

Activity Guide to accompany *Listening to My Body* by Gabi Garcia



Whether you are a parent, teacher or counselor, my hope is that you will find *Listening to My Body* and the accompanying resources to be useful tools for your child.

While there are many books that are dedicated to helping children name and identify their feelings, not much attention has been focused on helping children name and identify the sensations that accompany their emotional experiences. Yet helping children identify their sensory experiences (are they tired, hungry, thirsty, too hot, etc.?) is the foundation for self-regulation. Learning to identify their sensations, helps children to be better able to identify what they need (rest, food, water, etc.), so that they can better care for themselves.

A hungry child may also be a grumpy or cranky child. A tired child may be squirmy and unfocused. A nervous child may feel their belly tighten or have shortness of breath. As the responsive parent, teacher, or counselor, you may often be the one to notice what is happening and proceed to help your child slow down, identify what they are experiencing, and help them figure out what they need. But through practice, children can also learn to move through this process.

It is equally important for children to learn to identify and tune in when their bodies feel relaxed, calm, safe, etc., so that they can also begin to figure out what it is that helps them feel this way. Additionally, an angry, frustrated or upset child can begin to internalize and understand that sensations and feelings are always changing and they won't feel upset forever (or even that long). The practice of "listening" to their bodies will empower children to respond with care and kindness for themselves, even when they are experiencing difficult emotions.

There are many ways to help your child continue to pay attention to sensations that they notice in their bodies. You can:

- Build a sensation vocabulary. Start with the list of sensations found in the book and build from there.
- Help them further connect their sensations and feelings. When they are able to identify how they are feeling, you can ask questions like: How does your body tell you that you are happy, excited, angry, etc.? Where in your body do you notice the calm, nervous, sad, etc., feelings?
- Model the process of "listening" to your body and showing care and kindness for yourself.
- Use and discuss the worksheets included below.

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

What sensations do you notice?

Your Heartbeat

Gentle
Pounding
Fast
Slow

Your Breath

Long/ Short
Deep/ Shallow
Breathless
Slow/ Fast

Your Muscles/ Belly

Butterflies in belly
Lump in throat
Relaxed
Soft
Strong
Squishy
Tense
Tight

Your Energy

Ants in my pants
Buzzing
Calm
Focused
Full of energy
Shaky
Squirmy
Sleepy
Still
Tingly
Tired
Wiggly

Your Temperature

Burning
Cold
Cool
Hot
Sweaty

Other

Hungry
Thirsty
Full
Comfortable

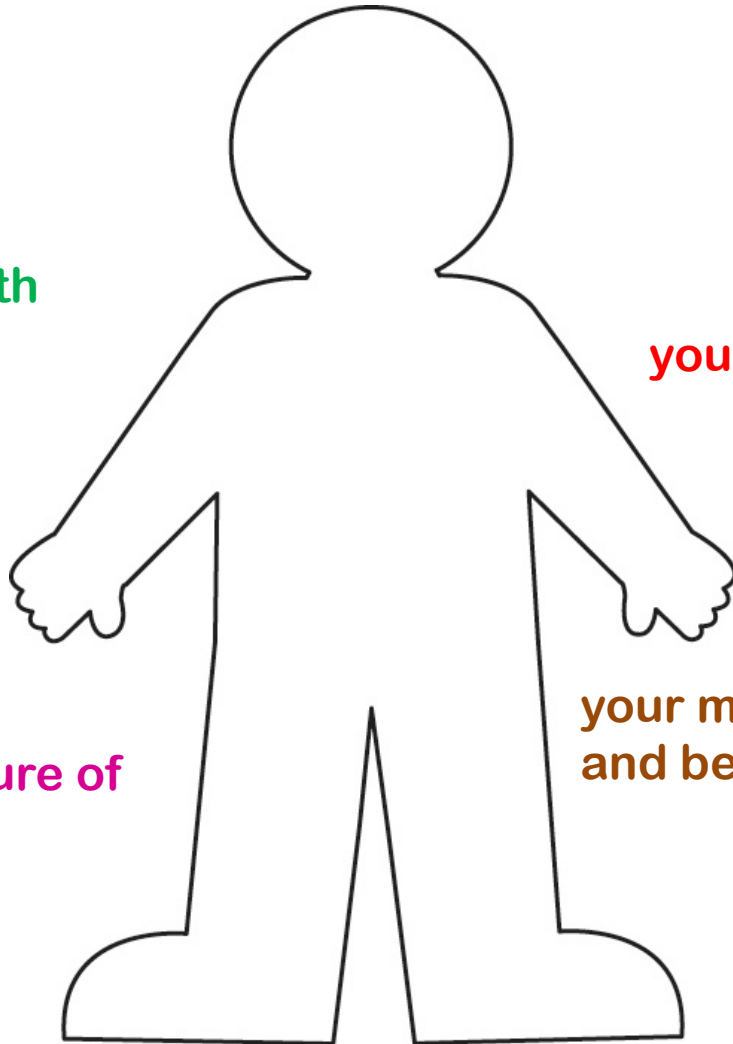
What other sensations can you add?

Listen to your body

Pay attention to:

your breath

your heartbeat



the temperature of
your skin

your muscles
and belly

How do you experience the energy in your body?
What other sensations do you notice?

FEELINGS

We all have feelings. Our feelings are not good or bad. They are something that we all experience and they can help us figure out what we need.

Below are 2 lists of feelings found in this book.

These are feelings we experience when our needs are taken care of. Can you add any other feelings to this list?

Awesome	Happy	Safe	
Calm	Peaceful	Silly	
Curious	Playful		
Excited	Proud		

These are feelings we experience when our needs are not taken care of. Can you add any other feelings to this list?

Angry	Grumpy	Overwhelmed	
Confused	Hurt	Sad	
Cranky	Lonely	Scared	
Frustrated	Nervous	Upset	

How do you feel right now ? _____

What do you need?

When we are not feeling the way we want to feel (physically or emotionally), that is a BIG sign that we are not getting something that we need. When we get what we need, we feel at our best!

Below are activities found in this book that may feel good to your body or help you feel calm, safe or relaxed. Are there any more things that you can add to this list?

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| food/snacks | a drink of water | rest | sing a song |
| Sit in a quiet place alone | | go outside and jump around | |
| Color or draw | dance to music | cuddle with a pet | |
| Hang around someone you love | _____ | | |
| | _____ | | |

What do you need right now? _____

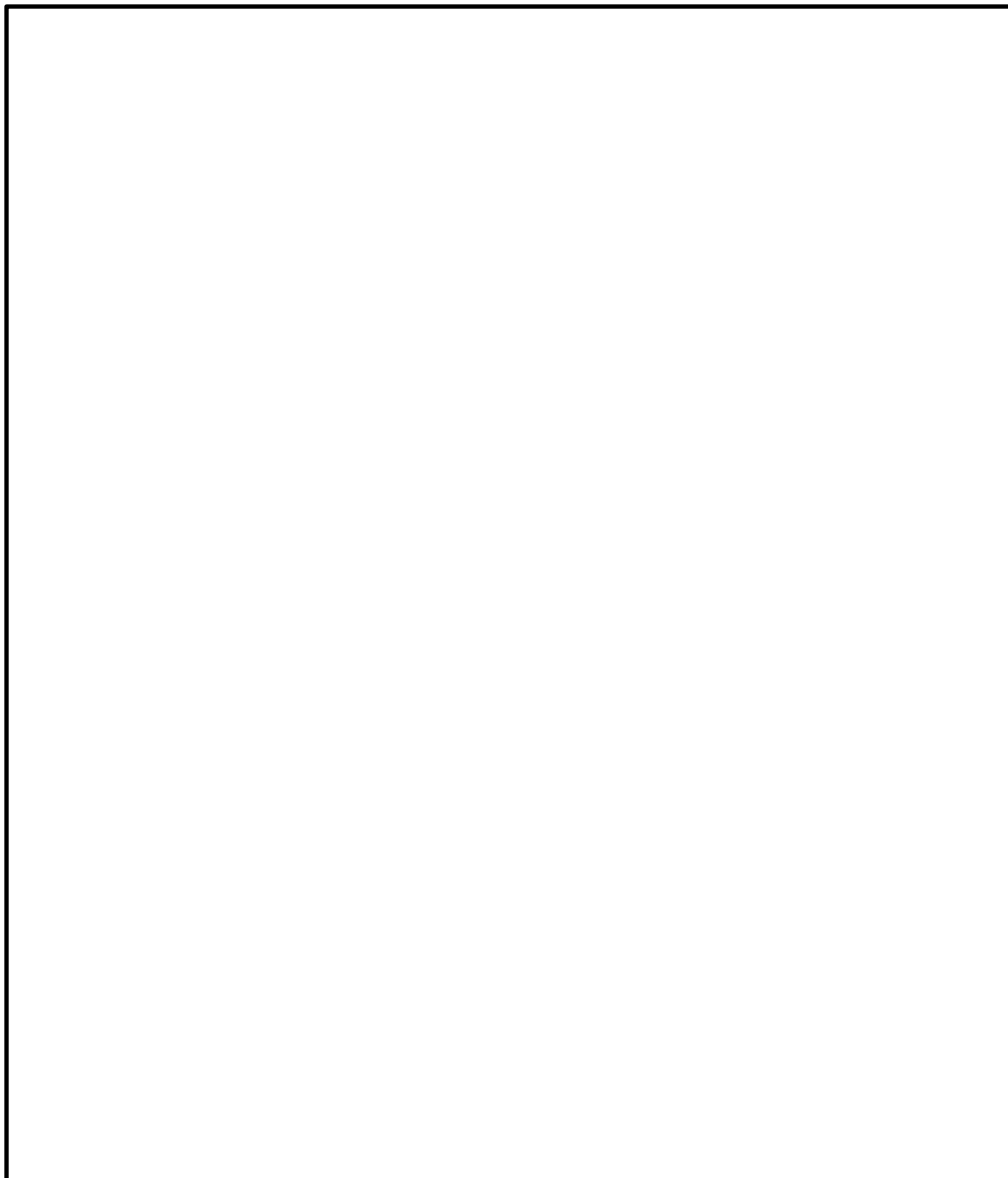
PRACTICE

Place your hand on your belly and breathe. Breathe in and out 10 times. Feel your belly as it moves in and out. Notice how that feels.

Wrap your arms around yourself and give yourself a gentle hug. Move your hands up and down your arms. Squeeze a little tighter and find what feel best for you.

Gently close your mouth so that your lips touch. Inhale through your nose and blow a strong puff of air through your mouth so that your lips flap like a horse's. Try this a couple of times.

Draw of picture of yourself doing something that makes you feel calm.



Draw of picture of yourself doing something that shows care and kindness for yourself.

