Sharing Circle:
Talking About and Understanding Feelings

How do we do it?
1. Grab a ball and sit with your child in her favorite spot. (The more the merrier – invite family members and friends to join you for this fun group activity!)
2. Ask everyone to finish a sentence about an emotion: “I am happy when ...” Start the game by sharing what makes you feel that emotion.
3. When you’re done, toss the ball to a person you’d like to finish the sentence.
4. Acknowledge each person’s response. “Sunny days make me happy too!”
5. Keep tossing the ball until everyone has had a turn.
6. Repeat the game, but switch up the emotion. Try sad, surprised or angry.

What’s in it for us?
Social-emotional
a. Children who are afraid or embarrassed to share their feelings may be more likely to open up after hearing others share.
b. When parents talk openly about feelings, children know that it’s safe to express their own feelings.
c. Children become more empathetic when they hear about other people’s feelings. If they know their actions make someone sad, scared or mad, they will find other ways to communicate.

Connecting across development
> Cognitive: Hearing what triggers an emotion in someone and why it makes them feel that way helps children understand cause and effect relationships.
> Language: When adults associate words with feelings, children learn to do so as well. They begin to say they’re angry instead of reacting physically.
> Motor: Tossing and catching a ball during the game helps children gain greater control over their gross motor skills.

Book sharing
When you finish a book together, use it as a chance to discuss feelings. Ask your child how the story made her feel. Did a character frighten her? Was the ending a happy one? Share feelings in everyday activities, and your child will feel more comfortable expressing her emotions.
Parenting behavior … Observing my child’s development …

Continued learning
Continue to play this game every few weeks! You may uncover new experiences in your child’s life that make her scared, sad or happy. You can then respond to her concerns and provide solutions before they pop up again.

This game is a fun and stress-free way to show your child that you value the feelings she may be too embarrassed to share. Props can make it easier for your child to express her feelings. She can pretend to hide under the blanket if she’s scared or toot a horn if she’s happy.

Reflecting with my child …

Keeping it going …