

StigmaFreeOC

**ACTION PLANS
FOR PROVIDERS
AND CAREGIVERS
OF VERY YOUNG
CHILDREN**

Below are some ideas to create a culture of caring and a stigma free environment in your work and home. Feel free to follow any or all of these suggestions and add your own. Any steps you take to increase empathy and compassion and decrease stigma are steps in the right direction.

IDEAS FOR CHILDREN

Providers, parents and caregivers can assist children in developing empathy and compassion from birth. These qualities will help to reduce judging others and the resulting stigma that occurs. Here are some ideas, along with links with more information and resources.

READ: There are many great books that can be read to children starting at birth that will help to build empathy and compassion and create an opportunity for discussion about emotions, kindness and fairness. Here are some links to explore:

[Best Kindness Books for Kids](#)

[Best Social Skills Books for Kids](#)

[Books to help you talk to kids about racism](#)

[Extraordinary Lives Foundation](#)

[Recommended books for sharing values](#)

SING: Songs with a catchy tune and learnable words allow children to learn concepts effortlessly. Here are links to two that teach the concept of emotions, there are many more online:

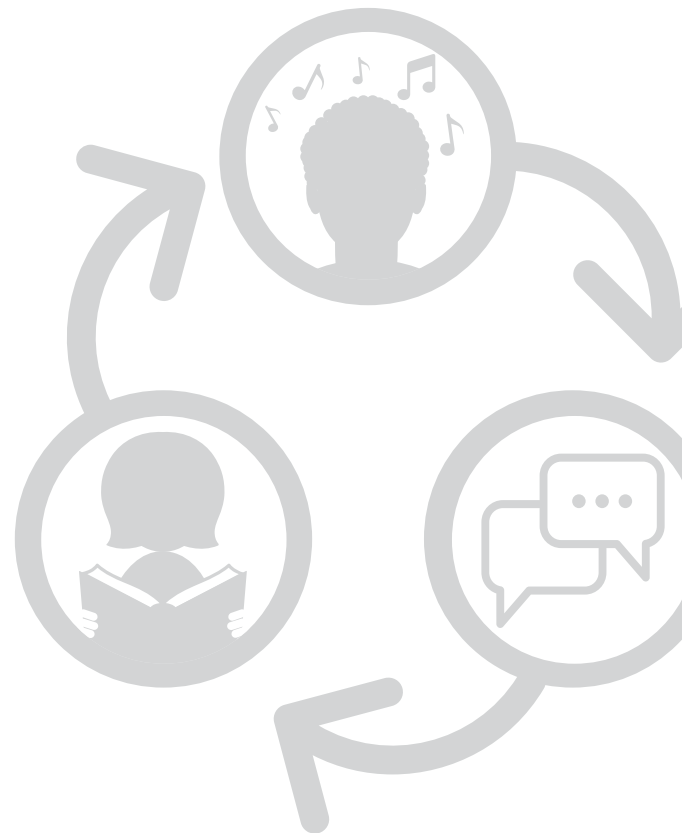
[The Feelings Song - YouTube](#)

[If You're Happy - YouTube](#)

Music also can create a soothing atmosphere to nurture calmness, actually slowing down the heartbeat and allowing for calmer and deeper breathing. Exposing children to these regulating and self-care strategies can start from birth. Here're are two free apps for mobile phones that help promote coping and relaxation skills that can be used with infants and very young children:

Relax Melodies ([iOS](#), [Android](#))

Breathe2Relax ([iOS](#), [Android](#))



TALK: All the activities above are enhanced with thoughtful discussion initiated by adults. Asking children about how they are feeling, how they think others might be feeling will increase their ability to understand how other's actions affect their emotions, and how their actions in turn affect others. Sharing how you are feeling when something happens will model for children how to share their emotions in an effective manner.

Embracerace has an action guide for talking to children about race. The ideas are also valuable approaches to talking to children about mental health

[EmbraceRace | You Can Do It! Talking to Young Children About Race](#)

CREATE: Using art and play

One idea is to have children decorate hard boil eggs as creatively as they would like. Talk about how everyone's eggs look very different on the outside. Then have everyone peel open their egg to reveal that though different on the outside, they are all the same inside.

Sesame Street's link below is full of songs and activities to help develop children's emotional intelligence:

[Exploring Emotions | Sesame Street in Communities - Sesame Street in Communities](#)

IDEAS FOR STAFF AT WORK

- Offer education on social and emotional development of infants and very young children to staff and caregivers
- Provide an anti-bias training to staff and caregivers
- Provide Stigma Free OC information at new employee orientation and staff meetings
- Use the Stigma Free OC social media content on your emails
- Add the Stigma Free OC link to your existing website
- Promote Stigma Free OC through your organization's newsletter, bulletin or other mailing
- Model empathy
- Use language that supports Social Emotional Development
- Let employees know that their mental health is as important as their physical health

IDEAS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS AT HOME

- Incorporate the above activities for children in your home life
- Share this action plan with your children's early care and education site
- Take advantage of opportunities to learn more about helping children develop empathy and compassion
- Model empathy
- Find support for yourself when needed

