

PRIMARY-AGE ACTIVITIES

These ideas to explore the theme 'EXPRESS YOURSELF' are designed for primary-age children. They can be adapted for use in school, for home-schooling, online lessons or independent learning.

To differentiate or extend the content, refer to our secondary-age group activities.

Below are a few key teaching points to consider and discuss with your child or group before engaging in 'EXPRESS YOURSELF' activities.

WHAT IS SELF-EXPRESSION, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Self-expression is about communicating your individuality. This can be through words, clothing and hairstyle, or through art forms such as writing, drawing, music and dance.

Self-expression can help you to showcase your true self – your story, your thoughts, feelings and emotions. But this can also make us feel vulnerable, so you might want to take things one step at a time.

We often get told by our family, friends, school, communities and through social media how we 'should' look, think, speak, and act. These constant messages about what we ought to do, and who we ought to be, can make it difficult to let go of expectations and express our true selves.

SELF-EXPRESSION HELPS US CONNECT TO OUR TRUE SELF

Self-expression is a great way to relieve yourself of stress and free your mind. Self-expression can help you to reflect on your life, actions, decisions, relationships, beliefs, and thoughts — rather than keep them buried deep down.

SELF-EXPRESSION HELPS US CONNECT TO EACH OTHER — IN GOOD TIMES AND BAD

By expressing ourselves thoughtfully, we can better communicate, collaborate and build a community with others. At times of crisis, people come together to express themselves individually, and as a group, through the arts.

Here are some examples:

- *Gareth Malone's online choir* — bringing self-isolating singers together during the Covid-19 lockdown.
- *Grayson's Art Club* — a series of online masterclasses to help unleash creativity during the Covid-19 lockdown.
- *BBC Lockdown Orchestra* — as part of a ten-day creative challenge, nearly 1,500 members of the public joined the newly formed BBC Lockdown Orchestra as part of a huge virtual performance.
- *Create 2030 Solidarity Art Shows* - The World Health Organisation, Create2030 and a group of international working artists collaborated on a project to showcase films, music, poetry and visual art about the COVID-19 pandemic.
- *Te Rito Toi* — using art to help children when they first return back to school in New Zealand following a traumatic or life-changing event.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

Use different ideas, mediums and art forms to encourage self-expression in your pupils. Even if they don't think of themselves as creative, it's important to create an environment that encourages pupils to explore and be playful so that they can express themselves freely and without judgement.

This is not about producing great art or performances. This is about helping children and young people to connect with their true selves and to others.

Mediums and art forms you may consider include: simple craft making, sculpture, junk modelling, mask making, murals, weaving, painting, photography, film, digital art, dance, drama, mime, poetry and literature, music, singing, gardening and cooking. But there are lots more to choose from.

Here are some ideas you can try with your group to help children express themselves:

CIRCLE TIME

- Sitting in a circle (or online if children are not physically in the same space), everyone takes a turn sharing something with the group. Warm up with simple ideas, like asking children to share their likes, dislikes and something about themselves. For example, go around the circle saying:



- Next, ask the children in your class to imagine they got stuck on an island for a day (don't worry, a ship comes to rescue you). Take turns or ask for volunteers to answer the following questions:



Everyone is encouraged to be supportive and attentive when others share.

ART

All these ideas are for non-specialist classroom practitioners.

Try this simple 'draw your feelings' activity by Place2Be's Art Room team. Each pupil will need some paper and something to draw with.

Watch the demo: <https://bit.ly/3iJCoMv>

Afterwards, discuss with your pupils how given the same basic task, they all created very different drawings. Celebrate effort rather than the best 'art'.

MOVEMENT

Play the miming game, 'In the manner of the word', to teach children how we can communicate with each other and express ourselves without words.

Follow these simple instructions:

- ask your class to sit in a circle (or online if children are not physically in the same space)
- choose one child to draw a card from a hat which has an adverb written on it (for example: happily, sadly, angrily, joyfully, carefully, casually, slowly, quickly, foolishly, etc.)
- the rest of the children in the circle then ask the child to mime an action (for example: walk, study, play, ride a bike, watch TV, eat, get dressed etc.) 'in the manner of the word'
- the child has to mime these different actions in a way that reflects the adverb they selected, for example: 'walk' (action chosen by class) 'carefully' (adverb picked by the child). The child does this until the rest of the class guesses the adverb correctly.

Discuss the use of movement, music, words and masks used in this short video by Fitzrovia Youth In Action: <https://bit.ly/2EMUhfW>

Then try this activity:

- ask pupils to choose an emotion (e.g. happy, sad, frustrated, joyful etc.) and an art form (dance, singing, mime, writing, painting etc.)
- group pupils by the emotion that they chose (e.g. happiness)
- ask individuals in each group to express that feeling in their chosen art form (for example, dance sadness, write about sadness, make a mask that depicts sadness, sing in a way that evokes sadness)
- if appropriate, ask children in each group to share the creations of their different expressions with the rest of the group

MUSIC

- Watch this short video by Classical MPR with your group and discuss the different ways in which music can change how we feel and express ourselves: <https://bit.ly/2GjLRMW> (Teacher note: some children may be distressed by scenes of the toy breaking at around 2m30s. The toy is later fixed but please consider the age and needs of your group, and perhaps listen to the audio instead if more appropriate).
- Research shows that people feel more positive after singing to music, than they do just listening to music.

If safe to do so, try this activity:

- choose a song from the list below (or one of your own)
- learn the words and sing it together (some children might prefer to join in by clapping, clicking their fingers, using percussion instruments, miming or dancing)
- encourage some pupils to sign some of the key words/phrases.

Have a go using these songs:

- 'If you want to sing out, sing out' by Cat Stevens <https://bit.ly/3iesKBg>
- 'Express yourself' by Labrinth <https://bit.ly/3kSm8tS>

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FREE ASSEMBLY

Featuring pupils and well-known faces discussing the theme of **EXPRESS YOURSELF**.

DRESS TO EXPRESS



Hold a '**DRESS TO EXPRESS**' day (<https://bit.ly/3mliHwR>) and encourage the children to express themselves through their clothes, hair etc. while raising vital funds for Place2Be. Pupils could wear their favourite colour or choose a range of colours that express how they're feeling. Colour can be very personal and mean different things to different people, so this is a great opportunity to encourage self-expression and celebrate a diverse range of emotions.

Provide opportunities at school for children who may not have resources for this at home. For example, you could provide access to the fancy dress box in the classroom.

Then try the following activity:

- ask the children about what they have chosen to wear and why
- discuss how we can use colour to help make sense of how we're feeling, who we are and the world we live in

OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

1. Hold a '**DRESS TO EXPRESS**' day to raise vital funds for children's mental health <https://bit.ly/3mliHwR>
2. Watch our free assembly on the theme of **EXPRESS YOURSELF** created in partnership with BAFTA Kids and Oak National Academy. <https://bit.ly/3oiQvfi>
3. Try some of our **assembly plans** from our free schools resources
4. Spread the word by sharing how you plan to take part on social media! Don't forget to use **#ChildrensMentalHealthWeek**



FREE ASSEMBLY

