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## How Your Child Grows and Learns about Feelings

Read this page to see how your child may grow.

### What you can expect:

Children develop at different times. There are many books that say how your child should develop. But each child will grow in his own way.

### Children who are deaf may not follow "normal" or "typical" development:

- This may be because your child was born too early.
- This may be because your child has other medical problems.

### Children grow in different ways

Children get taller and gain weight as they get older. This kind of growth is physical. [Find out about children's physical growth](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/growth/growth/growth_6_12.html) ([http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/growth/growth/growth\\_6\\_12.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/growth/growth/growth_6_12.html)).

But children also grow in ways that you can't see. Their minds grow as they learn. They learn how to share toys and get along with friends. They learn about their feelings and the feelings of other people. They learn about their community, about rules and behavior, and about how the world works. This kind of growth is emotional.

### Learning about feelings

It is important for children to learn about different feelings. Think how confusing it would be to feel very angry or sad without even knowing the ideas of 'angry' and 'sad'!



Children with a hearing loss sometimes have a harder time learning about feelings. Even basic feelings like sad, mad, happy, tired, and silly can be hard for children with a hearing loss to learn about. You should teach your child about feelings – don't just assume that he knows about them already!

### **I had to name the feelings to know them.**

“ I didn't have feelings. I didn't know feelings until I was age 9. Age 9 I went to deaf camp. There, I learned signs – happy, sad, upset, angry, ugly. Age 9 I learned feelings.”

— **A profoundly deaf boy**

**You can help your child learn about feelings. Here are some things you can do:**

- **Show and tell your child how you're feeling.**  
Even if it's just 'silly' or 'tired.' Say how you're feeling in words (spoken or sign language). This will help your child learn the words for different feelings. Show how you're feeling with body movements and strong expressions on your face. Make sure your face matches the feeling you are trying to show. Don't talk to your child about feeling sad with a huge smile your face – that will confuse him.
- **When you see that your child is sad or angry, tell him it's okay to feel that way.**  
Let him talk about why he feels that way.
- **Take extra time to notice the feelings of other people.**  
You can do it when you look at picture books together, watch Sesame Street or other TV shows, and even in real life. Use words to describe the feelings. You might say things like, "That boy looks like he's scared of the dog." If you're at the playground with your child, and you notice another child being teased, ask your child how that might feel.

### **Help your child feel good about himself**

Self-esteem means feeling good about yourself. Children need to feel good about themselves to be happy and get along with other people. Children with good self-esteem are more ready to face new challenges, too. Some children feel good enough that they can imagine that they will be a basketball star, famous singer, or President.

Deaf children sometimes feel sad or mad about their hearing loss. As they get older, they start noticing the ways they are different from other children. This is true for all kids. One child might feel bad that his clothes are different. Another child might be upset that she's not as good as her friends at sports. In the same way, a child with a hearing loss might feel sad that he can't hear as much as his brothers and sisters or his friends. He might get frustrated when other people are talking fast and he can't join in.

Children with a hearing loss might also feel bad about differences that other children can see, like their cochlear implant or their hearing aid.

Help your child feel better by pointing out all the things that he can do well. If your child is good at art, sports, math, or dancing, tell him! If your child is a good big brother or a good helper in the kitchen, thank him for his help. Put some of his drawings or spelling tests on the refrigerator. Be sure to tell your child you notice the things he's good at!

### **Things to watch out for**

See a doctor if your child:

- [Is sad or mad most of the time](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/special/depression/)  
(<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/special/depression/>)
- Has a lot of trouble paying attention. Sometimes this is a sign of [ADHD](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/special/adhd/)  
(<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/special/adhd/>).
- Has a very hard time playing with other children.
- Makes movements or sounds that he can't control. Sometimes this is a sign of [Tourette syndrome](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/special/tourette/) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/special/tourette/>).
- Gets stuck on the same thoughts, or wants to do the same things over and over. Sometimes this is a sign of [obsessive-compulsive disorder \(OCD\)](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/special/ocd/)  
(<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/special/ocd/>).

### **Learn more about how your child grows**

- Find out more about self-esteem  
([http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/self\\_esteem.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/self_esteem.html)).
- Find out how 4- to 5-year-old children grow in height and weight  
([http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/growth/growth/growth\\_4\\_to\\_5.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/growth/growth/growth_4_to_5.html)).
- Find out how 6- to 12-year-old children grow  
([http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/growth/growth/growth\\_6\\_12.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/growth/growth/growth_6_12.html)).
- Read more tips on teaching your child about feelings  
([http://okok.essortment.com/talkingchildren\\_paj.htm](http://okok.essortment.com/talkingchildren_paj.htm)).

*This page was last edited on January 15, 2004.*

*You can find this page online at:*

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/growingup/child/grow.jsp>