

Validating Sparks

 grades: 3-4

 40 minutes

“Part of being successful is about asking questions and listening to the answers.”
– Anne Burrell

Lesson Summary

Students consider the many feelings they experience each day. They discuss how everyone has emotions, how people vary in their experiences, and how they can validate someone else’s emotions by listening to them. Students then practice being active listeners for each other, preparing to take action by actively listening to someone in their lives.

Students will Examine

- The variety of emotions that everyone experiences.
- How do some emotions feel good, and others feel uncomfortable?
- How can they be an active listener?

Pre-Activity Prep

- Print and cut the Spark Template ([PDF](#)) (1/student) (SHARE section).
- Print the Worksheet: My Feelings ([PDF](#)) (1/student) (THINK.GIVE section).
- Print the Worksheet: Feeling and Emotion Words ([PDF](#)) (1/student) (THINK.GIVE section).
- Print and cut the Worksheet: How to be an Active Listener ([PDF](#)) (1/student) (REFLECT section).

MATERIALS

ThinkGive Journals
 Student Journal Guide ([PDF](#))
 Spark Template ([PDF](#))
 Worksheet: My Feelings ([PDF](#))
 Worksheet: Feeling and Emotion Words ([PDF](#))
 Worksheet: How to be an Active Listener ([PDF](#))

MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: [Validating Sparks](#)
 Read-aloud book: [The Rabbit Listened](#) (3:37)
 (Digging Deeper) Video: [Empathetic Listening](#) (1:45)
 (Digging Deeper) Read-aloud book: [I'm Sad](#) (3:38)

SHARE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Spark Template

Each student writes the action(s) they took since the last ThinkGive lesson to care for someone in their support network on a Spark Template ([PDF](#)).

Encourage students to use neat handwriting and outline in marker because their actions will be posted on the Spark Bulletin Board.

Small Group Share

Students form small groups and share the action(s) they took to care for someone in their support network and how taking their action(s) made them feel.

THINK • GIVE

Suggested time: 15 minutes

So Many Feelings

Ask: What are “feelings” or “emotions”? What are some feelings you know about?

Hand out the Worksheet: My Feelings ([PDF](#)) (1/student) and the Worksheet: Feeling and Emotion Words ([PDF](#)) (1/student).

Explain: We all experience feelings or emotions—and all are okay. There is no such thing as a wrong feeling! Even though feelings are important, we don’t always think about them. What emotion(s) did you feel when you woke up yesterday? Write that feeling in a light purple rectangle, then illustrate that feeling with an emoji face in the circle above. Now, think about how you felt throughout the morning. Write that feeling(s) in another rectangle and illustrate it with an emoji face. Now remember other emotions you felt yesterday—in the middle of the day, the afternoon, the evening. Write those down.

As students finish, ask: What other feelings have you experienced? Add those feelings to the emoji circles on your worksheet.

Optional Share: In pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, students choose one emotion from their worksheet to act out while their classmates guess which emotion it is.

Discuss:

- Do we all feel the same emotions when doing the same things? Why might people experiencing the same situation feel different emotions?
- What emotions feel good?
- What emotions feel uncomfortable?



VOCAB

Emotion: noun; a reaction in our mind or body to something that happens around us.

Feeling: noun; sensations we feel in our body from experiencing an emotion.



CONNECTION

Read-aloud book: [Pass It On](#) (2:58) by Sophy Henn. This story encourages readers to pass along their positive experiences and feelings. **Discuss:** What are some positive feelings you have experienced? How can sharing a smile or a laugh be a kind action?

DIGGING DEEPER

Watch: I'm Sad (3:38), a read-aloud book by Michael Ian Black. Characters learn that sadness is normal, that it can feel good to let yourself feel sad, and that everyone uses different strategies to feel better.

Discuss:

- Have you ever felt sad and another feeling simultaneously?
- Why is it okay—and even good—to feel sad sometimes?

REFLECT

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Active Listening

Watch: The Rabbit Listened (3:37), a read-aloud book by Cori Doerrfeld. Taylor's block tower is destroyed. Different animals try to help, but nothing works until the rabbit sits down and listens to Taylor.

Discuss:

- How did the different animals try to help Taylor?
- Which animal would have been most helpful for you? Why?
- Why was the rabbit the one who ended up helping Taylor?

Explain: One way to care for someone is to be an active listener (just like the rabbit was for Taylor), which means focusing entirely on the person speaking and using your body to show that you are listening. Active listeners validate the other person's feelings by saying things like, "Tell me more," "That sounds hard," "Thank you for sharing," or "I am always here to listen."

Students form partners (self-selection or assigned) and practice active listening. Each time you announce a prompting question and the quality of an active listener, one student listens and speaks. Students then switch roles with the same prompt and quality. When students are ready, announce the next active listening skill/prompting question.

Prompting Questions + Qualities of an Active Listener:

Speaker: Share a time you felt excited.

Active Listener: Lean forward and look at the speaker.

Speaker: Share about a time you were surprised.

Active Listener: Focus on what the speaker is saying; try not to think about other things.



VOCAB

Active listening: noun; showing someone speaking that you hear and understand what they are saying.

Validate: verb; recognizing that a person's feelings are important and worthwhile.



TEACHER TIP

Students can write the definition of an active listener in their ThinkGive Journals.

Speaker: Describe your favorite food and why you love it.

Active Listener: Wait to talk until the person finishes speaking.

Speaker: Describe a time when you did something challenging.

Active Listener: Validate the speaker's feelings by saying, "Tell me more" or "How did that make you feel?"

Speaker: Share about a time when you felt nervous.

Active Listener: Show that you hear and understand the speaker by saying, "It sounds like that was hard" or "It seems like you felt frustrated."

Discuss:

- How did your partner make you feel listened to?
- How did you feel when you were being listened to?
- Was active listening easy or challenging? Explain.
- Who outside of school could you support by using your active listening skills?

Hand out the [Worksheet: How to be an Active Listener \(PDF\)](#) (1/student). Students glue them into their ThinkGive Journals for future reference.

DIGGING DEEPER

Watch: [Empathetic Listening](#) (1:45). This clip from the movie Inside Out shows how active and empathetic listening can be more helpful for someone feeling sad than trying to cheer them up.

Discuss:

- Which character's response to Bing Bong was more helpful? Why?
- What did Sadness do and say to help Bing Bong?



VOCAB

Empathetic listening: a way of listening that involves paying attention to the other person's feelings and perspectives.

CONNECT + CLOSE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Take Action

Explain: Between now and our next ThinkGive session on [give date], be an active listener for someone. Notice how active listening makes the other person feel and how it makes you feel.

Brainstorm

None needed.



THINKGIVE THREE

1. True: be authentic
2. Small: small is all
3. Brave: step into your courage zone

Things to Consider




- The ThinkGive focus is on being True. Show authentic interest in someone else's words.
 - Notice your feelings to ensure you can be an active listener.
 - You might learn something new when you are an active listener, even for a good friend.
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Sample Actions

- My mom smiled when she came home. Without interrupting, I focused on what she was telling me about her good day.
- My classmate looked about to cry, so I sat beside him and said I'd be happy to listen if he wanted to share anything.
- I was doing a puzzle when my step-sister asked if she could talk to me. I put down the puzzle and looked at her, and she told me she was nervous about joining her new basketball team.

Student Journal Questions

"Part of being successful is about asking questions and listening to the answers" - Anne Burrell.
Anne Burrell is an American chef and cooking show host.

-  Why is it important to ask questions and listen to the answers?
-  How can being a good listener help you be more successful?
-  Do you agree with this quote? Why or why not?

Extensions

DO

Listening Skits

In small groups or partners, students write scripts and act out short scenarios that show active listening.

Discuss:

- How did you come up with your scenario? Is it based on a real experience?
- How do the characters show active listening?

Guess the Emotion

This activity helps students practice reading other people's emotions. Write emotions on slips of paper and put them in a basket. Pass the basket around. Students choose a slip of paper and act out the emotion using only facial expressions and gestures. The rest of the class tries to guess the emotion.

WATCH

Video: [Active listening is a skill!](#) (2:15). Explains the steps for active listening—Stop, Breathe, Listen, Respond.

Discuss:

- What message do we give a speaker when we are not good listeners?
- How can our bodies show that we are listening?

Video: [PBS KIDS Talk About | FEELINGS & EMOTIONS!](#) (9:40). Children and their grown-ups talk about their feelings.

Discuss:

- What big feelings have you experienced, and what do you do when those big feelings arise?
- Who do you talk to about your feelings?
- When is it hard to share your feelings?

READ/LISTEN

Read-aloud book: [Listen](#) (4:30) by Gabi Snyder. Explores listening to everything you can and the meaning of listening vs. hearing.

Discuss:

- What are the sounds you hear each day?
- What does it mean to “listen past the noise?”
- What is the difference between hearing and listening?

Read-aloud book: [The Way I Feel](#) (4:03) by Jana Cain. The rhyming words describe common feelings, conveying that all feelings are normal and come and go.

Discuss:

- Which feelings have you experienced?
- Why do humans experience such a wide range of emotions?