

Mental Health Matters: Strategies for Young Children

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AutismONTARIO

Presenters



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Agenda

- Lifestyle strategies
- Brain and body strategies
 - Sensory strategies
 - Mindfulness
- Strategies for “connecting”
- Building emotional literacy

Strategy Considerations

- Lifestyle strategies vs. brain and body strategies
- Record keeping

Keep in mind, that change takes time!



Lifestyle Strategies

- Predictable schedule
- Visuals:
 - Communicate clear expectations
 - Changes in schedule



Lifestyle Strategies

- Planning our day:
 - High energy vs. low energy activities
- Managing transitions:
 - Clear communication
 - Planning ahead
 - Using songs, stories, actions



Lifestyle Strategies- Screen Time

Considerations:

- Type of screen time
- Content quality
- Engagement and participation with family and friends
- Length of screen time



Brain/Body Strategies- Sensory

“Seeking”:

- Movement
- Rhythm
- Deep pressure
- Heavy work
- Tactile exploration



Brain/Body Strategies- Sensory

“Avoiding”:

- Sensory headphones
- Sunglasses
- Cozy corner



Brain/Body Strategies- Mindfulness

Mindfulness: an approach to mental health where people are trained to pay attention to the moment and bring awareness to their bodily sensations, feelings, thoughts, and senses.



Strategies for Connecting

‘Serve and Return’ strategies:

- Child-led: following your child’s lead
- Exploring your child’s interests

Examples:

- FloorTime
- Denver Early Start



Strategies for Connecting

Play-based Strategies:

- 1) “Copycat” or mirroring
- 2) Pretend play: e.g., hair brushing, nail painting, doctor, etc.
- 3) Art: paint, shaving cream, finger paint, beading, drawing, etc.
- 4) Music
- 5) Reading



Building Emotional Literacy

**Internal
Awareness**



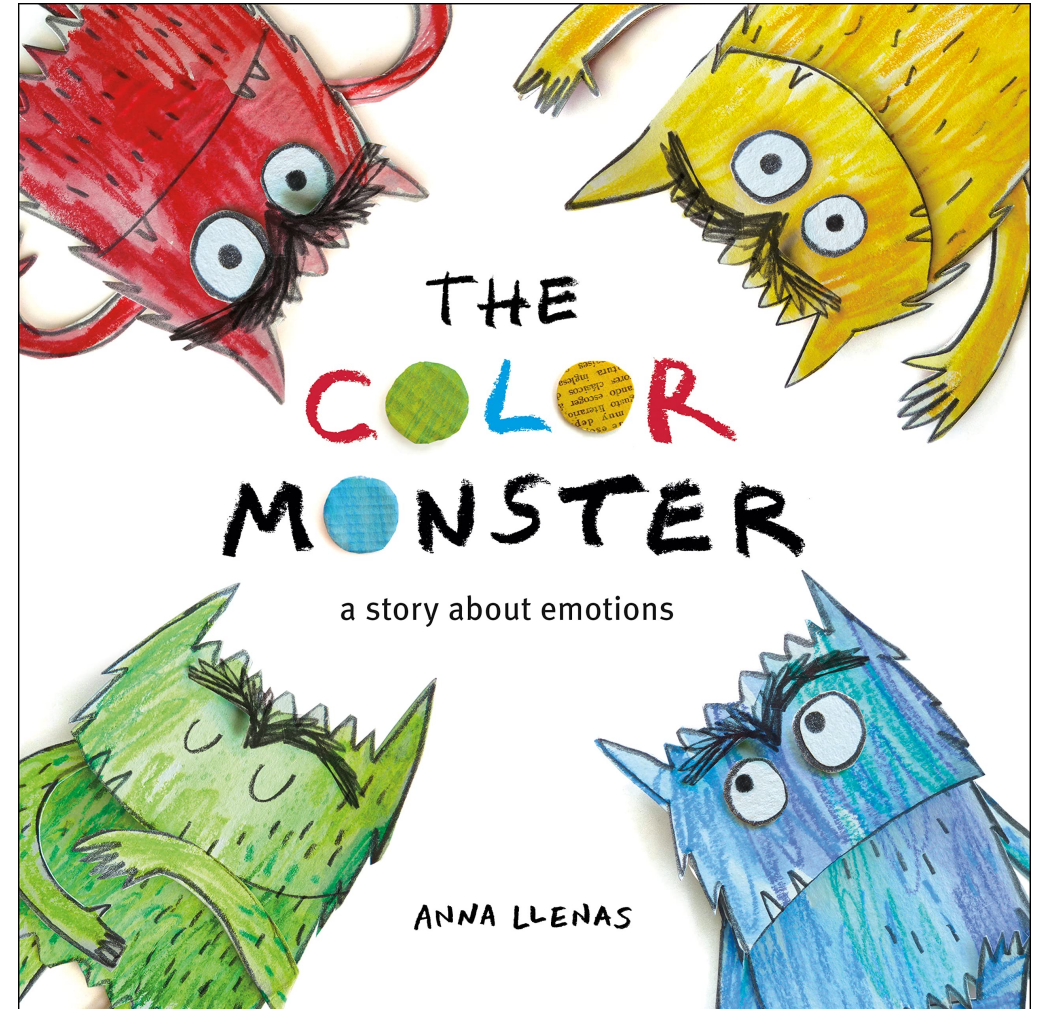
**Emotional
Label**



**Resolving
the Feeling**

Building Emotional Literacy

- Books:
 - The Way I Feel
 - The Feelings Book
 - The Colour Monster
- Photographs
- Movies:
 - Inside Out
- Songs:
 - “If you’re happy and you know it”...



Supporting Your Child's Mental Health- Next Steps

**Where is your child at
developmentally?**

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