

# Big Feelings: Music & Emotional Regulation

## What is emotional regulation?

Emotional regulation is the ability to regulate one's emotions. We all experience a myriad of emotions throughout our day. For children, these can be big and small emotions. To be able to focus and learn, children (and adults) need to be able to regulate their emotions.



## How does music help?

Music can help by creating a grounding or neutral avenue to regulate feelings. Singing with a child helps to refocus the child's energy and create calm. Labeling and describing the emotions felt, and then singing about these feelings supports a child's ability to reduce stress and cortisol levels. Singing can promote relaxation and reduce stress using long controlled breaths. Movement can slow down the body and help promote a reset to feelings.

## Musical tips to promote emotional regulation:

### I Have Feelings

Sing lullabies while rocking a child or having them rocking back and forth. Sing songs such as **Twinkle, Twinkle, Rock-a-bye Baby**, as well as the following:

#### I Have Feelings

*(Sung to the tune of **Twinkle, Twinkle**)*

I have feelings so do you,  
Let's all sing about a few.  
I am happy, I am sad,  
I am scared, I am mad  
I have feelings so do you.  
We just sang about a few.

### If You're Happy and You Know It

Change the underlined words to different feelings and actions to act out:

#### If You're Happy and You Know It

If you're Happy and you know it,  
Clap your hands!  
If you're Happy and you know it,  
Clap your hands!  
If you're Happy and you know it,  
Then your face should surely show it.  
If you're Happy and you know it,  
Clap your hands!

#### Additional verses:

- Sad – say “boo-hoo”
- Mad – stomp your feet
- Excited – say “hurray”

### Activities

#### Toddler or Preschooler:

Teacher/Caregiver-dim the lights in their room and grab a flashlight. Turn on a quiet piece of music and slowly move the flashlight around on the ceiling. Ask the children to follow the light with their eyes. You can add breathwork to this.

**For example:** When the light moves up, breathe in. When the light moves down, breathe out.

**Baby:** Use a quiet voice and rock back and forth to music or while singing.

**Breathe Like a Bear** book by Kira Willey. Scan the QR code below to watch a read-along video.

Check out video and music resources we recommend learning by scanning the QR code:

