

Chicken Scratch Books



Middle Grade Emotional Response

Middle grade kids respond to emotion with thoughts, words, and actions. In your writing, use all of these to get a complete response. This chart can help you plan.

Emotion	Thoughts	Words	Actions
Anxiety	Thinking about worst-case scenarios, self blame, irrational worries, replaying events	Talks to self, doesn't listen, doesn't want to talk, disjointed conversation	Churning stomach, fidgeting, glancing at the door, fingering a necklace, easily startled
Confidence	Positive outlook, sense of calm, heightened interest in what's going on	Booming laugh, controls conversation, offers witty responses, teases, listens	Relaxed body, hands out of pockets, strong posture, initiating contact, leading
Defensiveness	Scrambling thoughts, trying to diffuse the situation, shock, sifting memories for evidence	Uses sarcasm, dismissive responses, won't articulate, interrupts, raises voice	Rigid body, stepping back, eye rolling, hardened voice, shielding themselves
Determination	Encouraging thoughts to self, extreme focus, running through plans, no negative	Affirmative words—yes, I will, Asks pointed questions, Focuses the conversation	Active listening, a curt nod, feet in a wide stance, a set jaw, precise movements
Embarrassment	Wants to flee, panicked, thoughts searching for a solution, disbelief	Tries to change the subject, tries to deflect attention, lies, blames others	Coughs, cries, slides down in chair, hides behind hair, light-headedness, red cheeks
Guilt	Replaying what happened, anxiety, self-loathing, wishing to go back and change	Stutters, gets flustered, mutters to themselves, disengaged, changes subject	Can't concentrate, upset stomach, rubbing ears, staring at feet, loss of appetite
Nervousness	Erratic thoughts, irrational fears, wishing time would speed up,	Avoids conversation, unusual laughter, contradicts or makes excuses, rapid talking	No eye contact, clumsiness, darting eyes, repeated gestures, nausea
Pride	Positive self thoughts, focused on successes, over-estimating capabilities	Speaking first—thinking second, dominating conversation, talking about self, talkative	Chest out, direct eye contact, gleam in eyes, smiling, standing tall, draws attention to self
Sympathy	Wishing to alleviate pain, thoughts turning to others, appreciation for little things	Listens well, uncertain what to say, focused on others, gentle tone, offers advice	Gentle actions, hugs, kindness, helping actions, focused, nods, physical contact
Worry	Questioning choices made, inability to focus, over-analyzing regret, irritable	Poor communication, distracted remarks, confusion, not listening well.	Pacing, rubbing eyes, taking breaths, smooths clothes, upset stomach.