Happy Box

Providing opportunities to talk about feelings helps your child build a collection of words to describe emotions and gives them tools to use to manage their feelings (*Communication and Language: Speaking, Personal Social and Emotional Development: Managing Feelings and Behaviour*).

You will need:

An empty food packet/any kind of box that can hold a few things

You and your child

1. Start by talking about being happy. What does happy look like? What does happy feel like? Make some happy faces together, maybe looking in a mirror. Draw a smiley face. When they smile or feel happy, do they feel it anywhere else in their body – warm tummy, tingly toes? (*Communication and Language: Speaking, Personal Social and Emotional Development: Managing Feelings and Behaviour*).
2. Explain that you are going to make a Happy Box – in it you will put 3 things that make you feel happy. You could model this by having your own Happy Box to show them. Talk about the things you put in it and why they make you feel happy. (*Personal Social and Emotional Development: Making Relationships*).
3. Ask your child what makes *them* feel happy? What would they like to put in their box – e.g. a pebble, a photo of Nana, a special toy. Together, go in search of 3 things. Use lots of happy words – smile, laugh, giggle, warm, cosy, joy, cheerful. Chat about why they have chosen each thing. (*Communication and Language: Speaking, Personal Social and Emotional Development: Managing Feelings and Behaviour, Personal Social and Emotional Development: Making Relationships*).
4. Your child can put the things in their Happy Box. They might want to decorate the box first – you could talk about what colours make them happy and use felt tips/paint matching their happy colours.
5. You can refer to the box every so often. Perhaps if your child is feeling sad and needs cheering up, you could suggest you look in their Happy Box and choose one of the things to look at and talk about. Or if they find something else that makes them feel happy, they could add that to the box later. (*Personal Social and Emotional Development: Managing Feelings and Behaviour*).

Earlier Stages of Development

Notice how your child is feeling during the day and use feelings words to describe them. These can be related to objects or moments: ‘You’re happy cuddling bunny’ or ‘You’re happy because it’s yummy banana for your snack!’ Do this with your own feelings too: ‘I always feel happy when I talk to Grandad.’ Acknowledge other feelings too: ‘We can’t find Teddy and I can see you’re feeling sad about that’. Use facial expressions that match the emotions you are talking about.

Extension ideas

You could collect lots of happy words – these could be words that *mean* happy (joy, smile, delight, glad) or words that make you *feel* happy (squidgy, cherry, star, hug). Write them down and stick them on the wall. Talk about a range of feelings, sad, cross, angry, excited: make facial expressions to show these feelings, draw faces to represent them, talk about where else in our body we feel them.