



**MADIGAN AND MENINA FIND THEIR “FUREVER” FAMILY**  
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**Lesson Plan 1: “Empathy and Feelings, go together!”**

*Third grade to Fifth Grade (and up!)*

Parents are their children's first teachers, supporting children in developing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills needed to succeed in school, work, and life. [These five skills make up Social-Emotional Learning \(SEL\).](#)

As children move into higher levels of elementary school, caring adults, such as teachers, school counselors, librarians, principals and others, work to support children in the developing SEL skills. Reading stories together, and reflecting on what is demonstrated through characters, helps children learn how to connect, identify feelings and illustrate decisions and values.

*This lesson will support your efforts to use reading to help a child connect to their own feelings, and the feelings of others, deepening an internal ability to empathize!*

**Lesson Plan 1:** “Empathy and Feelings, Go Together!”

**Objective:** Children will demonstrate an ability to empathize, by identifying their own feelings in relationship to how characters experience feelings and by verbalizing answers in discussions with the “reader” (e.g., teacher, parent, staff member) and friends/classmates.

**SEL Competency:** Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills

**Vocabulary:** alone, sad, blue, confusion, differences, excited, distracted, impulsive, nervous/worried, friendly, unfriendly, acceptance, inclusion, exclusion, “Pawsitive,” startled, considerate, generous, family, loved

*NOTE: Vocabulary can be pulled from the written text or from what is “seen” in illustrations.*

1. Preview the book, as the reader/teacher.
  - A. Not all vocabulary words appear in the text, but they exist in the story with the character illustrations.
  - B. Challenge children to identify familiar words, or words they THINK about when they read the story (that might not be there written, but remind them to look at the illustrations).
  - C. Allow children to use their imaginations about what feeling the character “could” be feeling, based on how they feel when reading the story.
  - D. Let them name **synonyms** (sad, blue, depressed or friendly, considerate, kind, etc. ) and **antonyms** (inclusion vs. exclusion, generous vs. selfish) for feeling words, scaffolding as necessary for developmental age with your child/children.
  - E. Read and Reference the questions on page 30 (Librarian Notes).
  - F. Make any notes needed, for your own creative ideas or observations, you might want to share with children later.
  - G. *NOTE: A child, group of children or classroom of children, may be working on ONE of the vocabulary words, such as “acceptance or inclusion.” Emphasize this word for this lesson, and relate it to your situation, family, or classroom.*
2. Show the children the cover first, and read the title aloud. Ask children, “How do these characters look, what emotions are on their face?” Take all answers, and ask a few children to take turns writing them down in a visible place, or use feeling word cards or tools (such as Kimochis® feeling pillows) to put in a visible place. Children can make predictions, if wanted, and share those aloud.
3. Begin by sharing with children an these ideas:
  - A. One of the most important things they will learn in a family is to love and feel loved. Ask how many agree by raising their hands.
  - B. One of the most important thing they will learn at school, is not only how to be a friend, but how to make a friend as well. Ask how many agree by clapping their hands.
  - C. Having differences is a part of life, and one of the most important things they will learn at school, is how it feels to be included and excluded. That at times, they may be included or exclude someone, all kids can be on both “sides of the fence.” Ask how many agree by showing a “thumbs up.” Ask if anyone has questions about this idea, and if they have been on “either side of the fence.”
  - D. *NOTE: Remember, all kids are kind, and all kids can be unkind. Children need our help to learn how to repair relationships and get adult support, in either situation. Children should not be shamed when they have done something wrong, instead, see it as an opportunity to connect, and then to correct, with: emotional support + replacement behaviors + a curiosity about how their feelings “got the best of them,” in that moment! This will normalize that taking responsibility for our actions is not only possible, but **feels** “do-able!” Children who learn to “own up” in a safe way, build a positive sense of self, leading to positive character development.*
4. Begin reading the book, pause on pages, and ask children to observe how they feel. You can have a child contribute verbally or non-verbally. With a group of children, it is helpful to engage ALL with non-verbal signals, such as “raise your hand if you felt or saw one of the vocabulary words we discussed,” or “show me silently, what does your body do when you are excited or distracted,” or “put your hand on your

heart, if you feel the same as Puppy or Kitten,” etc.

5. When you have finished the book, ask reflection questions found on page 30, in the Librarian notes. Additional ideas you can do with the reflection questions:
  - A. Have children pick a question to use to “interview” a classmate.
  - B. Pick three questions for children to write answers to, and then read anonymously aloud to the class.
  - C. Put children into small groups and choose three questions to discuss. Have each group present to the class.
6. **Engage in art!**
  - A. Children love to draw, collage, doodle, etc.! Allow them to engage in an art activity, where you give a prompt, such as:
    - I. Draw a cartoon from your favorite scene in the book (remind children they can draw it differently than the illustrator!).
    - II. Make a collage, that represents your family, with whom you feel loved!
    - III. Doodle scenes with your friends, note how they are different than you and how that compliments your friendship (e.g., My friend helps me with math, and I help them with basketball, etc.).
7. **Engage in a game!**
  - A. Play the non-verbal **gesture game** of “how is your day going?”
    - I. One person starts with a gesture to show how they feel today (e.g., feel like I’m running around, so I run in place silently).
    - II. Then the next person, mirrors the gesture the first to the person who gave it, then turns to the next person and gives their gesture (e.g., sleepy gesture), then that person repeats sleepy to the one who gave it, turns and gives their new signal to the next person, until EVERYONE has gone in the circle.
    - III. When the group is done, ask if anyone felt similar to someone else’s feeling “gesture” of the day or felt “empathy” when someone gave a gesture that was indicating they were having a hard day or tired day.
    - IV. *NOTE: This is a great game to play on a Monday morning, to see how everyone’s weekend was or how everyone is feeling returning to school on a Monday.*
    - V. *NOTE: This is a great game to play at the start of dinner, non-verbally, for a quick check in about how everyone is feeling af the end of the day.*
8. **Practice at recess!**

Read the book BEFORE recess, and when children go out to play, make a challenge to “be inclusive!” When children come back from recess, ask, “How were you friendly and kind?” How did you include someone? Praise their specific efforts!
9. **Reinforce!**

Use other tools in your classroom, such as Kimochis®, Second Step, Caring School Communities, Tribes, etc. to reinforce the vocabulary from this lesson.

Use your creativity at home, to encourage kindness and love as verb, in family settings.

**Visit us at [@messy\\_parenting](#) on Instagram to let us know how YOU are using  
[Madigan and Menina Find Their Furever Family](#) to spread love in your home, classroom and community!**