


South West London and St George's 
Mental Health NHS Trust

Supporting your child to manage and express their emotions


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PLAN FOR THE SESSION:

- ❖ Emotions and our behaviour
- ❖ What is emotional regulation and why is it important?
- ❖ What can we do to help?


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FUNCTIONS OF EMOTIONS

- 👍 Emotions provide us with a signal that something significant is happening which is necessary for our survival.
- For example some responses are hardwired like startle response to loud noises
- 👍 They help motivate us to take action to change or process a situation
- For example fear teaches us to stay away from things that may harm us
- 👍 Enable us to communicate to - and impact on - others
- How you communicate emotions by words, body language or behaviour impacts how others respond to you. For example a baby crying will elicit a response from a caregiver

REMEMBER EMOTIONS ARE WHAT MAKE US HUMAN AND ARE A GOOD THING - THEY ARE EXTREMELY HELPFUL.

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EMOTIONS ARE VERY HELPFUL BUT SOMETIMES THE WAY WE EXPRESS THEM IS NOT

Fighting with siblings
 Refusing to do homework = ATTEMPTS TO MANAGE AND EXPRESS BIG EMOTIONS
 Refusing to tidy up LIKE ANGER, FRUSTRATION, DISSAPPOINTMENT, CONFUSION
 Telling fibs
 Throwing tantrums

Why? ➡ Emotion dysregulation

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EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Emotional regulation refers to a person's ability to express their feelings in a constructive way.

1.. 2.. 3.. 4.. 5.. 6.. 7.. 8.. 9.. 10




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HOW DO YOU HELP YOUR CHILD REGULATE THEIR EMOTIONS?

1. Foster a stable and supportive environment, where children feel able to talk about their emotions.
2. Help your child understand their emotions and develop the language they need to be able to express themselves.
3. Model emotional regulation.

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1. FOSTERING A STABLE SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT:

- When home life feels stable and safe, children can depend on having a secure base from which to deal with the less predictable world outside.
- Create an environment at home where talking about feelings is seen as a positive thing BUT don't hound children and give them space if they don't want to talk straight away AND make sure they are not in a highly aroused state when you talk (CALM DOWN first)

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2. HELPING CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THEIR EMOTIONS:

Young children often do not have the experience or vocabulary needed to tell us how they feel and manage big emotions on their own which is why they may express these emotions through behaviour which grabs our attention.

When we then attend straight to the behaviour and miss out the emotion behind it we are missing an opportunity to teach children about the emotion they are feeling and how they can manage it in a more helpful way.

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HOW MIGHT YOU RESPOND?



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COMMON RESPONSES:

Refuting:

"You don't hate me"
"You're not stupid!"
"You love carrots!"

Questioning:

"Why.....?"
"What's happened?"
"What do you want me to do?!"

Giving Advice:

"People won't like you if you say things like that"
"Let me help you its obviously too hard"
"Why don't you try"

SOME OF THESE MAY BE HELPFUL WHEN THE CHILD IS CALM
BUT IN THE MOMENT THEY ARE EXPERIENCING BIG EMOTION
THEY ARE UNABLE TO PROCESS THESE QUESTIONS OR PROBLEM SOLVE

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WHY ARE THEY UNABLE TO PROCESS THIS AND WHY FOCUS ON EMOTIONS?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bKuoH8CkFc>

SO, WHAT CAN WE DO INSTEAD?

1. Try to think from your child's perspective – what might they be feeling? Name it to tame it!
2. Notice what YOU are feeling and try to stay calm. We need to be able to regulate our emotions before we can help children to regulate theirs.

'NAME IT TO TAME IT'

I hate you!

You are showing me you are so cross right now – that is ok sometimes we feel angry with each other. Why don't you go and sit somewhere to calm down.

I can't do it!

You are so frustrated that you can't do that question right now, you have tried so hard – try a different one instead.

Not eating it!
That's yuck!

You are disappointed with what is for dinner tonight aren't you – we don't always get to have our favourite! When you try it then you can have pudding.

WHEN AND WHERE TO INTERVENE?

- Recognise what happens in a child's body when they are experiencing strong feelings. When is it time to intervene and time not to?
- Time out to calm down – a safe planned space for them to calm down. Stay near but not too close. Choose this place with them when they are calm and use a toy to model it.
- Don't try to talk about it too early (ask why, give advice etc.) or expect an apology. Just acknowledge emotions.
- Reflect – once everyone is calm, reflect, process, problem solve and if you need to set limits. Do not waste time trying to do this during times of high emotion!

TOOLKIT FOR HELPING TO MANAGE EMOTIONS:

Breathing exercises

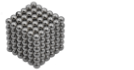
Deep breathing using your hand.



Muscle relaxation

Turtle technique

Stress balls



Calm down menu of above choices



3. MODEL EMOTIONAL REGULATION:



- When children are expressing big emotions in unhelpful ways this can provoke big feelings in us too – it is helpful to be mindful of this when responding to them. What are they learning from this?
- Show your child it's good to talk about feelings by talking about your own when appropriate as well as constructive ways of managing these emotions. For example - "I'm getting really frustrated with my laptop because it's not working. I'm going to go have a cup of tea, and maybe I'll be able to work out what to do when I've calmed down."

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STORIES AND METAPHORS

Using books to help children learn about emotions- and how to manage them

Letting them act out scenarios to try and make sense of what's happened – play with puppets, drawing, role plays

