

HELPING KIDS REGULATE BIG EMOTIONS

In various aspects of our lives, we have all seen children become overwhelmed by big emotions, whether it's not being picked for a team, not getting to play with a toy, struggling with homework, or worrying about different situations. As children grow, it is crucial to help them process these feelings and develop effective emotion regulation skills that they can carry with them throughout life, regardless of their age or environment.

Emotional regulation is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions in a healthy way. It plays a role in all aspects of life and has been shown to reduce behavioral issues, improve social skills with peers and adults, enhance academic achievement, and help individuals cope with life's challenges. Children will inevitably face situations that cause stress, sadness, anger, and frustration. As parents, guardians, teachers, and supportive individuals, our role is to teach and assist them in managing their emotions effectively.

Here are some ways to help children improve their emotion regulation skills:

- **Teach and model effective emotion regulation skills.** As adults, the way we handle stress, anger, and sadness sets an example for children. If we struggle with emotion regulation, it's likely that the children around us will as well. Instead of reacting with anger or frustration, communication is key. Letting children know, "I am frustrated right now and need some space," is a healthy way to model self-regulation. Teaching children to use "I statements" can also be helpful. For example: "I feel angry because I lost the game. I need to take a break." This approach helps them express emotions clearly and constructively.



- **Help children name their emotions.** Teaching kids to identify what their bodies feel like physically and emotionally can make it easier for them to express their feelings appropriately. Using characters from Inside Out or other familiar examples can help illustrate what emotions like anger, sadness, and joy look like.
- **Create a safe space for discussing emotions.** Encouraging open conversations about feelings allows children to process their emotions and build trust. Providing reassurance and a judgment-free environment can make a significant difference.
- **Introduce calming techniques.** Strategies such as deep breathing, taking a break, finding a comfort object (a blanket, toy, etc.), spending time with loved ones, or talking with a friend can all be helpful in managing emotions.

Learning to regulate emotions is a lifelong skill that benefits children and individuals of all ages. By developing these skills, children can better manage frustrations and stressors, improve their well-being, and support others in doing the same.



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