



Zara's Colors of Feeling

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Eight-year-old Zara sits on her bedroom rug with a sketchpad and a box of watercolor paints. She wonders why her body feels so different on different days, from her warm toes to her tingly fingertips. Today, she decides to use her paints to explore the secret magic of her feelings.



On a sunny afternoon at the beach, Zara runs across the warm sand while flying her colorful batik kite. Her chest feels light and bubbly, her cheeks ache from smiling, and her feet feel light enough to bounce off the ground. She visualizes a bright, warm yellow light beaming right out from her heart.



Zara realizes this bright yellow sensation in her chest and bouncy legs is Happiness. It fills her body like sunshine, making her fingers want to create and her feet want to dance. She dips her brush into brilliant yellow paint to swirl happy sunbeams on her paper.



Later that evening, a sudden tropical thunderstorm rattles the windowpanes with a loud crack of thunder. Zara clutches her blanket tight as a cold knot tightens in her tummy and her heart flutters fast like a trapped butterfly. Her whole body shivers beneath the blanket.



Zara recognizes this chilly, fluttering feeling in her tummy and chest as Fear. A cool shade of deep midnight blue wraps around her body, showing her that her heart is trying to protect her. She paints soft blue ripples across the paper to give her fear a safe place to rest.



The next day at school, Zara accidentally knocks over her water cup, soaking her carefully painted artwork. A heavy weight settles in the center of her chest, a soft lump grows in her throat, and hot tears prick the corners of her eyes. Her shoulders drop heavily toward her knees.



This heavy ache in her heart and lump in her throat is Sadness. Raindrop-colored shades of muted slate blue and soft grey stream down from her shoulders to her toes. Zara breathes gently, painting soft grey teardrops on her canvas as she learns it is okay to feel sad.



During recess, another child snatches Zara's favorite jump rope right out of her hands without asking. In an instant, her hands clench tight into fists, her cheeks burn hot, and a swift surge of energy stomps all the way down into her feet.



Zara identifies this fiery surge in her palms and warm cheeks as Anger. A brilliant crimson red sparkles brightly through her hands and face, signaling that someone crossed a boundary. She takes a long, slow breath, painting a bold red heart to remind herself to speak up calmly and firmly.



Sitting cozy on the veranda with her mother at sunset, Zara looks down at her completed masterpiece filled with yellow, dark blue, soft grey, and fiery red. She places a gentle hand on her chest and smiles, proud that she knows how to listen to every color and feeling inside her body.