

Takalani Sesame's new *Big Feelings Special* gets children talking about their emotions

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National heroes **Banyana Banyana** and comedian **David Kau** are joining the much-loved crew from *Takalani Sesame* to teach children and their families how to manage their emotions in *The Big Feelings Special*, airing on SABC 2 at 5:30pm on Saturday, 20 May 2023.



With South African families still dealing with the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, and now facing more challenges such as load shedding and the ever-rising cost of living, it's understandable that many of us may be feeling overwhelmed by the big feelings that result from dealing with the pressures of everyday life.

"Children are especially vulnerable to these pressures, and this is why we've stepped in with a brand-new family special program that aims to help children understand why we sometimes feel the way we do and how we can cope with Big Feelings," says **Innocent Nkata**, managing director of Sesame Workshop South Africa, the nonprofit organisation behind *Takalani Sesame*.

The Big Feelings Special demonstrates what to do when those big feelings take hold – with the help of *Takalani Sesame* stars (three-and-a-half-year-old Elmo; six-year-old Zuzu and taxi driver Zikwe).

“Big feelings frequently threaten to overwhelm us,” Nkata points out. “But, if you know how to work through them, they won’t disrupt your day as much. That’s why being able to manage big feelings not only helps us; but it’s also beneficial for the friends and family around us.”



With many families still feeling the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, it’s an apt time for the special, says Nkata. Research from the World Health Organisation (WHO) shows that there has been a 25% increase in anxiety and depression since the onset of the pandemic. While this is a global trend, it has hit hard in South Africa, where the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) reports that one in three people in this country have – or will – experience mental health distress at some point.

Big Feelings can happen to anyone from presidents to musicians and national sports icons. In this special, Banyana Banyana team members are experiencing some big feelings as they’re preparing for the Fifa Women’s World Cup, which takes place in Australia and New Zealand this July, and they can use some help to cope with the pressure of the big challenge ahead. *The Big Feelings Special* sees the *Takalani Sesame* furry gang bringing their unique brand of fun as they make their way to meet the Banyana Banyana team and sing them a song.

“This is one of the show’s highlights: we want children to know that everyone experiences big feelings at some point. They’re not alone,” Nkata adds.

Takalani Sesame has been reaching and teaching children for more than 23 years, helping them grow smarter, stronger, and kinder thanks to its playful take on education with an early childhood development curriculum rooted in the needs of local children. Using a blend of catchy music and appearances from popular celebrities (like Banyana Banyana and comedian David Kau), the programme is able to take on important topics through playful learning, making them accessible and easy to understand.

The Big Feelings Special is part of Sesame Workshop’s [long-standing commitment](#) to the emotional well-being of children and their families.

“The past few years have been a very difficult time for everyone, and many families are struggling to find a balance. *The Takalani Sesame Big Feelings Special* is a helpful tool that empowers children and their families (or caregivers) to cope in difficult times as we all try to navigate challenging situations,” Nkata concludes.

The Big Feelings Special airs on SABC 2 at 5:30pm on Saturday, 20 May 2023.

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