



The Music Settlement  
OHIO CITY · UNIVERSITY CIRCLE



# CENTER FOR MUSIC THERAPY

## Musical Emotion Expression Game

During times of increased uncertainty, stress, and fear, our emotions can sometimes feel out of control and hard to understand; this activity provides an interactive and musical way to see (or hear!) emotions differently.

Materials needed for activity:

- 2+ people
- Small percussion instruments OR at-home instruments (ideas listed on pg. 3)
- Notecards or small pieces of paper with selected emotion words written on them
- Hat or container to pull pieces of paper from
- Music Terms sheet (pg. 4)
- Feelings Wheel (pg. 5)
- For younger players, I suggest selecting the larger words on the wheel (sad, mad, scared, peaceful, joyful, powerful) to put in the hat or container.

## GAME SET-UP:

1. Select emotion words from wheel and write on notecards, then fold notecards in half
2. Place notecards in empty hat or container
3. Display feelings wheel nearby for guessing players to reference
4. Display music terms sheet or pass sheet around during discussion before game
5. Set chairs in a semicircle with one chair at the head of circle; chair at head of circle is for person musically expressing an emotion
6. Place instruments in center of circle for the Expression Player to choose from.

## GAME DIRECTIONS:

1. Read Music Terms sheet to players
2. Select one player to express an emotion first. This player is the Expression Player for this turn.
3. Expression Player picks a notecard from container
4. Expression Player selects an instrument to use for his or her turn
5. Expression Player then considers the musical elements of tempo, dynamic, and articulation when deciding how they will express (parents can partner with children and express together)
6. Expression Player plays the emotion for a maximum of 30 seconds
7. Guessing Players guess which emotion the Expression Player is playing using the Music Terms
8. Then next Expression Player is chosen
9. Repeat steps 3-8 until there are no emotion cards left and each player has gotten a chance to Express and Guess!

## At-Home Instrument Ideas:

- Shakers: spices or small containers filled with rice, beans, or other small items
- Drums: pots and pans or empty plastic containers
- Drumsticks or mallets: wooden spoons (tapping with handle end), plastic spoons
- Rainstick creation instructions:  
<https://buggyandbuddy.com/how-to-make-a-rainstick-instrument/>
- Other instrument creation ideas:  
<https://redtri.com/homemade-instruments/slide/1>

The topic of emotion is a complicated and important one. While this activity itself does not fully cover the complexity of human emotion or replace a music therapy session, I hope that it provides a fun and unique way of talking and thinking about emotion as a family! I wish you all emotional, mental, and physical wellness.

Take care,

Jennifer Noyd

The Music Settlement

Music Therapy Intern 2019-2020

# Music Terms Sheet

\*To be read aloud and shared with all players!

Musicians can select and change a couple different things about the music they're playing in order to express different emotions, just like anyone can change certain things about the way they're talking when they want to express how they're feeling!

For this game, we are going to focus on three music elements or terms: TEMPO, DYNAMIC, and ARTICULATION.

- Tempo is the SPEED at which the music is played.
- Dynamic is the VOLUME of the music played.
- Articulation is basically the STYLE or way that the music is played and how it sounds. This focuses on the length of the notes and how much pressure or force is being used to play the instrument.

When listening to and expressing emotions musically, think of how certain emotions might sound according to tempo, dynamic, and volume:

TEMPO/SPEED: fast, moderate, or slow?

DYNAMIC/VOLUME: loud, moderate, or quiet?

ARTICULATION/STYLE: short length and hard force, medium length and moderate force, or long length and soft force?

\*Hint: before expressing emotions musically, practice saying neutral sentences or words with different emotions and point out the above aspects. Example neutral sentence: "I am going to the store now and will be back later" Example questions after saying sentence with different emotions: "How fast did I talk when I was expressing sadness?", "How loud did I talk when I was expressing anger?", "Was my speaking short or long?"

