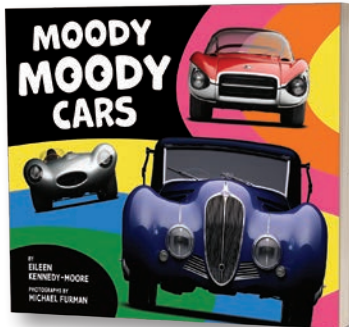




Rev Up Social Emotional Learning with *Moody Moody Cars*



Moody Moody Cars by Eileen Kennedy-Moore, PhD with photographs by Michael Furman is a rhyming picture book that shares various expressive classic cars and invites readers to figure out the emotions, from excited to angry and more, behind the facial expressions. This book provides a playful, approachable way to teach kids about feelings and emotions and to develop an essential skill as kids travel along in their social world.

Here's an excerpt from the Reader's Note:

Understanding facial expressions of emotions is an essential skill that helps children navigate the natural world. It allows children to know, for example, when a sibling is annoyed, a parent sees danger, or a classmate wants to be friends. One study showed that a child's ability to interpret facial emotions at five years of age predicts how well they do socially and academically—even four years later. Research also shows that talking about feelings and practicing labeling them can help children increase their understanding of emotions. Look for opportunities to talk about emotions in books, movies, and daily life.

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Eye tracking studies show that babies are very interested in faces—they'll stare at two dots and a curve arranged like a face longer than any other arrangement—but it takes children a surprisingly long time to develop the ability to recognize specific emotions. For example:

- At two years old, children are only able to categorize emotions as happy or not.
- Around age four, they can accurately categorize angry faces and distinguish them from other negative emotions.
- Between ages five and ten, children's ability to accurately and quickly identify facial expressions and identify less intense emotions continues to develop.

Learning to understand emotions may be especially important for boys. Too often, boys (and men) get the message that emotions are “girly” and therefore not for them. But boys have feelings, too! As infants, boys are more expressive than girls, but by five or six years old, boys are less likely to express hurt or distress.

Moody Moody Cars is a fun way to help children develop emotional literacy, which is the ability to read feelings in ourselves and others. It is based on pareidolia—the human tendency to see faces in things. Most children ages 4 and up know that cars don’t really have feelings, but it’s entertaining and intriguing to see how these cars look as though they do! Figuring out the cars’ emotions can help your child learn to recognize, label, and talk about these common emotions.

Check out the Educator’s Guide for questions to ask before, during and after reading, as well as activities to do and games to play when sharing *Moody Moody Cars*.

Here’s a video of Dr. Kennedy-Moore explaining the importance of understanding emotions.

This Article’s Author

Eileen Kennedy-Moore, PhD, is an author, psychologist, and speaker based in Princeton, NJ. She has written many books about children’s feelings and friendships, including *Growing Friendships* and *Kid Confidence*. Eileen has been a featured expert multiple times for *The New York Times*, *Parents* magazine, and *Live with Kelly and Ryan*. Her blog on Psychology Today has over 4 million views. Visit her website, Dr. Friendtastic: Friendship Advice for Kids website, Psychology Today blog, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.