Usually we sit down together briefly before dinner and talk about which Gefühlsmonsters are currently occupying our minds. We laugh and cry, and afterwards we each take a card for how we would like to feel or which one is good for us. This card can be kept until the next evening."*¹

You might well experience the same or something similar if you want to support your children to talk about their feelings.

Experts have found that it helps if you find words for your feelings. The Gefühlsmonster® Cards make it easier to do this, and they also make it easier to bear difficult feelings.²

- If you work with small children, please use the word "monster" only if your child understands that it is meant to be playful. Otherwise, the term "Emotion Cards" or simply "Figure" is also suitable – your creativity is needed here.
- The Gefühlsmonsters "work" on two levels: on the one hand they remind you of situations you have experienced, on the other hand they remind you of your own

feelings. It is advisable to let your child speak without interfering, because then he or she can gain access to the cards by himself or herself.

- Whoever looks at the pictures decides what she or he sees in them. Instead of discussing whether the card shows this or that feeling, just be curious about what you are told!



Be careful at the beginning to associate a specific goal with the use of the cards. If your child enjoys playing with the cards, he will begin to look at his feelings in his own situations.



Feelings are contagious, even representations of feelings. So children as well as adults are attracted by the cards that have something to do with them. If you then talk about "how the monsters are doing", there is a pleasant distance to your own experience, and yet you have a conversation about it.

¹ Told by a friend

² <http://emotionnews.org/does-labeling-your-feelings-help-regulate-them/>

Some general ideas:

- Now that you are living together as a family without time off because of school or work, it is important to arrange times when everyone can be alone.
- And to find a keyword to say when you feel overwhelmed and need peace and distance.
- In the paper "Gefühlsmonster Emergency Kit" you will find exercises that you can do in such moments.
- You can use the Gefühlsmonster®


cards as signals when someone in the family needs quiet time. Select these Signaling Cards in a suitable moment and tell all family members what they mean to the person using them, for example, at their room door.

- Children sometimes know better than we adults what they need, and if we are open, they will tell us.
- They can also handle when we show them our feelings. It is important that there is a place/time where you talk about them (see the rituals under 2).

2 WORKING WITH YOUR CHILD/YOUR CHILDREN

Some children like to play alone with the small Gefühlsmonster® cards in mini format. They might say something about it, they might not.

Let your kids choose one to three Gefühlsmonsters, and then let them tell you how the monsters are doing. It's easier for young children to do this than talk about their feelings - this exercise can help them talk about things that would otherwise be harder.



Let yourself be surprised what the child says to the cards! It can be something completely different from what you see in them!

Once you have gotten to know the cards in the family, you may consider introducing a ritual for dealing with feelings. For example:

1. The "**Now let's all say how we feel to-**

day" ritual or the "**Meet the fear**" ritual. Or the "**What I was upset about today**" ritual.


Try to do it once a day, preferably at a set time. You can keep difficult feelings "in check" by giving them a specific place to be.

2. Of course we also recommend the "**How much we love each other**" ritual – perhaps before going to bed?
3. What kind of ritual suits you? Find out together with your children.

If you want to spend time with your child and give him/her the opportunity to talk about his/her feelings, you can also ask the following questions:

1. "Find a card for mum, dad, grandpa, grandma, sister, brother, teacher, coach, best friend" etc.

2. "Find a Gefühlsmonster for the freshly tidied up playroom, the walk with dad, the video call with grandma." Photos of certain situations are also a good way to let the child choose a Gefühlsmonster that suits him or her. When the child has chosen a card, ask "What does this card mean to you?".



It is important that you let the child lead the way here and accept the meaning she or he gives the cards. You will see that interesting and deep conversations arise, all by themselves.

3. Or you choose one of the "not so happy monsters" and ask yourself what it needs. That's also something you can do with the family. If everyone gives a hint of what this monster might need right now, the child can, almost as an aside, look at what he or she would need in this situation.



3 MONSTER STORIES

Can be played alone: A child picks one card at a time from the face-down pile of Gefühlsmonster® cards and tells a made-up story.

Two to ten persons: Each player draws one card and keeps it face down. One of them starts, gives his monster an imaginary name and says what it is doing. The next one says something about his card that fits with the first "story" - and so on.

When you play in pairs, each player takes a card from the deck in turn and continues the story, no matter what card is drawn.

Example: (Just as a suggestion – your own story will certainly be better!)



This is Tim, who is not allowed to go to the pajama party now.



This is Tim thinking about what to do with the virus if he catches it.



This is Clare who's just heard that her friend is ill.

This is Tim and Clare's mother, who no longer knows what to do with them when they are so unhappy.



And here is Tim and Clare's grandma. She has just learned how to make video calls and is looking forward to seeing her grandchildren.

This is the dad of Tim and Clare, who comes along when they are all so frustrated and gives all of them a big hug.



(and so on...)

4 FEELINGS "UPSIDE DOWN"

Game for the whole family

First, the Gefühlsmonster® cards are spread out face down on the table. Then the group chooses a situation, such as

- Going for a walk
- Having a pet
- Riding a bike
- School starting again
- Falling in love
- Having a quarrel
- Seeing a film together
- Birthday party
- Calling grandpa etc.

Each player now takes a Gefühlsmonster® card and tries to imagine how that monster would

behave in the situation, how it would move and talk to others.

1. The first step is to show this card to the others and then play.

2. If everybody knows the Gefühlsmonsters well, and you have another set of cards or a poster to look at, the card will not be revealed to the other players and is kept face down. The situation is played according to the expression on the card. The other players may then guess which card the player has drawn.



Very lively game. Even when the cards are drawn, laughter comes up because the cards often do not fit the situation. It is even more fun to play these situations "wrong".

5 STRENGTHENING EXERCISE

Each family member chooses a Gefühlsmonster for when they feel really comfortable and happy. Then they think of three situations in which they have felt like this.

Now each one shows their card in turn and talks about the three situations in which they felt like this.

Option 1: One shows his card,



the other family members guess in what situation he feels like that.



Option 2: Before you show your cards, you may guess for another family member which card he or she might choose – and then compare. Have fun with it!



6 ONCE UPON A TIME...



.If possible play in two groups – then you need two sets of Gefühlsmonsters or one set and a poster.

1. Someone in the family tells a story, a fairy tale or recites a poem. If everyone feels like it, the story can first be re-enacted.
2. All of them bring together which roles or characters have appeared in the story.

3. Now a Gefühlsmonster® card is selected in each group for each role. For how the individual characters feel (for example Little Red Riding Hood, the Hunter, Grandmother, etc.).

Since everyone contributes their own ideas, there can be interesting conversations about different proposals.

4. Now the groups come together and talk about which cards were chosen for each figure and why.

Here too, conversations can take place about how differently we might experience the same situation.

7 THE GEFÜHLSMONSTER ONLINE-SCAN – AN EXERCISE FOR YOURSELF

This exercise can help you become clear about your current feelings.

Ask yourself, "*How am I doing right now?*"

1. Now look over the cards with an unfocused look. So that you are open to which cards "speak" to you, where you feel a small resonance. You can do this by spreading your cards out on the table, or by using the free online Gefühlsmonster Scan on our homepage.



Feelings are contagious. If you succeed in selecting the cards via the spontaneous reso-

nance, surprising additional insights can arise.

2. Choose the cards that appeal to you spontaneously and put them aside until you find about 3-5 cards. Look at the cards and answer the following question for each card:

"What does this card mean to me?"

3. Now look at the whole selection of your cards.
 - What does this mean for your current situation?
 - What do you need now?



It helps if you've already written down what can help you in difficult moments. For example, a phone call, a ride on your bike, cooking or baking something delicious, or express-

ing yourself creatively in some other way. Make a list of five things to have at your disposal in difficult moments!

8 IN-DEPTH: SOMATIC MARKERS

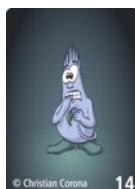
This paragraph goes a bit more into the depths of your feelings – if you feel that this is too much right now, save it for later. It's about how we can physically experience feelings and thus perceive them earlier.

If you would like to help your child/your children to cope better with their feelings, you can explain what somatic markers, or emotion indicators, are.

This is an **introduction** for you – you can then easily pass this on to your children.

Somatic markers are body feelings that serve as indicators. Negative somatic markers are the body sensations that appear as changes in the body when difficult feelings occur, and positive somatic markers are correspondingly the body sensations when pleasant feelings occur.

1. Think of a **difficult situation** you experienced in the past week. Alternatively, you can look at this or any other matching Gefühlsmonster® cards. Now focus your attention on your body.



If you have a strong aversion to this part of the exercise, you may feel overwhelmed by the crisis at the moment. Then please

continue with the second part of the exercise and think about who can support you in getting better.

Of course this is especially true if you want to explain the exercise to your child.

- What's changing in your body? These may be very subtle changes, but it is best to approach this exercise in the spirit of exploration.
- How does it feel? If you had to describe this to a friend, what would you say?
- Take the time to take notes – you are discovering your own and very personal negative somatic marker. If you write it down in your own words, you are more likely to notice the emergence of difficult feelings earlier and more easily. Most of the time these are feelings of tightness, tension, even dark colours can be perceived. As I said, your own words are important here so that you can memorize your personal marker.

2. Now of course we also go to the **pleasant situations**. So think of the most beautiful situation you have experienced in the past week or that comes to your mind. Or look at this Gefühlsmonster® card. Feel inside yourself:



- How does it feel physically when you recall this situation in your mind, when you relive it in your imagination?
- What changes in your body compared to the first part of the exercise?

If you take notes here, too, the probability increases that you will perceive pleasant moments more strongly in everyday life and come to a state in which your brain works optimally.



Tip: if you can't get away from a difficult feeling: choose the Gefühlsmonster that is

most pleasant for you at the moment and place it at your dining table or workplace! Any other picture that connects you with happy and satisfied feelings can also fulfill this function. When you have understood your own picture of the somatic markers and feel comfortable with the exercise, you can do this exercise as a game with your children.



Please tell your child, when you are looking at a difficult situation, that you will only do this for a short time and immediately after that you will look at something

really nice. You will feel whether it is a good time for the exercise or not. In any case the exercise should end with a nice experience! For example, have the child choose a favourite feel-good card and find a place in the apartment with the child where he or she can see the card often.

It's best to play a game afterwards that you both enjoy. The strengthening exercise from no. 5 is also suitable here.



Tip: With this exercise you give your child an important tool to learn how to get to know

himself and his feelings better. It might also be helpful to watch the film "Inside Out" together. The children then have a good picture of what it is like to have their hand on the "anger switch". Or just to collect "yellow spheres", i.e. pleasant experiences.

Please feel free to contact us with any question that arises about the exercises or the use of the Gefühlsmonster cards.

Wishing you and your family all the best,

The Gefühlsmonster Team