



The *Allen learns about feelings* resource provides information and materials for teaching young children about emotions and fostering their 'emotional literacy'. These activities extend the story of The Allen Adventure app.

This booklet provides:

- information about emotional literacy in the Australian Curriculum
- suggestions for activities to promote emotional literacy in the classroom
- guidelines for talking about emotions
- Allen emoji cards and images
- activity templates.

Before you use any of the materials, please read the section: **Important guidelines for talking with children about emotions.**

### What is emotional literacy?

Emotional literacy is the ability to understand, express and manage your own emotions, to understand and respond to the emotions of others, and to listen to others and empathise with their emotions.

Learning to notice and understand the emotions of others is a core part of social development. Reading the emotional 'clues' to get a sense of how other people are feeling and responding to them allows children to relate appropriately to others. This is the foundation for developing friendships.

Parents and educators support children's emotional development every day through their responses to children's feelings and behaviour, teaching children an emotional vocabulary, and providing an example of how they manage their own emotions and respond to other people.

### Why focus on emotional literacy?

Students with well-developed emotional literacy find it easier to manage themselves, relate to others, develop resilience and a sense of self-worth, resolve conflict, engage in teamwork and feel positive about themselves and the world around them.

Emotional literacy enables positive interpersonal relationships, is the basis of loving connections between people, makes co-operative work possible, and facilitates a sense of community. As children become emotionally literate, they learn to identify and handle emotions in a way that improves their wellbeing and quality of life. The benefits include:

- enhanced positive mental health, resilience and engagement
- more positive social behaviour
- decreased disruptive behaviour
- measurable improvements in academic learning.

Children learn emotional literacy through social experience and by being taught. Some children, such as children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, often have specific difficulties learning emotions and need more extensive and explicit teaching. All students benefit from being taught emotional literacy skills.

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## Emotional literacy in the Australian Curriculum

In the Australian Curriculum general capabilities, emotional literacy is an aspect of Personal and Social Capability. <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/personal-and-social-capability/>

Personal and social capability involves students in a range of practices including recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for others and understanding relationships, establishing and building positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams, handling challenging situations constructively and developing leadership skills.

Personal and social capability is addressed through the content of the Australian Curriculum learning areas. An icon is used to indicate where personal and social capability is addressed in learning area content descriptions and elaborations.

The table on the following page unpacks the elements of the Personal and Social Capability relevant to emotional literacy in the early years.

	Level 1a	Level 1b	Level 2
<b>Self-awareness</b>	Recognise and identify their own emotions	Identify a range of emotions and describe situations that may evoke these emotions  Reflect on their feelings as learners and how their efforts affect skills and achievements	Compare their emotional responses with those of their peers
<b>Self-management</b>	Recognise and identify how their emotions influence the way they feel and act	Express their emotions constructively in interactions with others	Describe ways to express emotions to show awareness of the feelings and needs of others
<b>Social awareness</b>	Show an awareness for the feelings, needs and interests of others		Identify ways to care for others, including ways of making and keeping friends
<b>Social management</b>	Respond to the feelings, needs and interests of others		Practise solving simple interpersonal problems, recognising there are many ways to solve conflict

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## Why use emojis?

Emotional literacy is based on emotional vocabulary: the words a child uses to express feelings and reactions to events. Even before they learn to talk, children begin to learn this vocabulary.

Many parents provide words for the strong and common emotions, like *happy*, *sad* and *angry*, but children need a much larger pool of words to draw on. Having a wide range of emotion words helps children understand their own feelings and other people's feelings.

One way to explore the large number of different emotions, and promote an expansive emotional vocabulary, is using emojis. Emojis are simplified pictorial representations of everyday aspects of life, including feelings.

Emojis are common in this age of mobile communication and social media. While emojis in social media are a relatively new phenomenon, the use of symbols to convey meaning is a basic and longstanding aspect of human communication and sharing of knowledge.

Emojis provide a tangible external reference point for teaching and talking about emotions. Research suggests emojis can be effectively used by young children to communicate about their feelings. In the classroom, they can be useful:

- for helping children identify their own emotions
- for talking to children about their strong emotions (or emotions about events that are distressful for them)
- as a visual aid for children with limited spoken language
- for developing written language by pairing with the emoji
- to allow children with limited written language to participate in class activities such as class surveys, questionnaires, diary writing etc.

## The Allen Adventure emoji activities

### ***The Allen Adventure and emotions***

The Allen Adventure is a fun story about an alien who comes to a school on Earth and has to learn how to get on with other people. The story is a starting point for parents and carers to talk about some important social and emotional skills with children aged 3 to 8 years. Two chapters in the story specifically explore emotional literacy.

In chapter 2, Allen finds a rocket in the sandpit which becomes his favourite toy. He loves the rocket so much he keeps it all for himself. He does not understand how this is affecting the other children who also want to play with the rocket, because he cannot tell what they are feeling.

Then Allen plays a game called *I Get the Feeling* where he learns there are clues to people's feelings in their faces, their voices and their bodies. When he learns about feelings, he works out he has been upsetting the other children. He wants to be their friend so he shares the rocket.

In chapter 4, Allen is enjoying learning at school on Earth. But he also sometimes finds his feelings are a bit too big for him.

When he has overwhelming feelings, he does silly or unpleasant things that affect the other children. One of the children explains to Allen that when this happens there are things he can do to calm down.

### ***The Allen emojis vocabulary list***

The 45 emojis based on Allen the alien are provided at the end of the document. They are simplified drawings, but clearly linked to the character that young children are familiar with from The Allen Adventure.

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Two sets are provided – a full set of 45 emojis and a shorter set more suitable for three to four year old children, children with limited emotional literacy or those still learning to notice and identify the sensations in their bodies.

While the majority of the emojis refer to emotions, the first seven emojis relate to the physical states of being sleepy, hungry, sick, silly, teary, tight (i.e. stressed) and uncomfortable. Emotions are experienced in the body, for example the physical sensation of heat flush, fast heart beat or tensed muscles. Learning about physical states provides a basis for later learning about more complex emotions. (See the References for useful reading about this area, known as 'Interoception'.)

For very young children, learning to identify a physical state, like hunger, is an important part of tuning into the signals from the body. When a child can recognise the internal bodily signals for 'hunger', they can know when to eat, so they can talk about what they need to do to feel better. Importantly, they can then learn to tell the difference between how the body feels for 'hunger' and how it feels for another emotion, like 'fear'.

For children developing the skills in tuning into the signals from their bodies, the use of visual aids, like the Allen emojis can be helpful.

### **Ideas for using the Allen emojis**

This table provides some suggestions for games and activities to extend the story of The Allen Adventure and to use the Allen emojis in the classroom. You can use emojis or emoji cards, depending on your students and your learning aims. Parents and carers can also use the activities with their own child. Templates for some of the activities are provided.

Teachers will have many other ideas! Emojis are easy to use and fun to integrate into everyday interactions with children.

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Activities for 3 to 5-year olds	Activities for 5 to 7-year olds
Self-awareness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at the emojis (short list) and name them. Children decide on the names (discussion of ideas is more important than being right)</li> <li>Memory game (using two sets of emojis or emoji cards)</li> <li>Find the opposite emotion/emoji</li> <li>What sound goes with this emoji?</li> <li>My day: talk about what is happening and the related feelings (Use the <i>Feel the story</i> page while talking about events and emotions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at the emojis (long list) and name them. Children decide on the names (discussion of ideas is more important than being right)</li> <li>Cut up the cards and then match words with pictures</li> <li>Group emojis into similar and different (two circles, Venn diagram)</li> <li>Allen's wheel: find synonyms for emotions starting with the eight provided emotions (or make your own with the blank version)</li> </ul>
Self-management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>This is how I feel</i> allows discussion about emotions and what a child might like to do about their feelings</li> <li>'If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands' innovation on lyrics by substituting different emotions and ways of managing them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>This is how I feel</i> allows discussion about emotions and what a child might like to do about their feelings</li> <li>Brainstorm situations that might make a person feel a little bit angry... very angry (option: use the diagram <i>This is how I feel</i> as a visual prompt)</li> </ul>
Social awareness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find someone with the same emotion card and talk about when you have both felt that emotion (can also be built into other activities where you need to set up pairs)</li> <li>Match face of real child (e.g. from a magazine) with emoji</li> <li><i>I get the feeling</i> game played with or without the template using the short list of emojis</li> <li>Emotion charades, a child 'acts' the emotion for the emoji they select for others to guess</li> <li>Listen to a short scenario read by the teacher and select an emoji from a set (suggest no more than five) or draw on <i>Allen emoji blank</i> how a person might feel in that scenario</li> <li>While listening to a story or looking at picture books, circle (or point to) the emoji on <i>Feel the story</i> for the emotions the character is feeling. (Adult could prompt: What is happening? What do you think he/she would be feeling? 'How can you tell?')</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss when reading someone's face can be hard? Can you be wrong?</li> <li>Explore the same written or spoken sentence with two different emojis (e.g. 'I'm having a great day' with happy and sad emojis)</li> <li><i>I get the feeling</i> game played with or without the template using the full list of emojis</li> <li>Emotion charades, a child 'acts' the emotion for the emoji they select for others to guess (a mirror can be helpful for some children)</li> <li>Select which scenario (from up to four) matches an emoji. Discuss possible emotions someone might feel in that scenario.</li> <li>While listening (or after reading) a story, circle or plot the emotions the character is feeling using <i>Feel the story</i>. (Adult could prompt: What is happening? What do you think he/she would be feeling? How can you tell?)</li> <li>Emoji bingo, snap, memory and more</li> </ul>
Social management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What would you do if you saw someone looking like this emoji?</li> <li>Use <i>Allen solves a problem</i> template to explore interpersonal issues and possible solutions (see References)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What would you do if you saw someone looking like this emoji?</li> <li>Use <i>Allen solves a problem</i> template to explore interpersonal issues and possible solutions (see References)</li> </ul>

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## Important guidelines for talking to children about emotions

### ***Respect children's emotions and possible reluctance to talk about emotions***

Children's emotions are real and important; avoid dismissing a child's feelings as inappropriate or 'over-the-top'. Respect involves adults sensitively helping children to learn to express emotions appropriately.

**Wherever possible, and suitable, talk about the feelings using words like, 'When might someone feel ...?' rather than 'When do you feel ...?' Externalising emotions to talk about them allows children to talk about challenging or upsetting feelings more easily.**

Some children may not be willing or able to talk about how they feel but will talk about another character or toy, particularly to express their strong feelings or feelings about things that distress them.

### ***Use 'okay', neutral or blank emojis to explore children's ideas and knowledge***

Researchers have found the more neutral the emoji face, the more it generated ideas, discussion and debate. This presents the young children with opportunities to discuss their understanding and experiences.

With all the activities, the emphasis should be on discussion and what the emoji looks like to the children. The emoji cards provide a feeling title for each emoji, but it is entirely appropriate for children to decide which the emotion is represented by each emoji. Discussion is more important than being 'right' or 'wrong'. It might be more effective to use the emojis without labels to support this.

One limit to using emojis to represent emotions is that only the face is provided. In the classroom, teachers can use the emojis to start a discussion about what other 'clues' a person might show – their voice, their shoulders, their arms, in fact their whole body – all provide information about how that person is feeling.

### ***Mirrors come in handy in teaching about feelings***

Young children might benefit from the use of a mirror to check their own facial expressions when they are learning to identify emotions.

### ***Adults' emotions are the first teachers***

Adults have a most important role in teaching, demonstrating and guiding young children to learn about emotions. Activities such as those described in this document are helpful, but more important is the example that adults provide in everyday life as they deal with life's frustrations and joys.

Think about how you model to young children around you how to express and regulate your emotions.

### ***All emotions are okay, although not all actions are okay***

When discussing emotions, it is critical to avoid labelling some as 'positive' and some as 'negative' emotions. Children need to identify the full range of emotions as a normal part of being a person – they just are emotions. If children are taught that some emotions are not okay to feel, they may learn to suppress them, and this is not healthy.

The critical distinction is that while all emotions are okay to feel, we all need to find ways to manage our emotions including being aware of our impact on others.



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## References and more reading

Australian Curriculum <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/>

Bullying. No Way! early childhood resources with Allen <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/resources/early-childhood-to-year2>

CASEL. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning <http://www.casel.org/>

Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., & Schellinger, K.B. (2011). The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432.

Fane, J.J., MacDougall, C.J., Jovanovic, J.M., Redmond, G.M. and Gibbs, L. (2016). Exploring the use of emoji as a visual research method for eliciting young children's voices in childhood research. *Early Child Development and Care*, pp. 1-16.

Goodall, E. (2016). *Interoception 101*. Department for Education and Child Development South Australia <http://web.seru.sa.edu.au/pdfs/Introception.pdf>

*Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships*. Teaching for Social and Emotional Learning and Respectful Relationships. Foundational Learning Materials (DET, Victoria, 2016)  
<http://fusecontent.education.vic.gov.au/893b7ed8-1f0a-4b6b-a2d0-c4a037ea0216/RRRR%20Foundation.pdf>

## Materials provided

Emojis - full list (3 pages)

Emojis - short list (2 pages)

Emoji cards – full list (3 pages)

Emoji cards – short list (1 page)

Allen emoji outline (1 page)

Allen's wheel (1 page)

Allen's wheel – make your own (1 page)

Feel the story (1 page)

I get the feeling (1 page)

This is how I feel (1 page)

# Allen learns about feelings

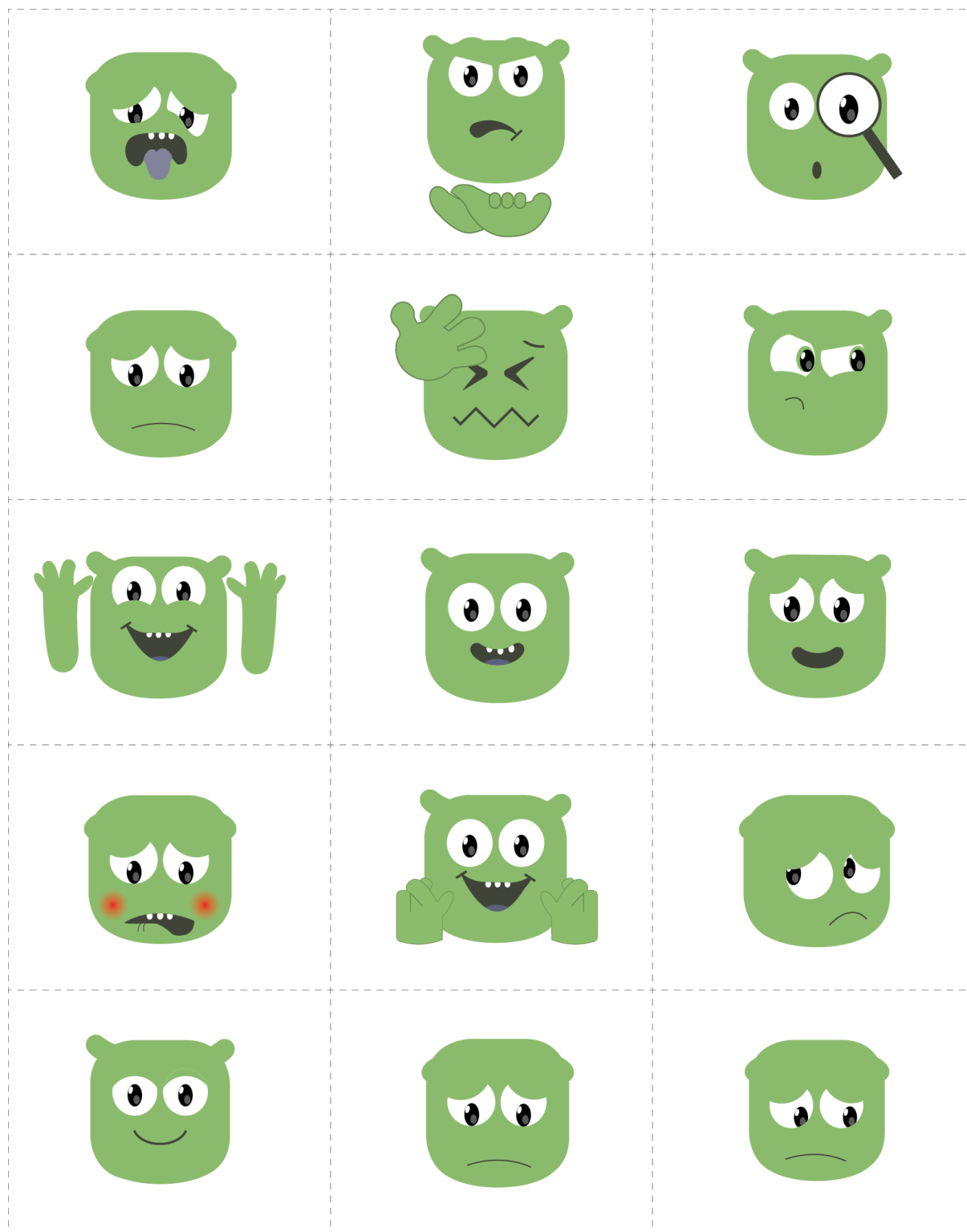
Emojis – full list (page 1 of 3)



Emojis – full list (page 2 of 3)

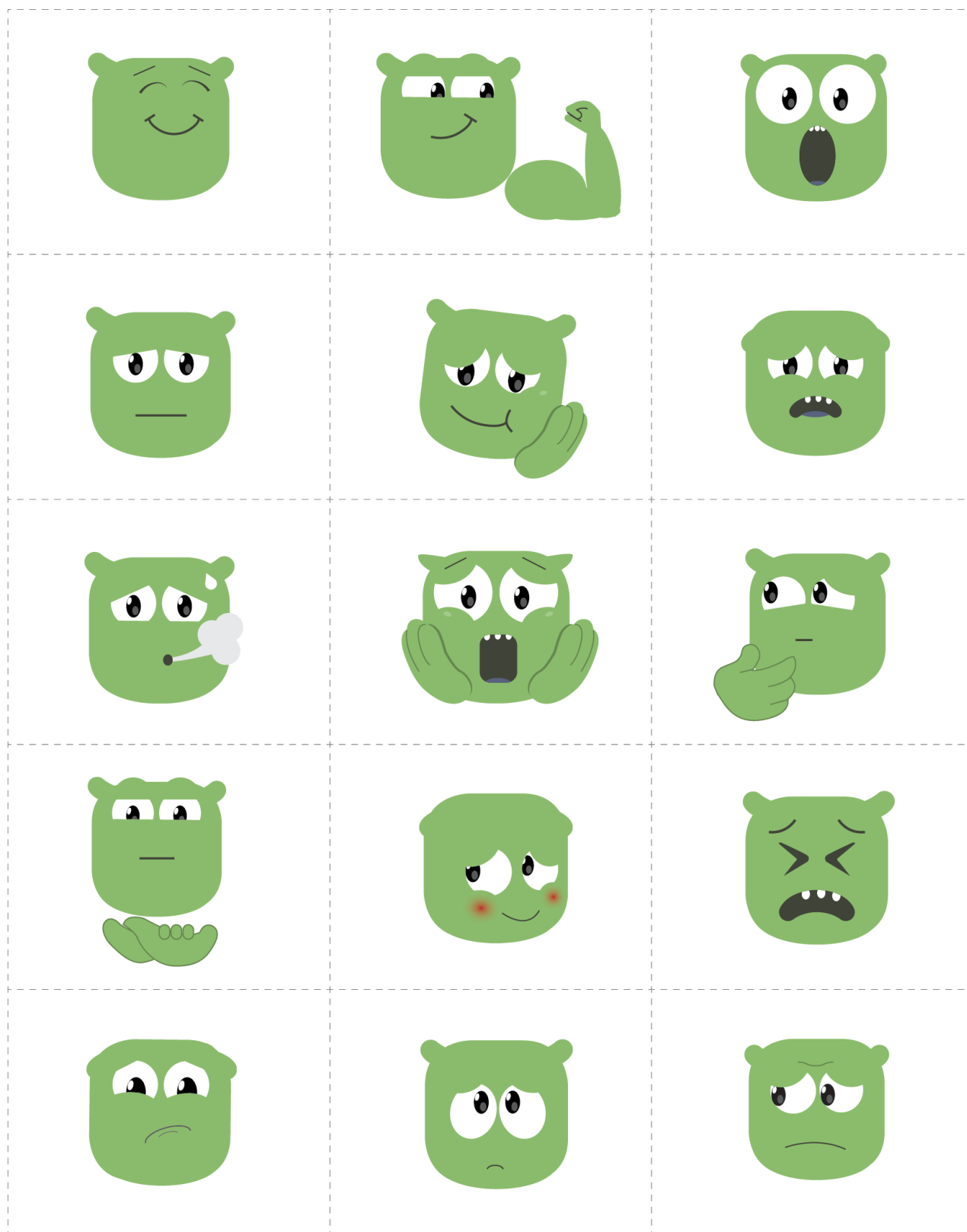


## Allen learns about feelings



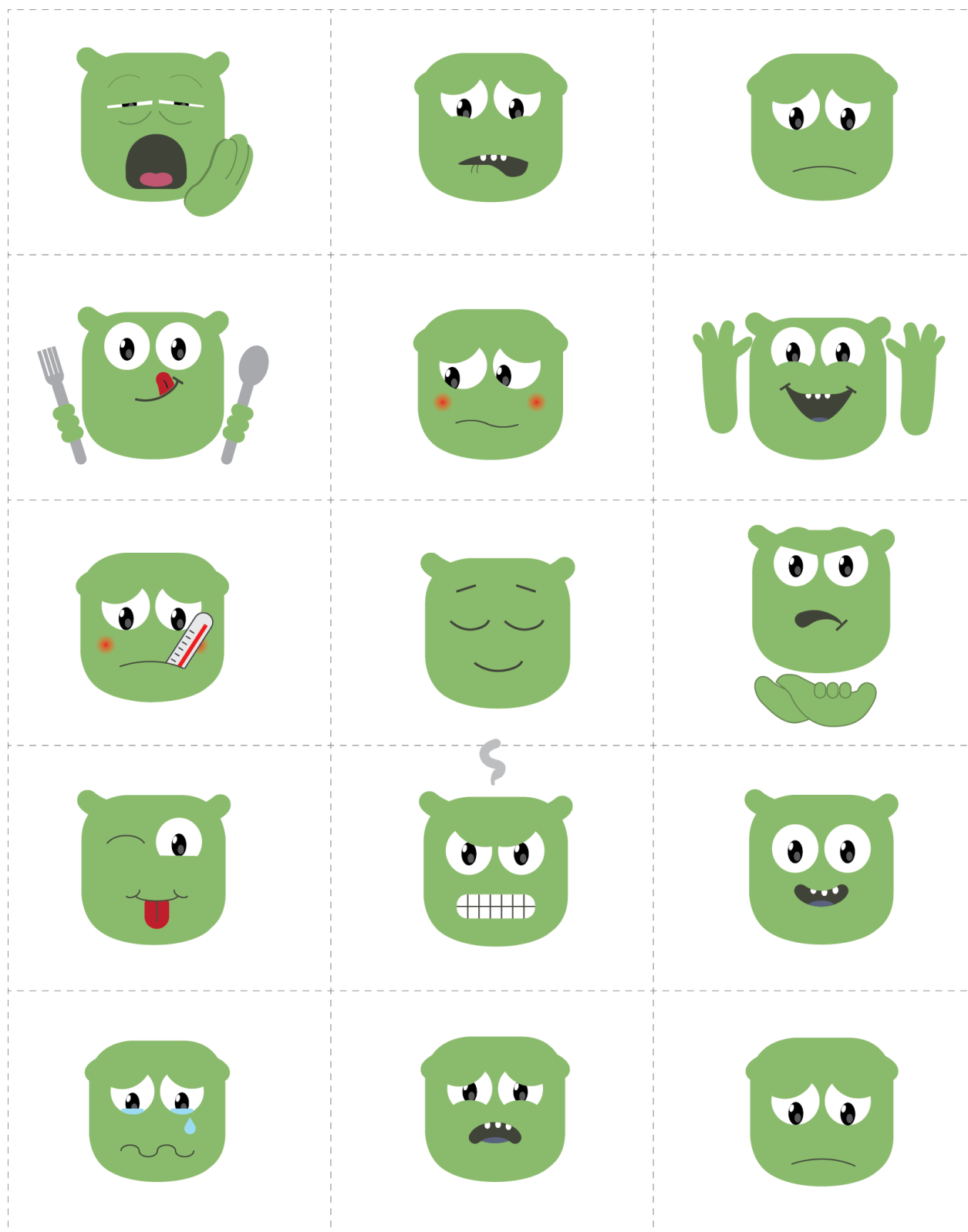
Emojis – full list (page 3 of 3)

## Allen learns about feelings



Emojis – short list (page 1 of 2)

## Allen learns about feelings



# Allen learns about feelings

Emojis – short list (page 2 of 2)



# Allen learns about feelings

Emoji cards – full list (page 1 of 3)

 sleepy	 bored
 hungry	 cooperative
 sick	 calm
 silly	 caring
 teary	 confident
 tight	 confused
 uncomfortable	 disgusted
 annoyed	 disappointed
 angry	 excited

Emoji cards – full list (page 2 of 3)

## Allen learns about feelings

	embarrassed		kind
	friendly		left out
	frustrated		lonely
	fed-up		proud
	happy		okay
	hopeful		relieved
	hurt		stubborn
	interested		sensitive
	jealous		strong























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Emoji cards – full list (page 3 of 3)

	safe
	scared
	shy
	sorry
	surprised
	sad
	thoughtful
	upset
	worried

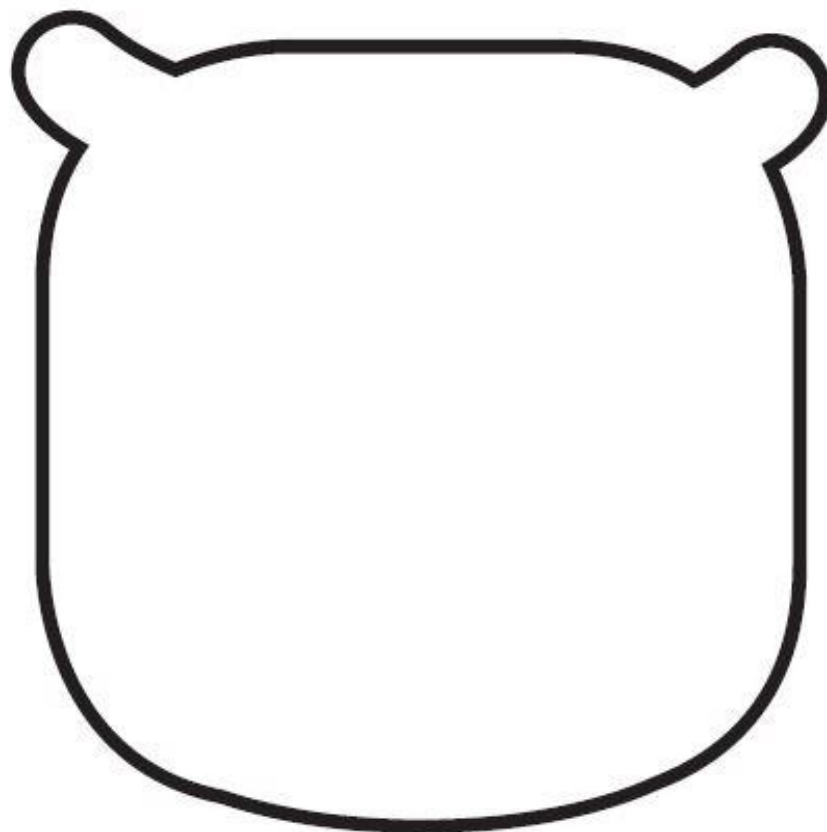
# Allen learns about feelings

Emoji cards – short list (page 1 of 1)

 sleepy	 disappointed
 hungry	 excited
 sick	 frustrated
 silly	 happy
 teary	 hurt
 tight	 left out
 uncomfortable	 okay
 calm	 scared
 angry	 sorry
 sad	 worried

# Allen learns about feelings

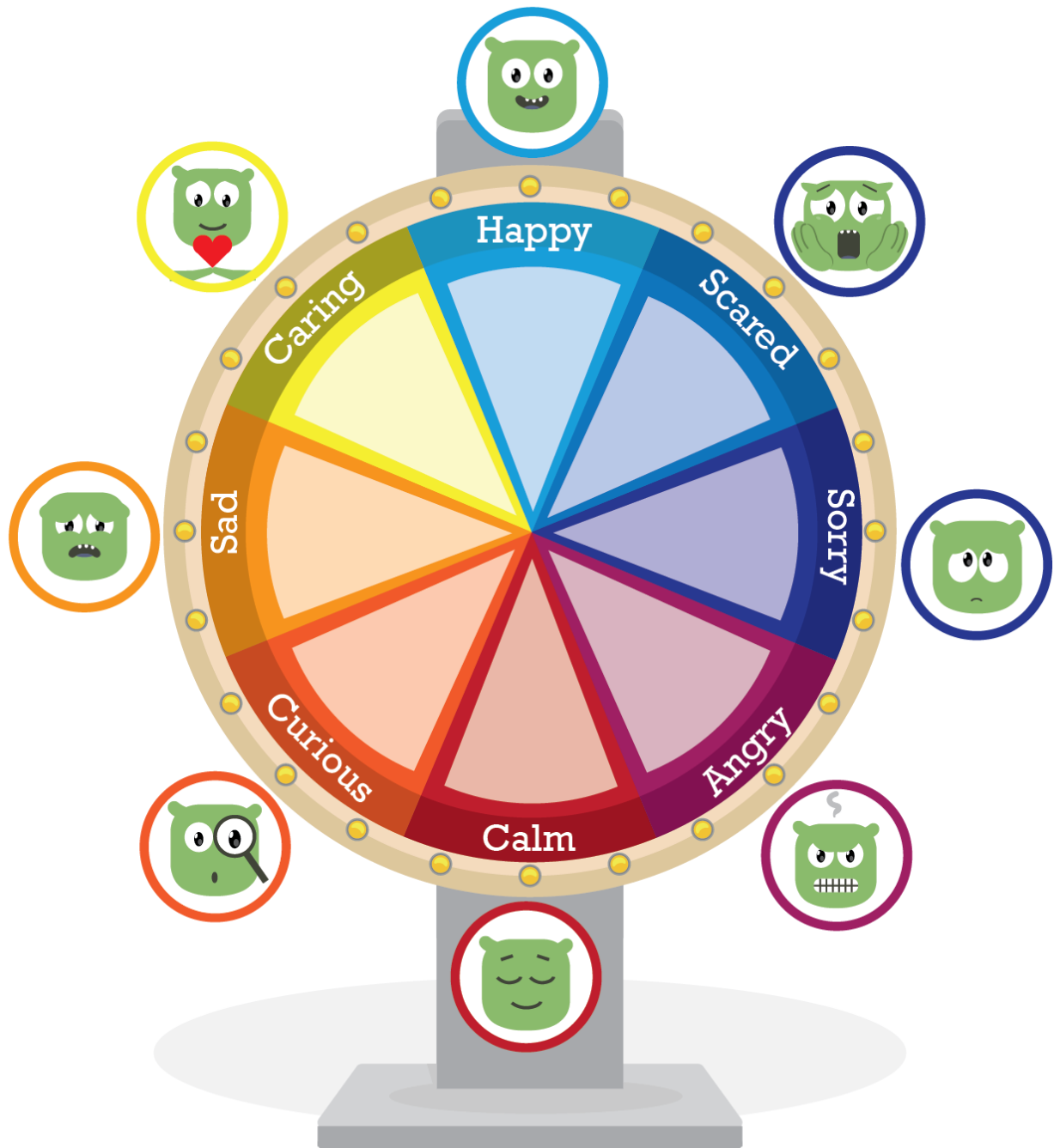
Allen emoji outline



# Allen learns about feelings

## Allen's wheel

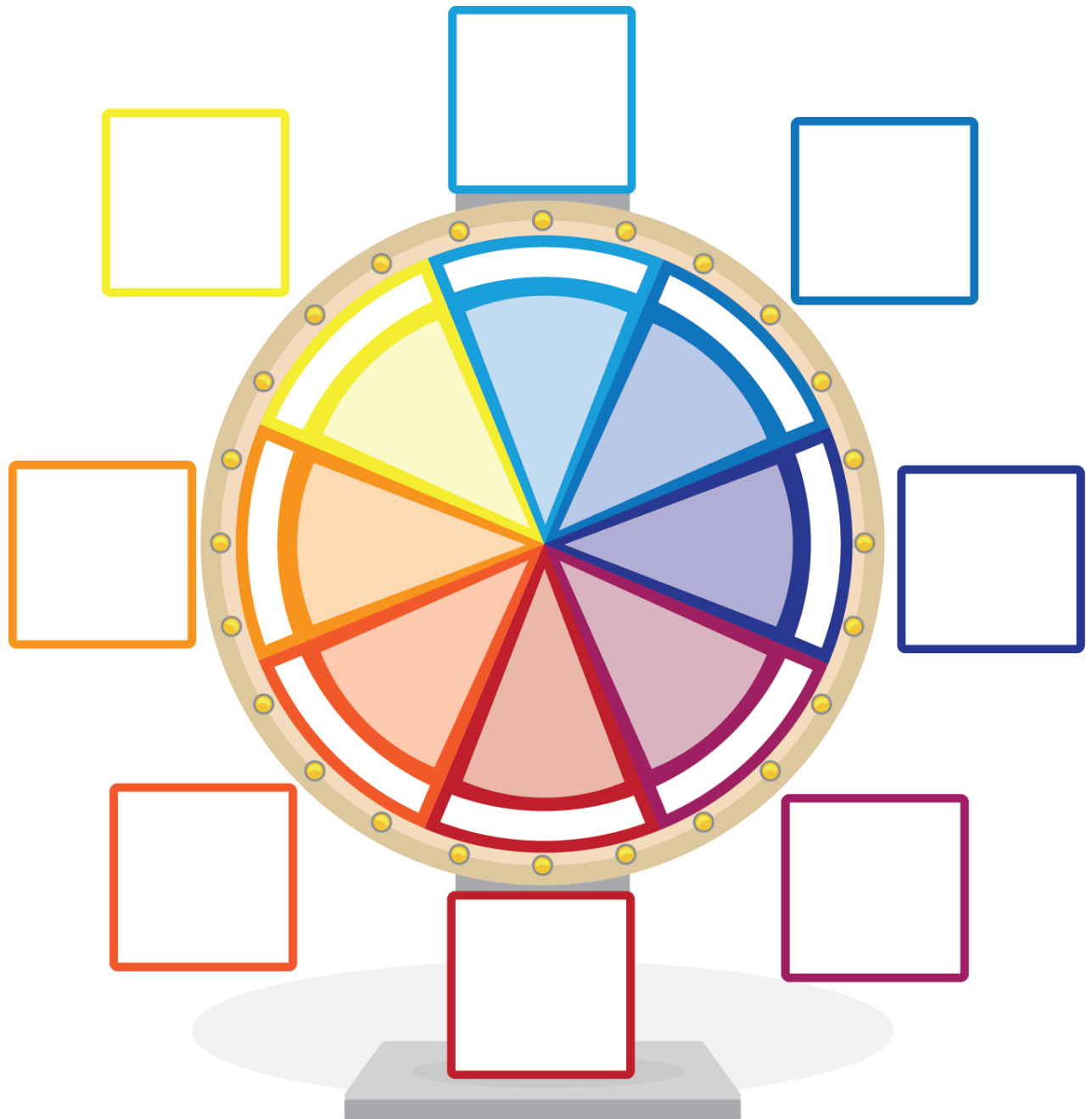
*This template allows you to brainstorm synonyms, antonyms, possible reasons for this feeling, etc.*



# Allen learns about feelings

## Allen's wheel – make your own

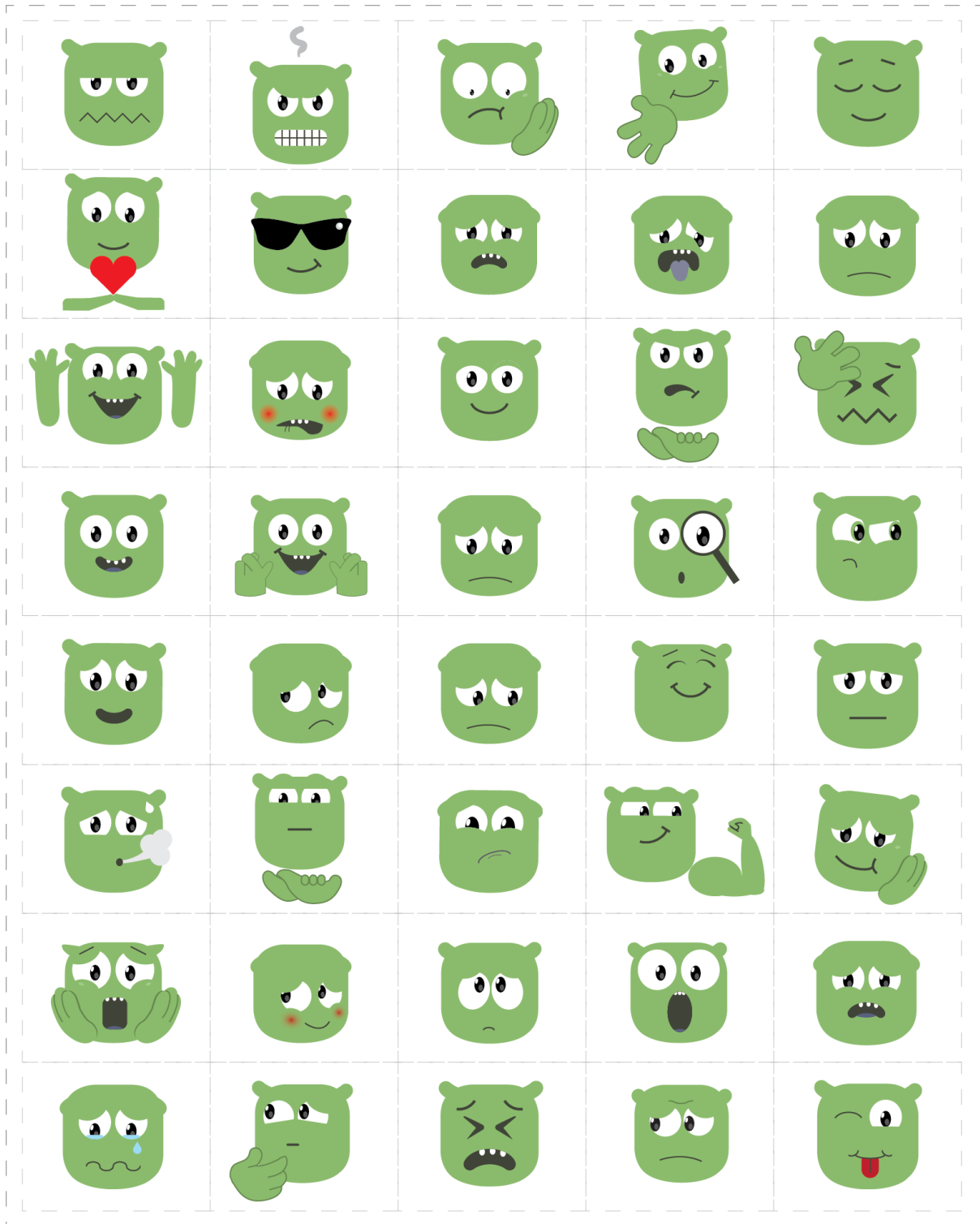
Select a range of emojis to place around the wheel. This template allows you to brainstorm synonyms, antonyms, possible reasons for this feeling, etc.



# Allen learns about feelings

## Feel the story

After students read or listen to a story, ask them to think about how the main characters might have been feeling throughout the story. Students can map the characters' feelings by circling the emojis.

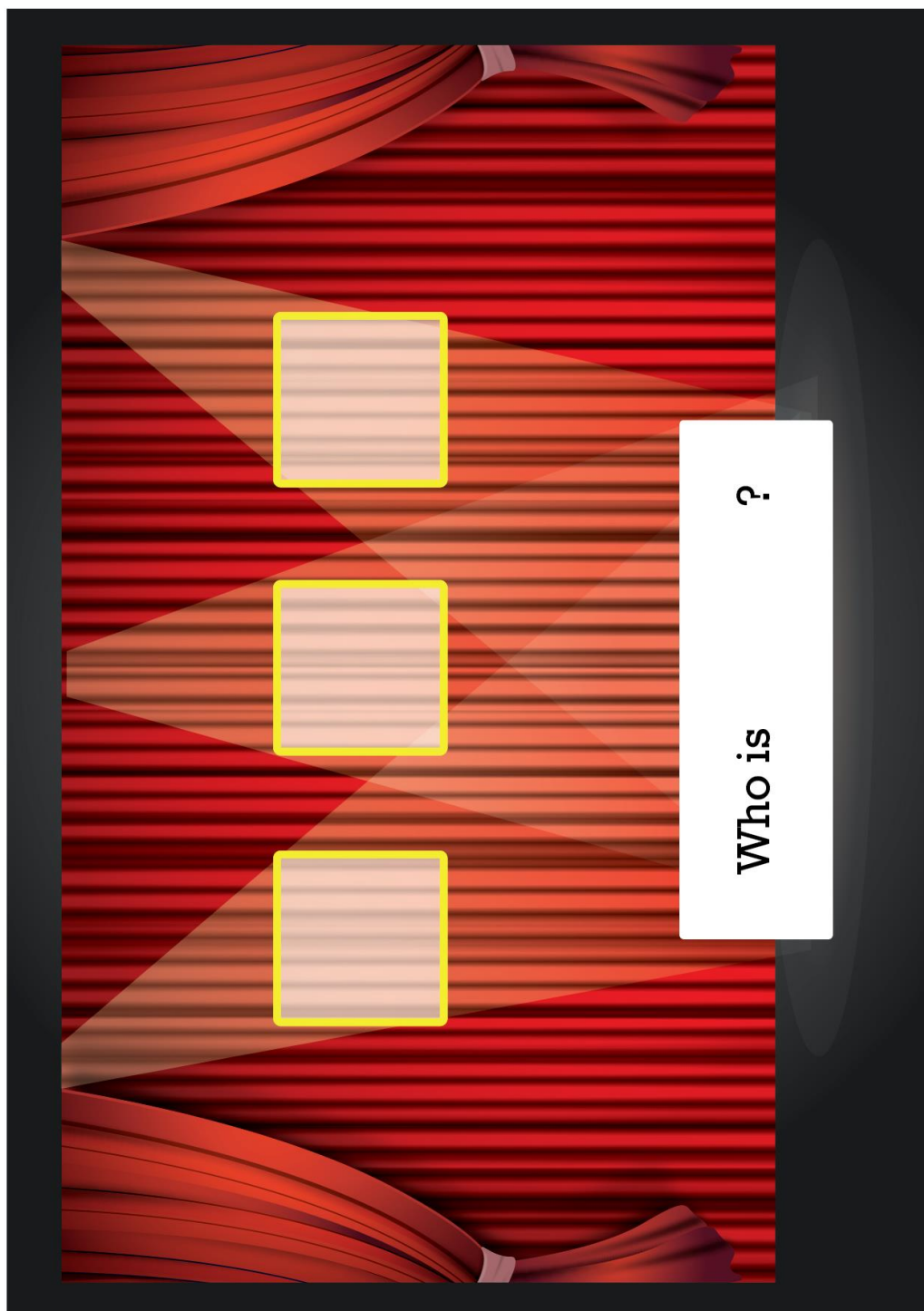




# Allen learns about feelings

## I get the feeling

*This template is designed to be laminated to enable emotions to be written to complete the sentence: Who is ....? Students select from two or three emojis places in the spaces.*



# Allen learns about feelings

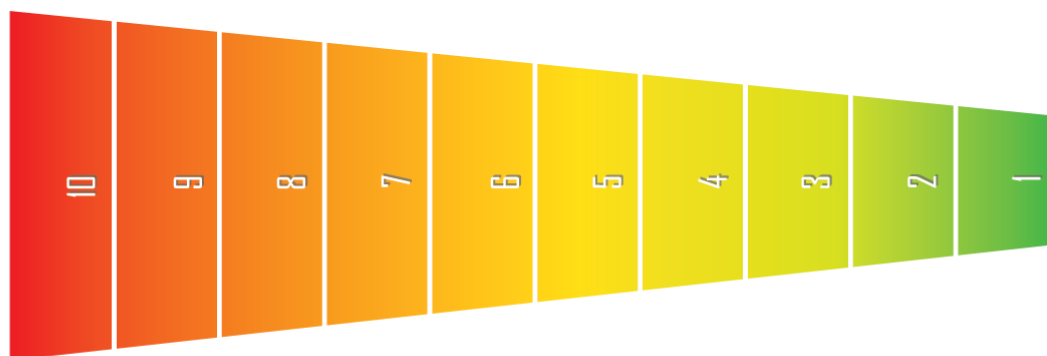
## This is how I feel

This template assists you to talk to individual children about their feelings with a problem-solving approach (after calming and comforting if necessary). One suggested use is to provide a limited set of emojis for the student to select from in column 1, then pick which point on the scale indicates how 'big' (overwhelming) that feeling was, and then together discuss, write or draw what the student can do to feel better.

What do I need to do?



How big is it?



How do I feel?

