

Body Signals

Butterflies in your tummy? Goosebumps or beating heart?

Your body signals let you know when you're feeling stressed or unsafe, even before your conscious mind kicks in. These 'early warning signs' are crucial for protective behaviours, trauma-informed care or simply for navigating everyday emotions. Learning about body signals helps pre-schoolers transition to big school, young people build identity, and adults manage life's ups and downs. Here are a few ideas for using the cards (you'll find many more in the booklet that comes with the cards).

- Choose cards for body signals you feel quite often.
- Which ones do you find pleasant/unpleasant?
- There are words on the cards to describe the body signals. What other words could you use?
- What animal or plant could a body signal be? For example, goosebumps could be a cactus, a pounding heart could be a bouncing kangaroo.
- How does the meerkat's whole body help communicate what they are feeling? For example, their expressions, gestures, posture, or involuntary behaviours like blushing, sighing, blinking, biting lips, darting gaze.
- Invite participants to act these out and ... really ham it up!
- Do you think body signals are useful? How do they help you? What do they tell you?
- How do you respond to body signals? Do you act on some and ignore others?
- Pick cards for body signals that mean the meerkats feel unsafe or need help.
- What should the meerkats do to get help or to make sure they are safe?
- What could you do and who could you tell when you feel unsafe?



Body Signals

40 laminated, full-colour cards, 120 x 150mm,
polypropylene box, plus booklet.
ISBN: 978 1 925657 12 8
Booklet author: Karen Bedford
Illustrator & designer: Mat Jones

- Butterflies could mean excitement, nausea or fear. Choose other cards that might be interpreted in different ways.
- Have you ever misread a body signal, for example, you thought you were scared but actually you were excited?
- Body signals and emotions often go together. Choose cards that show what happens in your body when you are happy, sad, scared, angry, surprised or disgusted.
- What body signals indicate you are cold, hot, hungry, tired, or need to go to the toilet?
- Pick several cards at random. What would each meerkat say when they are experiencing this body signal? What would they be thinking?
- Sometimes negative 'self-talk' goes with a body signal. For example, blushing is a body signal. The person might feel ashamed or embarrassed, and they might say to themselves, 'I am a hopeless idiot.' Do you have any patterns of negative self-talk associated with a particular body signal? What emotion goes along with that?
- What else could you say instead that is kinder or more neutral or truer?
- Do you sometimes have anxious thoughts and body signals even when you know there is no danger? What can you do to soothe them? (There are many techniques in the booklet.)
- Here is a fun 'externalising' technique: Make up a name for the anxious body signal. For example, a nervous tummy could be 'Wormy Wiggles'. Then you can talk with WW and find out what would help.

