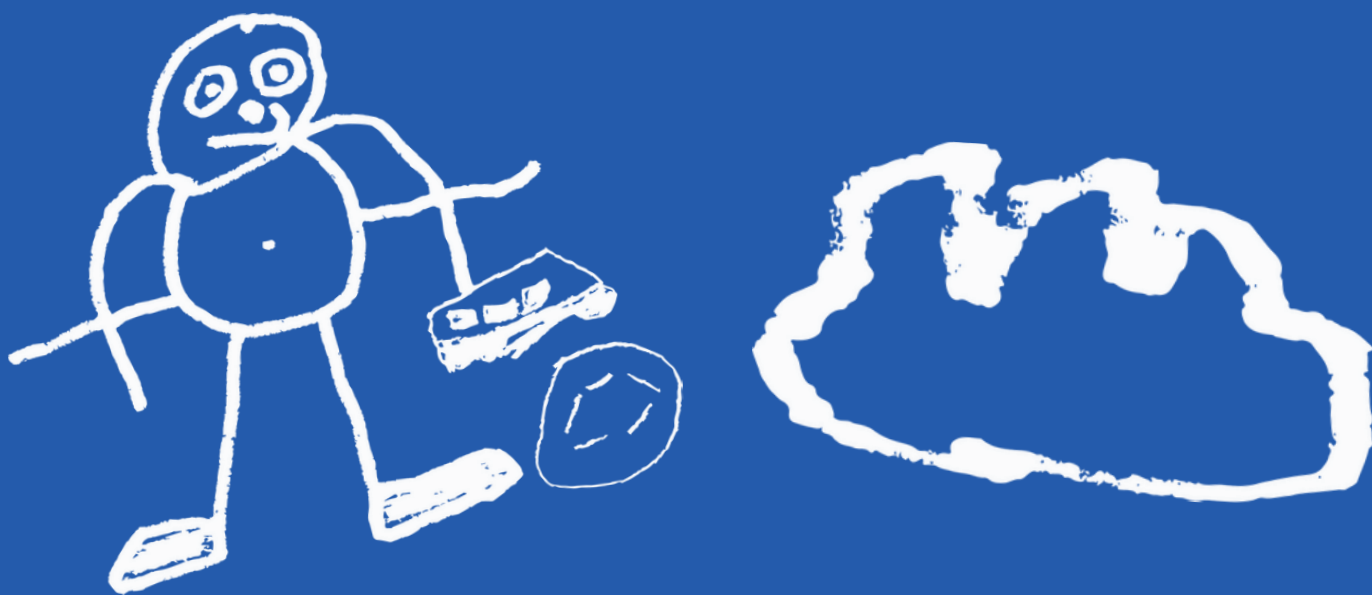


Guide to Children's Participation

Tools & methods for hearing
young children's opinions



MANNERHEIMIN
LASTENSUOJELULIITON
Kaakkois-Suomen piiri

Hearing young children

To ensure children's voices are heard, one must use child-centric and varied methods that facilitate safe self-expression and participation. These methods enable feelings, opinions and experiences to be expressed in various ways - for example verbally, visually and physically.

These methods can be used in a wide variety of situations where children's opinions and feedback are needed. The guidance of an adult and added playfulness helps young children recognize and define their feelings for themselves and adults.

1. Literary and structured methods

Anonymous paper feedback form

Used e.g. at the end of peer groups to collect experiences and constructive criticism.

Mood thermometer

An easy, visual way to express feelings on a good-bad scale.

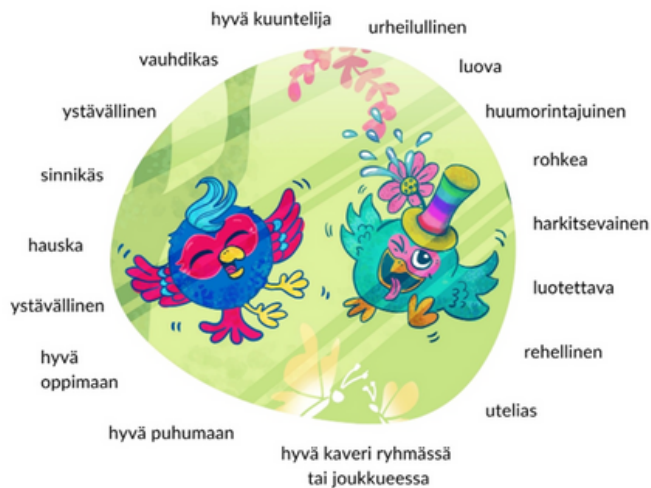


Children with mood thermometers.

Strength card

Helps children internalize and verbalize their own strengths and shortcomings in a reassuring, positive way.

MINÄ OLEN SINUN VAHVUUTESI



MITÄ VOISI VIELÄ KEHITTÄÄ?

itsehillintä	tunteiden ilmaisu	keskittyminen
harkitsevuus	rohkeus	keskustelutaidot
kaveritaidot	rehellisyys	oman mielekkään tekemisen keksiminen
sinnikkyys		omista asioista huolehtiminen

A strength card with positive attributes on the left and shortcomings on the right.

2. Visual and symbolic methods

Mood cards

Mood cards help especially younger children recognize and show their feelings. Children pick a card they feel represents them in the moment.



Examples of mood cards.

Horseshoes

For evaluating feelings and experiences. Children pick one to five horseshoes (or another object) to represent their mood (1 being the lowest). Their choices and reasons for them are then gently discussed.

Mood plushies

For expressing feelings without the need for verbalization.



The popular reversible octopus is an example of a mood plushie.

Traffic lights

Children pick a traffic light color to reflect their mood from green to yellow to red.

Pick a photo

Children pick a photo to reflect their mood from a curated selection. E.g. animals and nature scenes may be used. Children may also take photos themselves.

Marble jars

A number of jars show different answers to a predefined question. Children must then drop a marble in the jar they feel corresponds to their answer to the question. Works well in larger group situations.



3. Bodily and physical methods

Scale or spectrum play

Children physically place themselves along a line representing a scale or spectrum of answers to a predefined question or situation.

For example:

- “Strongly agree - strongly disagree” in relation to statements
- “Not worried - very worried” in relation to questions or situations



Children on a mood scale.

Thumbs

A quick, non-verbal way of collecting feedback - thumbs up, down or sideways.

Pose play

Adults and children first determine which pose means which answer or opinion to a question or situation (e.g. arms up means “I feel good” etc.). Children then strike a pose representing their answer when questioned or presented with a situation.

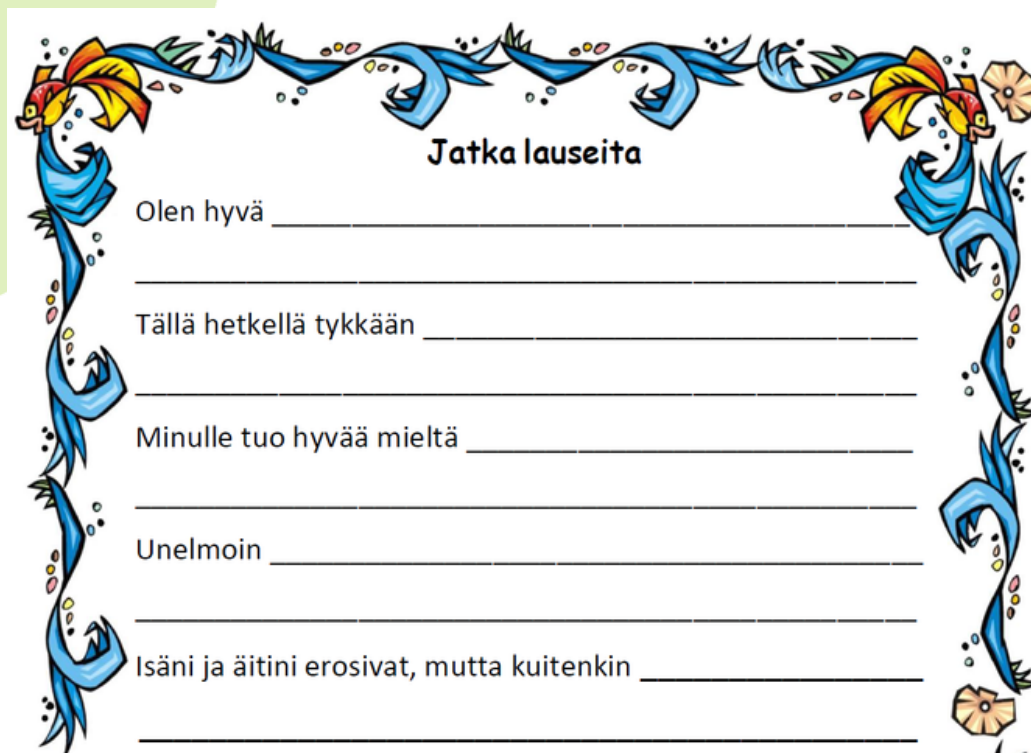
4. Creative and active methods

Drawing, writing, painting, sculpting...

Arts, crafts and creative writing give space for non-structured expressions of feelings. Can be used both individually and in groups. Discussing the results may help children understand their feelings.

Fill in -stories and texts

Children fill in their own words into a partially complete story or text. The given context may help children understand and verbalize their opinions and feelings easier than e.g. writing on a blank page.



Jatka lauseita

Olen hyvä _____

Tällä hetkellä tykkään _____

Minulle tuo hyvää mieltä _____

Unelmoin _____

Isäni ja äitini erosivat, mutta kuitenkin _____

An example of a fill in -page.

Translated lines from top to bottom:

I am good at _____
At the moment I like _____
I am happy when _____
I dream of _____
My parents separated,
but still _____

5. Additional resources (in Finnish)

Kodin tunnetaitajat (A guide to children's feelings for parents)

A thesis work detailing methods and tools for parents to better understand and accommodate their children's feelings and opinions.

Möllö Pöötinen's toolbox

A thesis work with high-quality mood cards, fill in -stories and other methods mentioned in this pamphlet (plus much more!) with lovely illustrations of our joyous mascot, Möllö Pöötinen.



Contents of the toolbox.



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LAPSET ENSIN



Opas saatavana myös
suomeksi.

Guide also available in
Finnish.

kaakkois-suomenpiiri.mll.fi