

# EMPATHY STORYKITS

Creative book based activities to stimulate children and young people's empathy skills by deepening understanding of characters



## The Grand Hotel of Feelings

### By Lidia Brankovic

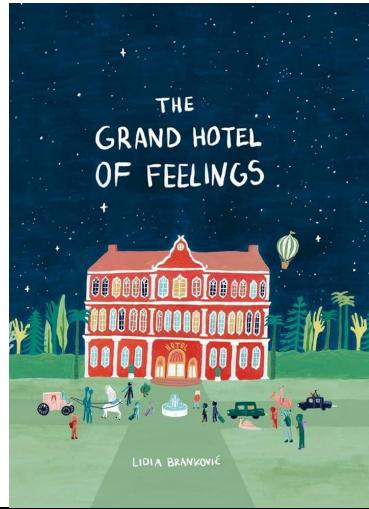
#### Summary

A picture book exploring emotions through the metaphor of a hotel where many different feelings come to visit and the hotel manager needs to consider how best to look after them during their stay.

**Theme:** emotions

**Additional themes:** listening, self-care, caring for others

**Recommended age range:** 7-11



#### Orientation

Read the poem The Guest House by Rumi as part of the session either before or after you have shared the picture book <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/guest-house/>

Check that children know what a hotel is. They could also explore a couple of hotel websites to get a general understanding.

Make sure that children know that no emotion is wrong. It is important that all emotions are welcomed at the hotel.

Activities	Empathy skills practised	Learning approaches
<p><b>INTRODUCING THE FEELINGS</b></p> <p>Read the story aloud. Discuss the Feelings who have visited the hotel with the children. Make sure they all understand what all the feelings are. Play a game of 'Simon Said' where children have to make the face and the body language that they think best demonstrates the feeling.</p> <p>The Feelings who visit the hotel are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anger</li><li>Peace</li><li>Sadness</li><li>Anxiety</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Wider vocabulary to recognise and share own and others' feelings</li><li>Stronger empathic communication skills: deep listening and conversation</li></ul>	Discussion Group activity

<p>Gratitude Confidence Love Joy Satisfaction Contentment Hopefulness</p>		
<p><b>WHAT MIGHT EACH FEELING CHECKING INTO THE HOTEL HAVE IN THEIR SUITCASE?</b></p> <p>If you have an old suitcase bring it into class.</p> <p>Invite each child to choose one of the Feelings in the story and decide on one or two items that feeling might bring in their suitcase to stay at the hotel.</p> <p>(For example, Gratitude might bring a thank you card, Love might bring a photo of someone they love, Anxiety might bring something to fiddle with to keep them calm)</p> <p>On a sheet of paper ask each child to write the name of the Feeling they have chosen and draw a picture of the items they think they would bring. Then put all the drawings in the suitcase. Children can explore each other's drawings and talk about why the objects would be good for those Feelings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger ability to imagine, understand and reflect on other people's perspectives and feelings</li> <li>Wider vocabulary to recognise and share own and others' feelings</li> <li>Stronger empathic communication skills: deep listening and conversation</li> </ul>	<p>Art Discussion and listening</p>
<p><b>CHECKING IN</b></p> <p>Make sure children understand what checking into a hotel means.</p> <p>Then set up a hotel check-in desk in the classroom. Ask one or two children to be behind the desk and check the 'guest' Feelings in.</p> <p>The rest of the children take the role of the guests' Feelings. There can be more than one of each Feeling and you can swap children around between check-in staff and guests. The 'hotel staff' check the guests in by writing their Feeling name down and you could even cut bits of card up to be the room keys.</p> <p>Children need to think about how each guest will behave as they arrive. And how those hotel staff might receive them. For example, will Angry arrive shouting and grumpy? Should hotel staff respond in the same way or is there a better way to make Angry feel welcome at the hotel?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger ability to imagine, understand and reflect on other people's perspectives and feelings</li> <li>Wider vocabulary to recognise and share own and others' feelings</li> <li>Stronger empathic communication skills: deep listening and conversation</li> </ul>	<p>Drama and role play Group Discussion</p>

<p>When everyone has had a go discuss the behaviours exhibited and the way the 'staff' responded, you could follow up by talking about whether everyone experiences these feelings in the same way - for example some Sads might have arrived at the hotel sobbing but others might have just been very quiet.</p>		
<p><b>A BEDROOM FOR EACH FEELING</b></p> <p>What might each Feeling need in their bedroom? You could put children in groups, allocate each group a Feeling and a small box e.g. a shoe box and invite them to decide which room each feeling might need - the colours of the walls, the type of bed, objects in the room, maybe even the view from the window. Children could create their model bedroom with the comforts they think would be good for the Feeling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger ability to imagine, understand and reflect on other people's perspectives and feelings</li> <li>• Wider vocabulary to recognise and share own and others' feelings</li> <li>• Stronger empathic communication skills: deep listening and conversation</li> </ul>	<p>Team working Art and creative thinking</p>
<p><b>LISTENING</b></p> <p>In the story the hotel manager needs to spend time listening to Sadness. Discuss with children why it is important to listen when someone is sad and they could practise their listening skills.</p> <p>In pairs or threes invite children to try the listening switch exercise  <a href="https://www.empathylab.uk/the-listening-switch">https://www.empathylab.uk/the-listening-switch</a> and then discuss how they feel when someone really listens to them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger ability to imagine, understand and reflect on other people's perspectives and feelings</li> <li>• Wider vocabulary to recognise and share own and others' feelings</li> <li>• Stronger empathic communication skills: deep listening and conversation</li> <li>• More developed social values which turn</li> </ul>	<p>Skill practice</p>

	feelings of empathy into moral actions in the home, school and community	
<b>MEETING FEELINGS</b>  Ask children in pairs to consider if they were the hotel manager which Feelings would they most like to have coming to stay? Share their thoughts and say why.  Have a follow-up discussion – are there other Feelings apart from those who visited in the story that they would like to invite to the hotel? Remember all feelings are welcome at the hotel.  Use an emotions wheel like this one <a href="https://bearable.app/free-worksheets-and-resources/free-feelings-wheel-pdf/">https://bearable.app/free-worksheets-and-resources/free-feelings-wheel-pdf/</a> to choose the Feelings they would most like to visit the hotel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wider vocabulary to recognise and share own and others' feelings</li> </ul>	Discussion
<b>WE ARE ALL HOTELS FOR FEELINGS</b>  Explain that over the course of a day many Feelings will come to visit us – we are all hotels for feelings. Some feelings will stay a while, others will come and go. Ask each child to draw an outline of their hand (or ask a partner to do it), then ask them to reflect back on their day so far – and list five of the feelings that have visited them within the outline of their fingers and thumb. Invite children to share their feelings if they want to. (Just be aware of children sharing emotions that you may need to check in with them about.)  Have a general discussion about how the class can help other children in the school look after the Feelings that come to visit them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger ability to imagine, understand and reflect on other people's perspectives and feelings</li> <li>Wider vocabulary to recognise and share own and others' feelings</li> <li>Stronger empathic communication skills: deep listening and conversation</li> <li>More developed social values which turn feelings of empathy into moral actions in the home, school and community</li> </ul>	Art Reflection Discussion

## **Books which explore similar issues**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Age group</b>	<b>Why</b>
Emotion books in our Read for Empathy collections 2023 and 2024 <a href="https://www.empathylab.uk/previous-collections">https://www.empathylab.uk/previous-collections</a>				
A Shelter for Sadness	Anne Booth & David Litchfield	Templar Publishing	6-9	A young boy builds a shelter for his sadness, where it can be as it wishes. Gently and subtly encourages children to recognise and be with their sadness before moving towards healing. A beautiful book.

Barbara Throws a Wobbler	Nadia Shireen	Jonathan Cape	4-7	Barbara is furious, ready to explode. She doesn't really understand her feelings until she meets her 'wobbler' and realises she can take charge of it. A reassuring way, for younger children, of explaining the range of emotions involved in feeling angry.
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When Sadness Comes to Call	Eva Eland	Andersen Press	6-9	Being able to recognise, name and share emotions is a key empathy skill. This lovely book personifies sadness, and gently walks the reader through how it feels. A reminder that sadness is not to be feared.
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All About Feelings	Felicity Brooks and Frankie Allen Illustrator Mar Ferrero	Usborne Publishing	5-11	A great starting point to talk about feelings, why we have them and how we express them. Informative, well-illustrated non-fiction book with useful prompts for activities and reflection. Especially useful for supporting children finding it difficult to understand emotions.
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## A note about Storykits

Empathy Storykits focus on specific stories. They allow children to build practice empathy through character-focused activities. The text is used as a springboard for discussion, activities and social action.

## Teaching children about empathy

In teaching children about empathy, it is important to understand the three different elements to develop the right teaching strategies.

- *Affective - the feeling part of empathy. This is where we literally resonate with someone else's feelings, for example feeling upset when someone else is upset. We do this automatically, and very early in life - babies often cry when another baby cries. Since this happens naturally and automatically, we need to help children*



recognise that it is happening and help them identify and name the empathetic emotions they are feeling.

- *Cognitive - the thinking part of empathy. This is where we use our reason and imagination to work out how someone else feels as well as understand why they might feel that way (done through perspective taking).* We need to give children space and support to use their reason and imagination to try to work out how someone might be thinking and feeling, and why. Giving them the opportunity and encouragement to reflect through the safe distance of literature is a great way to do this.
- *Empathic concern - the acting part of empathy. Often described as empathic concern, this is where we are motivated to act as a result of our understanding.* Research shows this plays a key role in our sense of social justice and is a powerful motivator for wanting to help someone else, a force for social change. We need to encourage children to put their feelings of empathy into action and grow as active citizens, who've really worked out what kind of help to give, based on a deep empathic understanding.

In order to help children explore all three elements of empathy, Empathy storykits include activities which encourage children to use the following empathy skills:

- Stronger ability to imagine, understand and reflect on other people's perspectives and feelings
- Wider vocabulary to recognise and share own and others' feelings
- Stronger empathic communication skills: deep listening and conversation
- More developed social values which turn feelings of empathy into moral actions in the home, school and community