

# LEGO Education: *Build Me 'Emotions'*



**Price:** £51.99 (ex. VAT) **Contact:** [LEGOeducation.co.uk](http://LEGOeducation.co.uk)

LEGO WINS THE AWARD FOR 'BEST hands-on play experience' standing on one leg, but it goes much deeper than that – it has the power and potential to unlock words and feelings to build conversations and character; it's an emotional experience. I've got lots of LEGO mini-figures at home, and they often help out when needed: if my household want to talk about how they are feeling, there's sure to be something in my collection to mirror an emotion (and swapping heads is easy).

Children readily interact with objects that are designed to represent personalities and the 'minifigs' are perfect for that. But LEGO Education has gone further and tuned into the emotional power of the brick to produce Build Me 'Emotions'. This is the perfect starting point for PSHE work for children aged three to five years, ideal for exploring feelings and for developing a core vocabulary to express them.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED?

The Build Me 'Emotions' set includes 188 classic LEGO DUPLO pieces and eight double-sided building cards. The pieces are joined together to build characters with unique features; children can create a person and compare themselves by looking at expressions, clothing and features. The non-toxic pieces are large, robust, and colourful – as quality is a LEGO obsession, you know the resources are built to the highest standards.

The easy-to-follow cards are what children mimic to construct a

character and an associated emotion. The distinctive yellow faces in the set each show a different emotion, and because the cards are double-sided, children can flip their people around to express different feelings (there are 16 in all). The fun is copying each character and building it, but this activity is also an open door to discuss why a particular character is feeling that way. What has happened to her? Who has made him feel like that?

Whilst the building cards provide support and inspiration for children to build and rebuild characters, teachers can rely on tips, ideas, vocabulary and learning values included in the set. There are excellent online activity videos to help inspire you to incorporate it into your planning – with this level of support, you get extremely good value for money.

## ENDLESS LEARNING

What this ingenious set does is allow children to explore their connections to others, including family and friends, which in turn helps them understand the emotional needs of others. They can be used for role play in different scenarios, and allow children to experience emotions in playful settings. Whilst children might start off using common words like 'happy', 'sad' and 'angry', the characters provide you with golden opportunities to explore alternatives, what they mean and how people react and interact. Rather than lose their heads, children can pick up the pieces, build a character and create meaning.

Obviously copying the building cards is the starting point, but you can go off piste by encouraging children to create their own characters, build their own scenarios, problems and stories to act out. This is the beauty of LEGO.

Effective hands-on materials that teach emotions and social skills are very difficult to find, but LEGO Education have come up trumps here.

They have made talking about complex feelings and emotions really rather simple and enjoyable. When selecting

any resource I ask myself, "Do I want this?" and in this case the answer is a firm 'yes', because my PSHE tool-kit is crying out for something hands- and minds-on. Once opened and played with a few times, I then ask, "Do children want more of it?" and the answer to that is also 'yes'. One month later, Build Me 'Emotions' will not be in the cupboard; it will be played with and rebuilt many times over.

Build Me 'Emotions' could easily be used as a sort of LEGO therapy, especially for supporting children with autism, emotional and behavioural disorders, and other challenges in the area of communication and social skills. But in whatever way you use this set, it will provide a safe and supportive learning context in which children can develop their personalities, share feelings, ask questions, draw on their experiences and have fun.



## THE VERDICT

**In 2009 LEGO DUPLO was judged by educational psychologists at the University of Nottingham as being the ultimate educational toy. If they saw this character building set today they would probably explode with new superlatives. It helps children understand the social world they live in, and teaches them to express their feelings and needs, while recognising those of others.**

