

# COMMUNICATING WITH CARE

*A guide for parents and families*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### For Families

Supportive Media- 2  
A Walk in My Shoes-3  
What I say, What I do- 8

### For Parents

Understanding Social  
Emotional Development-9



## WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Communication is the act of sending or receiving messages to or from others. Communication can be verbal or non-verbal.

There are many healthy and unhealthy ways to communicate.



We are all communicating with others around us everyday. From phone calls and texts, to head nods and gestures, we send millions of messages communicating our needs, wants, and feelings each day- sometimes without even realizing it!

Healthy communication allows us to build relationships that are based in trust, respect and honesty. When we communicate our needs and boundaries in a healthy way, we are more likely to have our needs met by others. Similarly, when we respect other's boundaries and validate their feelings, we allow them to build more trust in us.

Taking time to care for ourselves and our emotional needs, give us the space to be able to communicate effectively by calmly and assertively asking for what we need from others.

# Multimedia Resources:

## Learn More About Communication and Coping



This video from SAH supports families in using communication methods that will leave everyone feeling heard and validated.



Coping skills allow us to care for ourselves so that we can also better care for those around us. Join SAH in this calming video about using music as a coping skill.

# A Walk in My Shoes

## Family Art Activity

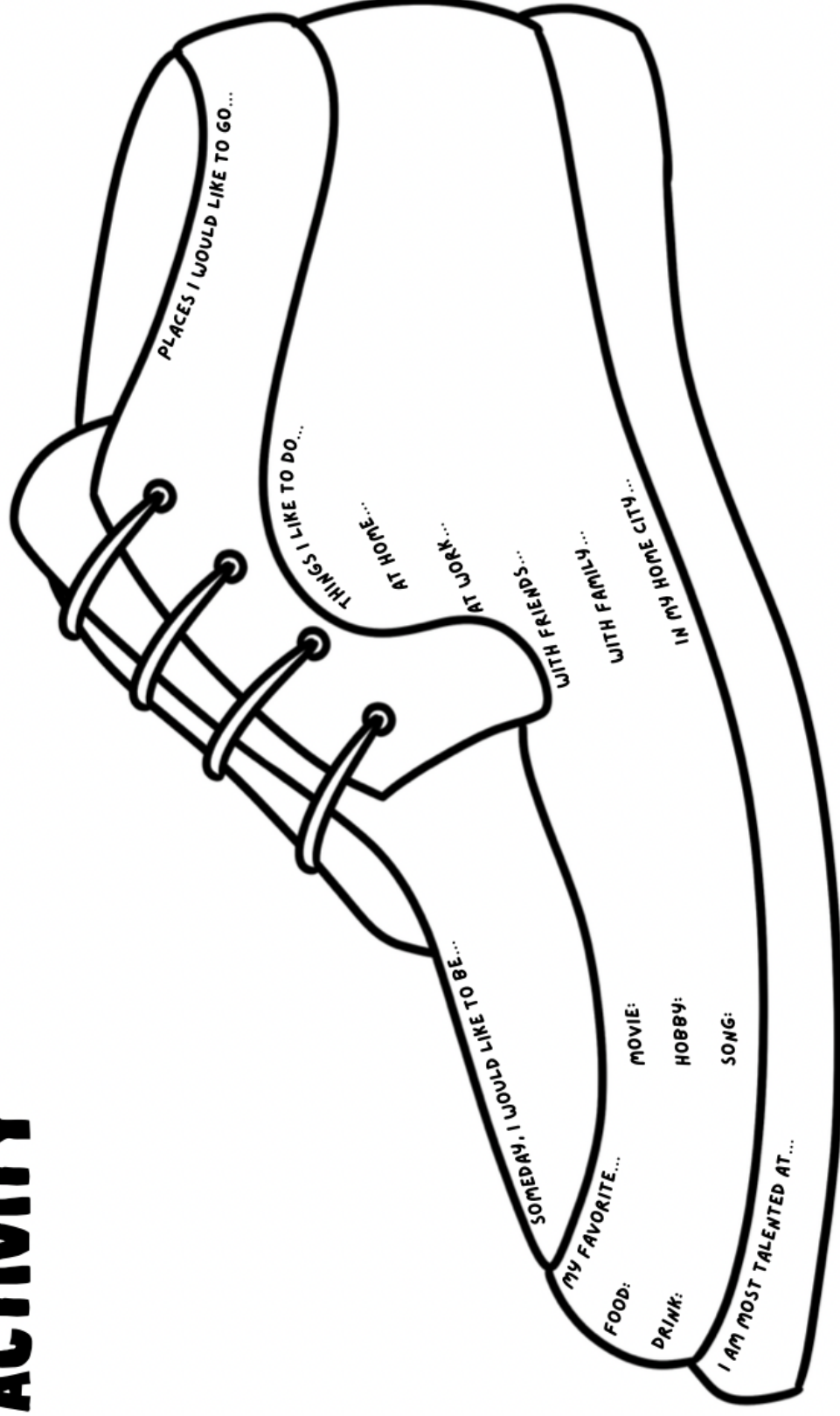
The goal of this activity is to help your family to connect and communicate around favorite things.



**Instructions:** Choose the shoes that represent you on the next page and fill in the guided prompts. You can color and decorate your shoe however you'd like! Take turns sharing your decorated shoes and the answers to the guided prompts with each other.

# A WALK IN MY SHOES

## FAMILY ART ACTIVITY



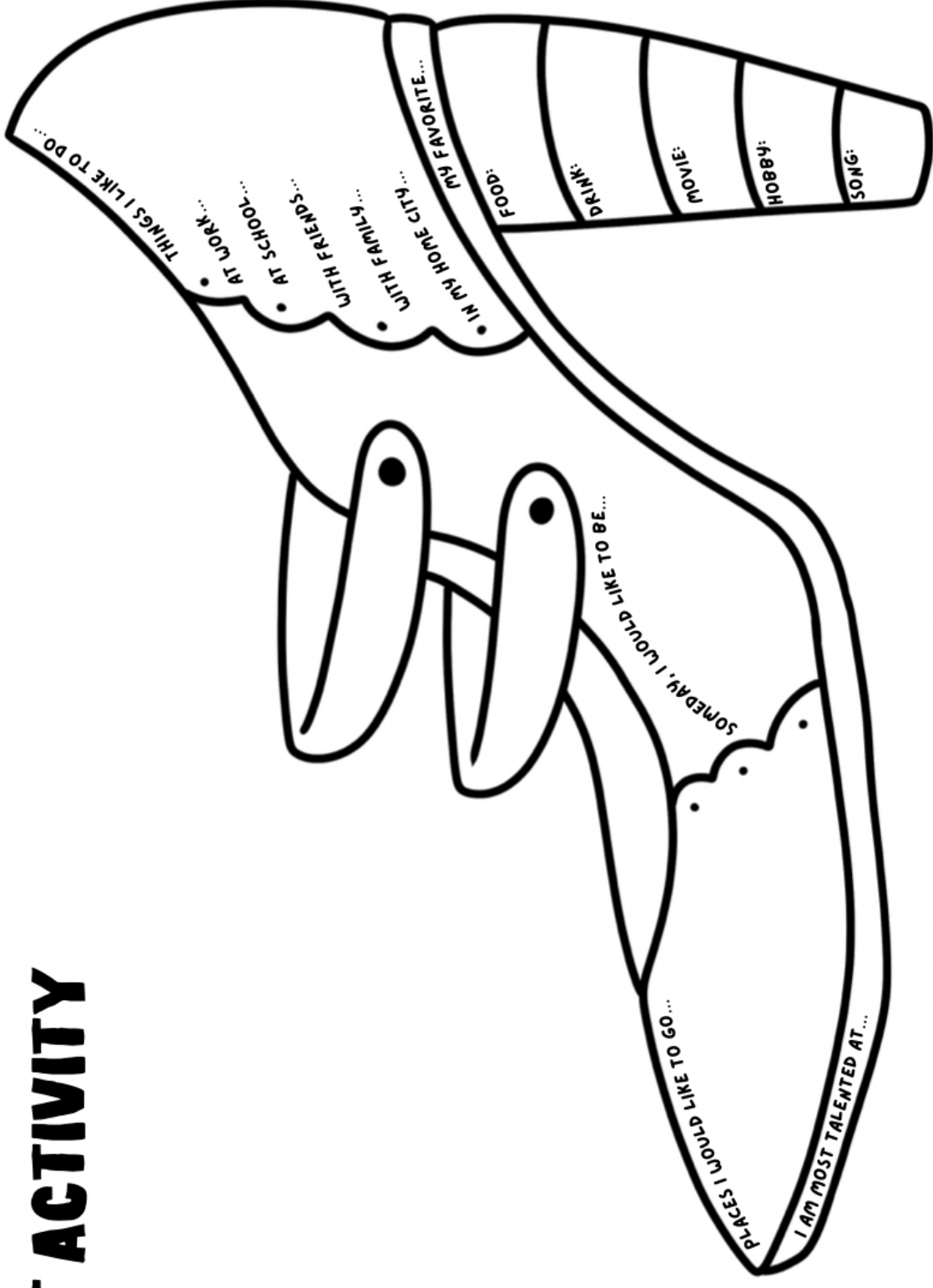
JOE TORRE

**SAFE AT  
HOME.**

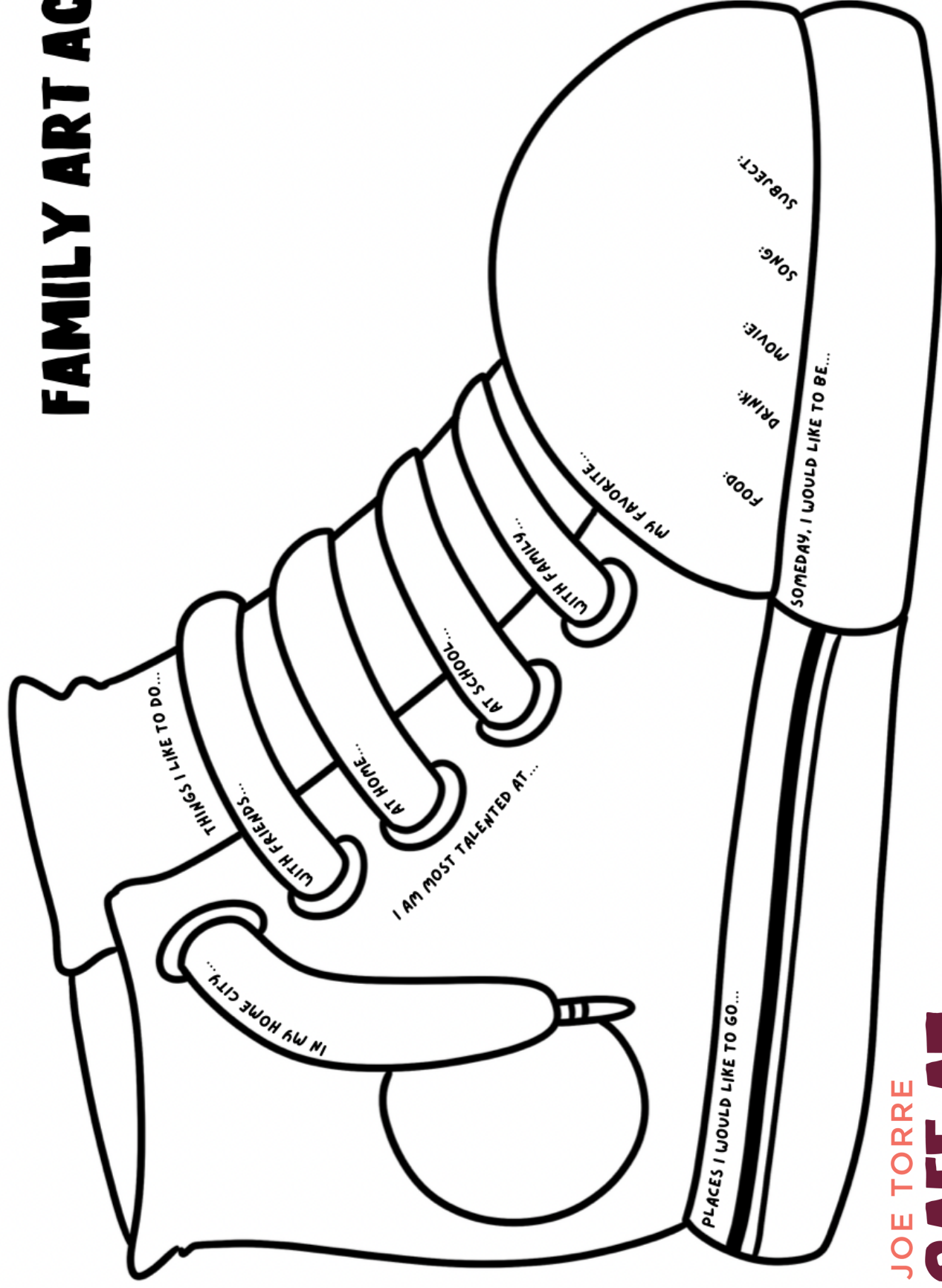


# A WALK IN MY SHOES

## FAMILY ART ACTIVITY

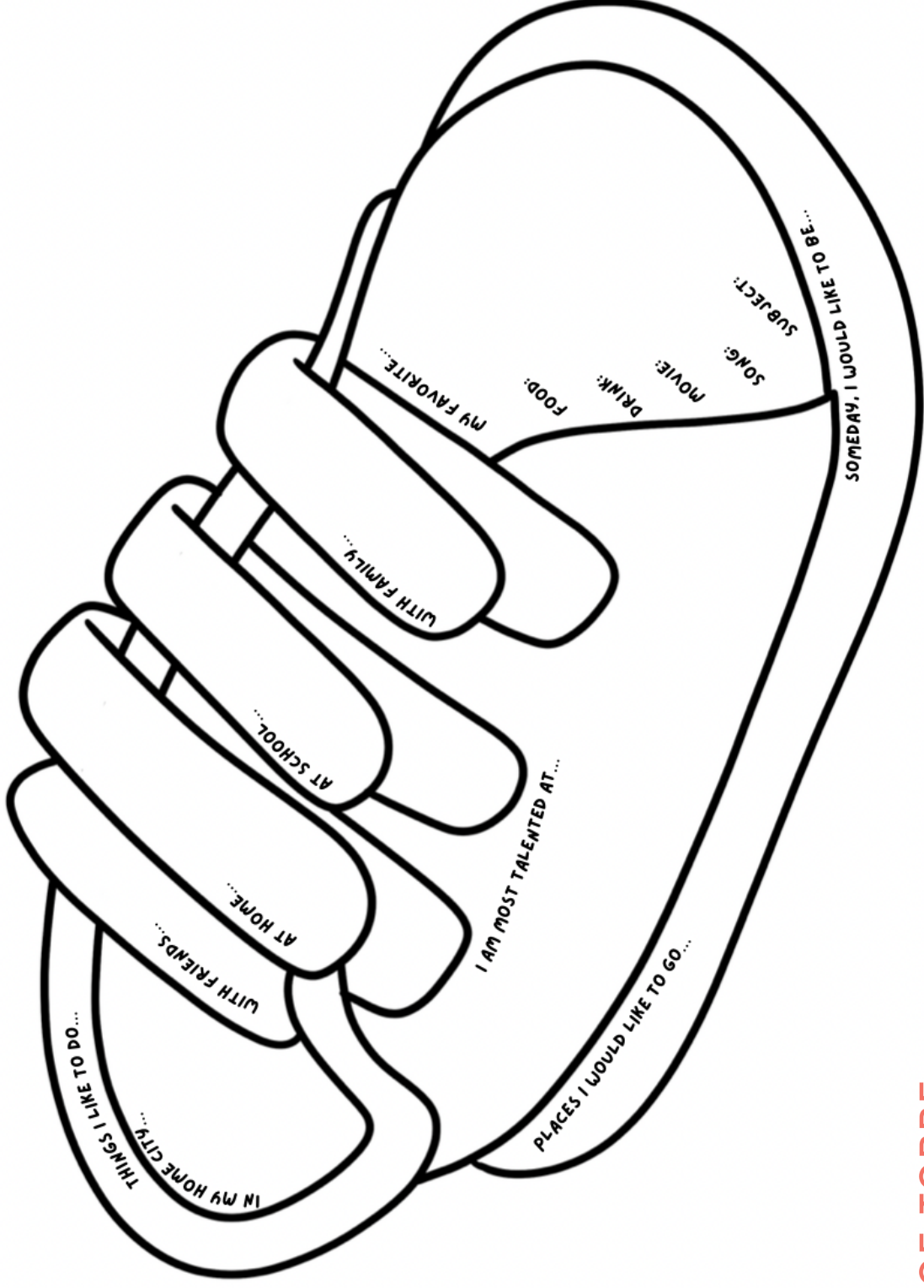


# A WALK IN MY SHOES FAMILY ART ACTIVITY



JOE TORRE  
**SAFE AT  
HOME.**

# A WALK IN MY SHOES FAMILY ART ACTIVITY



# Words, Actions, Intentions

Sometimes, we get so deep into our feelings, that we respond with actions that might impact others around us and make conflicts get worse. Exploring how our words and actions impact those around us can help us to create healthier environments to communicate emotions safely.

**For example, have you ever gotten so upset that you looked at your sibling and yelled "I hate you, I wish I didn't even have a sibling," when really, you're feeling frustrated and hurt in that moment?**

Using the table below, list how you share emotions with your words and with your behaviors (columns A & B). Then list how those words and actions might impact others (Column C). If you're unsure how others feel about your behavior, consider doing this activity as a family to get feedback! Finally, consider what you could do or say instead to get your feelings heard in the safest and healthiest way (Column D).

What I Say	What I Do	How Others Feel	What I Can Change
<i>"I hate you, you're the worst sister ever"</i>	<i>Slam and lock my bedroom door</i>	<i>Hurt, angry, rejected</i>	<i>I can say "I'm really upset with you right now and I need some space"</i>



# SUPPORTING SOCIAL- EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUTH

Strong social emotional development is key to healthy communication & relationship building. Parents can support youth's social emotional development by focusing on these 5 key skills

1. self-awareness
2. social-awareness
3. emotional regulation
4. responsible decision making
5. relationship building

## Youth with strong social emotional skills

- Tend to get along better with others
- Have an increased ability to manage stress
- Can identify, express, and manage their emotions
- Can communicate their needs and boundaries
- Are more likely to build relationships that are based in trust, respect and honesty



## WHEN SHOULD PARENTS BEGIN SUPPORTING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Children start developing social and emotional skills as babies, and new skills emerge as they get older.

Not all kids develop at the same pace. But there are some milestones you can expect kids to meet around roughly the same age.

**By being aware of emotional milestones, parents can model and teach the skills that kids need to become healthy communicators.**

**When parents are patient and understanding when kids behave in frustrating yet developmentally appropriate ways, parents can validate the feeling their child is experiencing while still correcting a behavior.**



# EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT DIFFERENT AGES

AS CHILDREN DEVELOP, THEY WILL EXPERIMENT WITH EXPRESSING EMOTION IN NEW WAYS --LIKE TODDLER TANTRUMS, ADOLESCENTS DISTANCING FROM PARENTS, OR CHILDREN AND TEENS TESTING NEW EXPRESSIONS AND MANNERISMS.

YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD IN MANAGING THEIR EMOTIONS BY MODELING HEALTHY COPING SKILLS & COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND THEN PRACTICING THEM TOGETHER.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS AREN'T ONLY ABOUT HOW WE OUTWARDLY EXPRESS OURSELVES. THEY'RE ALSO ABOUT HOW WE REACT INWARDLY.

ALL BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATING SOMETHING. YOU CAN TALK WITH CHILDREN ABOUT WHAT'S BEHIND THEIR BEHAVIOR AND FIGURE OUT WHAT WILL HELP.

## DURING PRE-SCHOOL AGES, CHILDREN:

- START TO SHOW A WIDER RANGE OF EMOTION
- MAY CONFUSE REAL AND "MAKE BELIEVE"
- ARE SPONTANEOUSLY KIND AND CARING
- MAY STILL HAVE TANTRUMS BECAUSE OF CHANGES IN ROUTINE OR NOT GETTING WHAT THEY WANT



## DURING ADOLESCENCE, YOUTH:

- CAN BE INTROSPECTIVE, MOODY, AND MIGHT WANT MORE PRIVACY
- MAY TEST OUT NEW IDEAS, CLOTHING STYLES, AND MANNERISMS WHILE FIGURING OUT WHERE/HOW TO FIT IN
- CAN START TO DISCOVER STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, AT TIMES SEEMING SELF-CENTERED, IMPULSIVE, OR MOODY
- SPEND A LOT OF TIME WITH FRIENDS AND MAY BE INTERESTED IN DATING

## DURING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGES, CHILDREN:

- TEST BOUNDARIES BUT ARE STILL EAGER TO PLEASE AND HELP OUT
- BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO FEEL EMBARRASSED
- TRY TO EXPRESS FEELINGS WITH WORDS, BUT MAY EXPERIENCE OUTBURSTS WHEN UPSET OR FRUSTRATED



# TIPS FOR CARING ADULTS

## SHOW YOUR EMOTION

Children learn from what they see. Verbalizing and expressing your emotions through body language, facial expressions, and other non-verbal means (i.e. crying, laughing) can support your child to learn to do the same. We all experience emotions. the more we show them, the more comfortable we become in sharing them.



## SUPPORT COPING SKILLS

Showing children how to respond to challenges by walking them through different strategies can help them learn how to prepare for challenges on their own in the future.

Some things you can try at home might be helping a child find a quiet place to reflect, practicing deep breaths to relax, or having a dance party to celebrate happiness. You can even ask your child for some of their own ideas!



## GIVE THEM LANGUAGE TO NAME AND EXPLAIN

Supporting a child to learn words for their emotions allows them to share what they are feeling in an open and communicative way.

For example, you can say "I noticed you were smiling a lot today after school. Are you feeling happy?"



## VALIDATE

Knowing that a feeling is normal allows children to have a sense of control and acceptance of that feeling. If they feel like they're the only one who experiences an emotion they are more likely to believe that they are helpless to it. validation is key to building both self-confidence and a healthy response to emotion.

## CELEBRATE AND ENCOURAGE

By pointing out when children use their feelings words to positively express themselves. you can build their self-confidence and encourage them to continue to communicate.

For example, you can say "I really appreciate how you used your words to share that you were angry instead of stomping or throwing things. Now that I undersand, how can I support you to feel better?"