

You Can... **Help your children to 'read' people**

It is important for children to learn to 'read' other people's body language, facial expressions and tone of voice. This helps them to understand what others are feeling or thinking, and to respond in an appropriate manner.

Thinking points

- People will often say one thing, but actually be thinking or feeling something completely different.
- We send out lots of signals with our faces and our bodies: most people are able to subconsciously read these messages and respond or behave accordingly.
- Teachers need to be particularly aware of how their own body language, facial expressions and vocal sounds might be interpreted.

Tips, ideas and activities

- First, talk with your class about the idea of 'reading' people, and establish the various ways in which people can interpret signals or messages. This would include:
 - the look on their faces
 - the way that they stand or move around
 - their use (or not) of eye contact
 - the sound or tone of their voices.
- Now use this role-play activity to show your children how they can work out what a person is feeling, even when they do not understand the words.
 - Make one copy of the photocopiable on page 57 for every pair of children. Cut the boxes out and put each set of statements into a separate pile, numbering the piles one to six.
 - Tell the children that they have travelled to a foreign country and they do not speak the language. (As an interesting variation, tell the class that they are travelling to an alien planet and do not speak the aliens' language.)
 - Get the children to split up into pairs and to decide who will be person 'A' and who will be person 'B'. Explain that child 'A' is a resident of the foreign country (or alien planet) and child 'B' is the visitor.
 - Ask all the 'residents' to come and pick up their first statement. They are going to try and put across this information in the way that they interact with their partner. They can only speak in gobbledegook - if they find this hard, they could use the letters A-Z or numbers.
 - Give all the 'visitors' something specific to ask, for instance, they might need directions to the bank, to find a good hotel, or to contact the police as they have just been mugged.
 - Now ask the pairs to improvise the scenario together. When the children have finished, ask whether anyone would like to volunteer to show their scene to the class. Now ask the 'visitors' to guess what their partner's 'problem' was.
 - After a while, swap the partners over and repeat with different statements.

