

Illustrated Card Sets — Quarter 2

Two new topics for Deepening & Personalizing, each fully explained before a single card, then a print-and-prop card sequence.

Document 7 of 12

Introduced in Weeks 15 and 17 of your Quarter 2 Roadmap

What Does "Naming Feelings" Actually Mean?

Before a single card, let's make sure this idea is completely clear — nothing here is assumed.



WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN?

Naming feelings means giving your child simple words or pictures — happy, sad, angry, tired — for the emotions they already experience, so a big or uncomfortable feeling has somewhere to go besides just building up inside. Think of it like labelling drawers in a cupboard: the things were always in there, labelling just makes them easier to find and talk about.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DOING THIS?

The purpose is to give your child a tool for expressing a big feeling with a word or a point to a picture, instead of the feeling only being expressible through behaviour like crying, shutting down, or a meltdown.



WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

We hope that over time, your child reaches for a feeling word — even a single one, even imperfectly — before or during a hard moment, giving both of you something concrete to work with.



HOW DOES THIS ACTUALLY HELP THE CHILD?

This groundwork also directly supports the self-advocacy skills built later in this program — a child who can name "overwhelmed" has the beginning of a voice for their own needs ^[22]

DOUALA, CAMEROON

A mother spent weeks pointing to a simple "tired" face whenever she herself felt exhausted in the evening. One evening, her son, unprompted, pointed to the same picture on the fridge and then pointed to himself — the first time he'd ever shown her how he felt without crying first.

The Feelings Ladder — Cards 1–4



THE FEELINGS LADDER · STEP 1
OF 7

The Feelings Ladder

Feelings become easier to handle once they have a name.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



THE FEELINGS LADDER · STEP 2
OF 7

Make 3–4 simple feeling faces: happy, sad, angry, tired.

Why: A simple drawn face is often clearer to a child than the word alone.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



THE FEELINGS LADDER · STEP 3
OF 7

Name YOUR OWN feeling out loud, using the pictures, several times a day.

Why: Children learn an enormous amount just from hearing a parent narrate their own feelings casually.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



THE FEELINGS LADDER · STEP 4
OF 7

Name your child's feeling for them gently, the moment you notice it.

Why: Narrating what you observe gives your child the word for a feeling they're already having, without demanding a response.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up

The Feelings Ladder — Cards 5–7



THE FEELINGS LADDER · STEP 5 OF 7

Offer a simple choice between two feelings during a calm moment.

Why: Low-pressure practice during a calm moment builds the skill before it's ever urgently needed.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



THE FEELINGS LADDER · STEP 6 OF 7

Use a feeling word during a small, manageable hard moment.

Why: A word practised only when calm still needs one careful step into real use, in a small way first.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



THE FEELINGS LADDER · STEP 7 OF 7

Two mistakes to avoid: only using feeling words during a meltdown, and demanding your child repeat the word back.

Why: Both mistakes turn a helpful tool into pressure, which works against the whole point of it.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up

What Does "Backward Chaining" Mean for Self-Care Skills?

Before a single card, let's make sure this idea is completely clear — nothing here is assumed.



WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN?

Backward chaining means teaching a task by helping with every step EXCEPT the very last one, so your child always experiences finishing it themselves — even on the very first try. Imagine helping someone build a tower of blocks all the way up, then stepping back so they place the final block themselves: they built a tower.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DOING THIS?

The purpose is to give your child the genuine feeling of completing a whole task successfully from day one, rather than waiting until they can do every single step before they ever experience finishing something on their own.



WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

We hope your child gradually takes over more and more of the task, one step at a time, from the end backward, until dressing, hygiene, and self-feeding tasks are genuinely their own.



HOW DOES THIS ACTUALLY HELP THE CHILD?

Structured, evidence-based teaching methods that break a skill into small, manageable steps are a recognised, effective approach for building independence ^[1]

KIGALI, RWANDA

A father used to dress his son fully every morning. Once he started letting his son pull his trousers up that final inch to his waist himself, his son began reaching for his trousers on his own within two weeks — he'd never once done that before.

The Self-Care Steps Build — Cards 1–4



THE SELF-CARE STEPS BUILD ·
STEP 1 OF 7

The Self-Care Steps Build

Teaching a new skill backward, so your child always finishes it themselves.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



THE SELF-CARE STEPS BUILD ·
STEP 2 OF 7

Choose one self-care task and write out its smallest steps.

Why: There are always more separate steps than you'd think — writing them out makes the plan concrete.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



THE SELF-CARE STEPS BUILD ·
STEP 3 OF 7

Help with every step except the very last one.

Why: This is the entire method in one sentence — everything else builds on this single idea.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



THE SELF-CARE STEPS BUILD ·
STEP 4 OF 7

Let your child complete that last step, and celebrate it as the whole task.

Why: Genuine celebration of the small final step teaches that finishing things feels good.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up

The Self-Care Steps Build — Cards 5–7



THE SELF-CARE STEPS BUILD · STEP 5 OF 7

Repeat the same last step for several days before moving on.

Why: Repetition at the same step is what builds real motor confidence, not a single lucky try.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line, prop it up



THE SELF-CARE STEPS BUILD · STEP 6 OF 7

Move your "help stops here" point back by one step at a time.

Why: Moving back one small step at a time keeps every stage achievable, never overwhelming.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line, prop it up



THE SELF-CARE STEPS BUILD · STEP 7 OF 7

Two mistakes to avoid: moving the help point back too fast, and forgetting to celebrate small completions.

Why: Both mistakes remove the confidence-building feeling of success this whole method depends on.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line, prop it up

Sources for this guide: [11] Steinbrenner et al. (2020) · [22] Self-advocacy and self-determination mini-review (2025). Full list of references in the Start Here document.