



The colorful **Walk in My Shoes** mat is a great addition to any classroom. It can be used at arrival, as a social-emotional small-group activity, during a social-emotional conflict, or at dismissal. Do you have a student or group of students whose challenges start as soon as they walk in the door? From a developmental standpoint, young children need concrete tools to help them express abstract emotions. The language skills of young children are just emerging, and this mat adds the visual supports and movement to enhance social and emotional discussions and learning activities. The **Walk in My Shoes** mat helps to build expressive and receptive language skills; advance literacy, math, science, social studies, and motor skills; develop an emotional vocabulary; promote classroom community and so much more! It is also helpful for dual language learners and children with special needs as they develop their skills in expressing themselves. At circle time or morning meeting, the mat is a great way to generate discussion and ask children what they will do to maintain a good emotion or respond to a negative one. It is also a good way to help children understand and regulate emotions and develop empathy and classroom community.

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Activities

Introduce the Walk in My Shoes Mat

1. This activity can support social and emotional problem solving, attention and engagement, empathy, literacy skills, language skills, math skills (how many ideas), science inquiry (predicting how someone might react to a situation), perspective taking, and social-studies skills by developing a classroom community.

Introduce the Walk in My Shoes mat by talking about each feeling represented.

2. With the children, generate a list or chart of ways to maintain good feelings and respond to negative ones, and post the chart or list in the room. For example, the list could include:

- Ask our friend how we can make it better.
- Ask our friend if he or she wants to play.
- Give our friend a compliment.
- Ask our friend if he or she wants a hug.
- Give our friend some quiet time alone.

3. Give students a scenario using puppets or visuals of a social-emotional problem, and ask the children to use the mat to “walk in the shoes” of the person with the problem. For example: *John’s friends told him he can’t play with them. Pretend you are John, and move to the place on the mat that shows how you think he might be feeling. What could we do to make him feel better?*





Arrival or Morning Meeting

Start the day off right! Select someone to be the greeter, ask this person to stand in one pair of shoes on the mat (Note: This could be the teacher)

1. Invite the students to step into the other shoes, then jump or walk to the shoes that express how they feel.
2. You can use the following rhyme or make up your own:

*Welcome! Welcome! Let's have fun!
What are you feeling?
Just pick one!*
3. Label the emotions children move to with words and/or sign language. Sign language plus the visual on the mat and your words can support comprehension for very young children or children with special needs.
4. If a child stands on a negative emotion icon, such as sad or mad, respond by asking the children what we can do to help the child feel better. Provide parallel talk and open-ended questions to provide a feeling vocabulary. Support analysis, reasoning skills, and brainstorming: "Mary is feeling angry today. Friends, we will have to talk at breakfast about some strategies to feel calm again when we are angry," or "Jovan is really feeling sad today. We should try to use some nice words to make him feel better," or "Looks like Madison is feeling worried. What do you think we could do to help her feel better?" or "Carlos is feeling happy today. I wonder how we can help him feel this way all day."
5. The mat can also be used with families as they enter, as starting point to ask, "How was [child's name]'s morning?" or "How did [child] sleep last night?" or "Seems like you had a great weekend." It may seem logical to place the mat at the door, but to get families to enter your classroom, it may be best to place the mat by the cubbies, near the sink where children wash hands as they enter, or near the breakfast area where you can have a better view of the entire classroom. Try out the mat in different areas to see the benefits of each location and what works best for you and the children and their families.

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Circle Time

This activity builds expressive and receptive language skills, motor skills, and attention and engagement.

1. Select someone to be the greeter; ask this person to stand in one pair of shoes on the mat. (Note: This could be the teacher.)
2. Invite the students to step into the remaining shoes, then jump or walk to the shoes that express how they feel.
3. You and the other students can sing a song or chant a rhyme to ensure entire class engagement. For example, sing the following to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat":

*Jump, jump, jump on the mat
Tell us how you feel!
Jump, jump, jump on the mat
Tell us how you feel!*

4. You can replace *jump* with *hop*, *tiptoe*, *walk*, *dance*, *slither*, *step*, *saunter*, *stroll*, *crawl*, *roll* (if child is in a wheel chair or if they just want to be silly and roll), *tap* (if a child is on crutches), and so on. Add different words to build advanced vocabulary skills.





Conflict Resolution

This activity can support social-emotional problem solving, expressive and receptive language skills, attention, engagement, empathy, literacy skills (creating a chart or list), math skills (counting ideas), science inquiry (How do you think ___ will feel if we ___?) and perspective taking

1. When children are having a conflict, you can have them each stand on the mat and move to the emotion they are feeling.
2. Invite each child to talk about how to make each person feel better, using the list or chart you made with the children when you introduced the mat.
3. Feel free to add to the chart as the children's problem solving skills become more sophisticated, or make a new chart for new situations. You might even have more than one mat or a mat in each area. Don't be afraid to use this tool outside the classroom, as well.
4. Use the mat with individual children you are having a conflict with! Invite the child to stand on the emotion he or she is feeling. (Note: If a child is really upset, you may need to wait until a child is ready to interact with the mat.)
5. **A word of warning:** It may seem like a good idea to show a child you are angry or sad when the child displays negative emotions or challenging behavior. However, doing so could escalate a child's behavior rather than calm it. Instead, respond to the child with, "How can I help you?" or "It looks like you want to be alone right now."

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Dismissal or Goodbye Circle

This activity may generate discussion as to what occurred during the day or help the children brainstorm on how to have a better day tomorrow. This can also be a starting point for parents during pick-up.

1. End the day well! Stand in one pair of shoes on the mat. Invite the students to step in the other shoes, then jump or walk to the shoes that express how they feel.
2. You can use the following rhyme or make up your own:

*Jump, jump, jump on the mat
Tell us how you feel!
Jump, jump, jump on the mat
Tell us how you feel!*

3. You can replace *jump* with *hop*, *tiptoe*, *walk*, *dance*, *slither*, *step*, *saunter*, *stroll*, *crawl*, *roll* (if child is in a wheel chair or if they just want to be silly and roll), *tap* (if a child is on crutches), and so on. Add different words to build advanced vocabulary skills.
4. If a child stands on a negative emotion icon, such as sad or mad, respond by asking the children what we can do to help the child feel better tomorrow. Provide parallel talk and open-ended questions to provide a feeling vocabulary. Support analysis, reasoning skills, and brainstorming: "Mary is feeling angry. Friends, how can she feel calm again?" or "Jovan is really feeling sad. What are some nice words we can use with him to help him feel better?"





General Activity

Shoe Decorating

1. Give each child a blank copy of the shoe printout included in the set.
2. Provide materials for children to decorate their shoes. Materials can be as simple as crayons or might include additional materials such as markers, glue, construction paper, fabric, sequins, and beads.
3. Invite children to decorate their shoes in the way that represents how they are currently feeling.
4. Ask children to share their shoe designs and explain why they chose to decorate them as they did.

Extension Ideas:

- Have children decorate a second shoe to represent the way they were feeling during a specific time (examples: when it rains, when it is time to go to bed, etc.)
- Create pre-decorated shoes of all different colors and themes to share with a small group of children. Share each design one at a time with the group, and without assigning a specific emotion, ask children if they have ever felt this way. If so, can they describe what was going on when they felt that way?





Pre-K Activities

Imagine

1. Invite a small group of children to sit in a circle and place their shoe designs facedown in the middle.
2. Have each child take a turn choosing a shoe and imagining wearing it.
3. Ask the child to describe (imagine) how the person who designed it must have been feeling.
4. Once the child has finished describing, ask the original artist to confirm or deny the analysis.
5. Talk about how different symbols, colors, and designs may mean different things to different people.

Extension Idea:

- Have children to choose two shoes and imagine them on their feet. Ask them to describe how they feel. Talk about the possibility of feeling two emotions at once.

Faces

1. With the mat flat on the floor, have children stand on an emotion. You can facilitate this by having them walk in a circle as you play music. Once you stop the music, they must also stop.
2. Ask a few children to look at the expression of the emotion they are standing on. Ask them which feeling they believe that emotion face is representing.
3. Continue having the children walk around until they have had a chance to identify all of the emotions.

Extension Idea:

- Ask children identify the feeling they believe the emotion is representing. Then, ask them if they can remember a time or a situation in which they felt that way.





K-3 Activities

Storytelling

1. Invite the children to stand in a circle around the mat.
2. Choose a storybook, recite a story from memory, or make up a story in which the main character or characters encounter a lot of experiences.
3. While sharing the story with the children, pause at the points in the book or story in which the character may be feeling an emotion or reacting to a situation.
4. Ask children how they think the character may be feeling at that moment. Encourage children to find the face on the mat that represents that emotion and stand on it.
5. Do this repeatedly throughout the entire story.

Extension Idea:

- While pausing to ask the children how they believe the character in the story may feel, encourage them to take a moment and speculate how they might feel in that same situation. Is it the same as or different from how the character feels?

Self-Awareness

1. Invite the children to stand near the mat.
2. State a scenario that may be common for the children's age or a scenario that has been occurring frequently in the classroom and needs to be addressed (example: someone cuts in front of you when the class is lining up).
3. First, ask the children how they may feel in that situation and to stand on that emotion.
4. Next, ask the children how they may display that emotion (example: tell the teacher, push the child, cry, etc.).
5. If the reaction is appropriate, talk about that being a good choice. If the reaction is inappropriate, discuss how that may not help the situation. Brainstorm a more appropriate way to handle the emotion.

Extension Idea:

- Discuss how both people in the scenario may feel and react in the situation. Explain that there are no inappropriate emotions, just inappropriate ways of expressing emotions.





General Counseling

1. Introductions

As children enter into school or a new school year, they may experience a variety of emotions. We can use the mat and template to give the children the opportunity to acknowledge, express, understand, and accept these emotions in themselves as well as their classmates.

Use the shoe template to have children design:

- How they feel about being at school
- How they feel about riding the bus
- How they feel about learning new things
- How they feel when they get an answer right
- How they feel when they get an answer wrong

Follow this pattern for any situation that children may need to work through or for which they need to appreciate another point of view.

Use the mat to have children:

- Identify and talk about emotions and feelings
- Find feelings they have in common with classmates
- Consider how another child (teacher, parent, sibling, etc.) may be feeling about the same experience
- Validate that what they are feeling is normal
- Talk about any of the scenarios associated with shoe design

2. Harmony

If two children are having a disagreement, you can use one of the following approaches to help them come to a mutual understanding:

- **Quick:** Have each child stand on the shoe icons on either end of the mat. Ask both children to identify how they feel in regard to the disagreement using the emotion faces and/or by describing their feelings. Ask the children to switch places on the mat (thus walking in the other person's shoes), and talk them through the disagreement while imagining how the other person may feel.
- **More Involved:** Have each child draw their emotion/feeling on a blank shoe template. This allows the child to begin identifying and releasing the emotion in a healthy way. Continue with the quick scenario. As the children switch places, they also can switch shoe designs to further help them understand what another person may be feeling. Utilize these conversations to create awareness and talk through potential resolutions.

Extension Idea:

Use common scenarios in early childhood classrooms and give children a quick description. For example: The teacher asks children to sit on the carpet, and one student sits where another student wanted to. Talk through what both children may be feeling during that time. Explain that all feelings are valid, and just because feelings are different doesn't mean they are wrong.

