

PARENT EMOTION COACHING COACHING



Fidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

PARENT EMOTION COACHING

Who is this group for?

This group is to help parents to build skills in supporting the emotional development of children. All children need help in developing skills to manage their emotions. This group will talk about ways to support your child when they feel anxious, nervous, angry or frustrated.



Why are emotional regulation skills important?

Emotional regulation includes:

1. How a child expresses emotions,
2. Which things he/she will focus on,
3. How he/she interprets a situation, and
4. How he/she will respond to a situation.

The ability to regulate emotion is related to academic performance in school, social skills, as well as mental and physical health later in life.





What causes emotional regulation difficulties?

There are things we cannot always control that impact on a child's ability to regulate their emotions such as:

- The child's natural temperament, which includes:
 - His/her natural activity level
 - His/her attention span and persistence
 - His/her willingness to approach or withdraw from novel or unfamiliar contexts
 - His/her quality or intensity of emotional expression
- Learning difficulties
- Difficult life events:
 - Bullying
 - Bereavements
 - Parental separation
 - Traumatic events
 - Ongoing stress in the environment which can impact on stability and predictability at home.

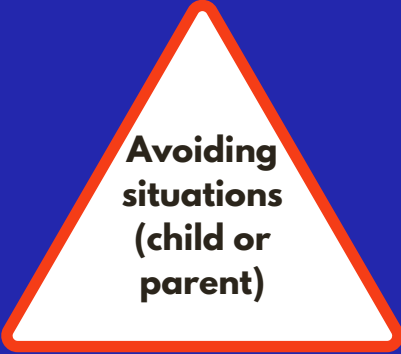
However there are some things we can change that positively impact how children regulate their emotions:

- How families talk about emotions – children need to learn that all emotions, even unpleasant ones, are healthy. Children also need to learn that emotions provide useful information and that there are things they can do to manage emotions if they feel their emotions are getting too strong or lasting for too long.
- Differences in how families cope with stress – children pick up on the coping strategies of those around them. So it is important that parents see taking care of themselves as equally important to their parenting.

What are some of the signs that a child is having difficulty regulating emotions?




**Regular
tantrums/
emotional
"meltdowns"**



**Avoiding
situations
(child or
parent)**



**Struggles
to express
emotions
appropriately**



**Difficulty
concentrating
and problem
solving**



**Higher
likelihood
of anxiety,
withdrawal, low
mood**



**Difficulty
building/
maintaining
friendships**



**Difficulty
adapting to
challenging
situations**



**Repetitive
questioning
and reassurance
seeking**



**Repetitive
actions or
need to
control**

Which of these fits your child?

How do you as parents support building emotional regulation skills?

Through play, praise, labelling emotions, talking about emotions, and modelling appropriate problem solving and coping strategies (e.g. relaxation).

What emotions are ok to feel?

All of them.

We all experience pleasant and unpleasant emotions from time to time and that's OK. It is important to learn how to appropriately express our emotions.

REMEMBER!

As parents you are not the only ones experiencing difficulties.

It is never about blame of the child or the parent. Blame is unhelpful and leads everyone to feeling stuck. But remember, as parents, you are in the best position to help your child grow in confidence!

Setting SMART goals

What are your goals?

Goals should be:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Reasonable
Timed



How to set **SMART** goals:

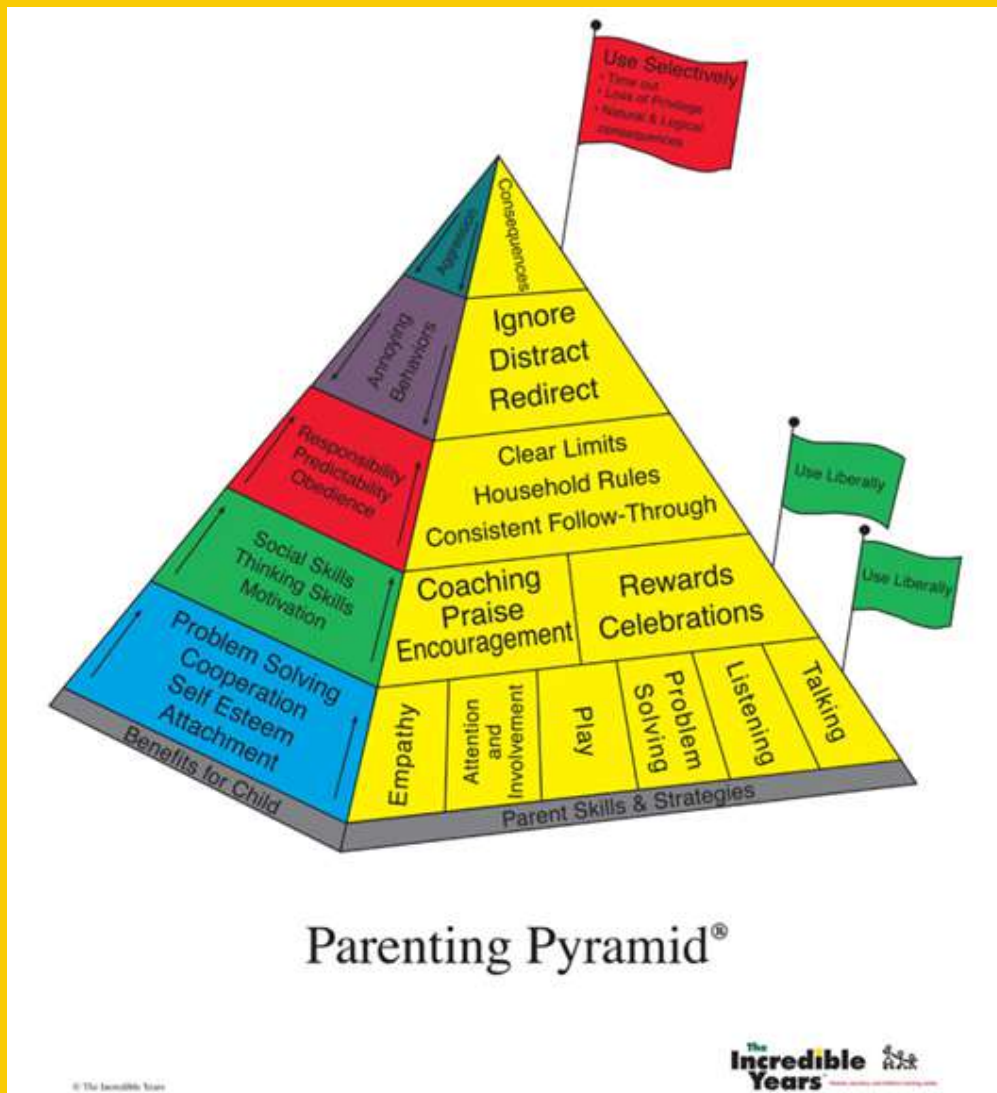
- State each goal as a positive statement.
- Be precise.
- Set priorities
- Keep goals small and attainable
- Focus on performance goals, not outcome goals
- Set realistic goals

PARENT EMOTION COACHING

SPECIAL PLAY

WELCOME BACK!

In this session we are going to talk about Special Play Time



The Parenting Pyramid

You might have seen the parenting pyramid if you completed the Incredible Years Parenting Programme. Notice how more space at the bottom is given to play, praise, problem solving etc. and less space is given to consequences. This is because we recommend you spend more time with the tasks at the bottom of the pyramid than with those at the top. Children need the things at the bottom to be in place to build a positive relationship with their parents in order to receive the consequences at the top, such as loss of privilege etc. The relationship is the foundation of the parenting pyramid, without it the pyramid collapses. Play is a keystone of that.

Special Play



Why is special play important?

- Children learn through play.
- Play builds the parent/child relationship.
- Play promotes physical development, cognitive development, speech and language, social skills, emotional development, identity and self-esteem.
- Play is fun, helps us to feel good, and to experience joy and laughter.
- Special play is a happy time for children and parents.

THE PARENT'S ROLE IS TO WATCH AND COMMENT ON THE CHILD'S PLAY. THE CHILD IS TO HAVE THE CONTROL OF THE PLAY.

1. Praising your child



PARENTS CAN DO THIS BY:

2. Showing affection



3. Imitating you child's words and gestures



5. Letting your child lead



6. Avoiding criticism and judgement



4. Preparing for ending by giving warnings and linking the ending to a concrete activity

7. Avoiding questioning your child



What to be prepared for

A lot of people find it an awkward way of interacting with children on their first few attempts, often feeling embarrassed or inadvertently reverting to old habits like taking charge. Problems such as battles over ending play, finding time to play, and playing with more than one child at once are also to be expected. Be prepared for this and do your best, reminding yourself of the importance of special play. You can manage difficulties over ending special play time by warning your child that the end is coming (e.g. five more minutes to go) and then at the end of special play time giving your child the option of continuing to play by themselves or coming with you to help with a chore or something.

Praising your child

**WHY DO WE
PRAISE?**



Praising children builds self-esteem and increases positive behaviours.

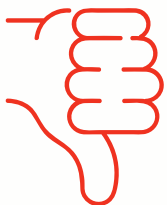
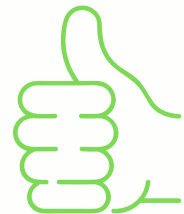


How to give effective praise

1. Show enthusiasm and approval. Use praise, smile, and touch
2. Praise immediately and appropriately
3. Label the praise and describe the positive behaviour
4. Give a clear, specific description of what your child did well (e.g. I really liked how you put your toys back in the box when you were finished playing with them.)
5. Praise your child's efforts to regulate emotions (e.g. I can see you worked really hard to be patient in the queue by taking deep breaths.)
6. Give a reason for praise
7. Tell your child how that behaviour helps them (e.g. when you take deep breaths it helps you stay calm.)
8. Give a positive consequence (optional)



- Praise yourself (positive self-talk) (e.g. I'm good at reading bedtime stories)
- Catch your child being good & praise
- Praise the effort and process
- Increase praise for children who experience more difficulty
- Praise in front of other people
- Model self-praise



- Worry about spoiling your children with praise
- Combine praise with criticism or commands (e.g. well done for setting the table but you should have listened to me the first time I asked you/ I really like how you are tidying your room but hurry up and do it faster)

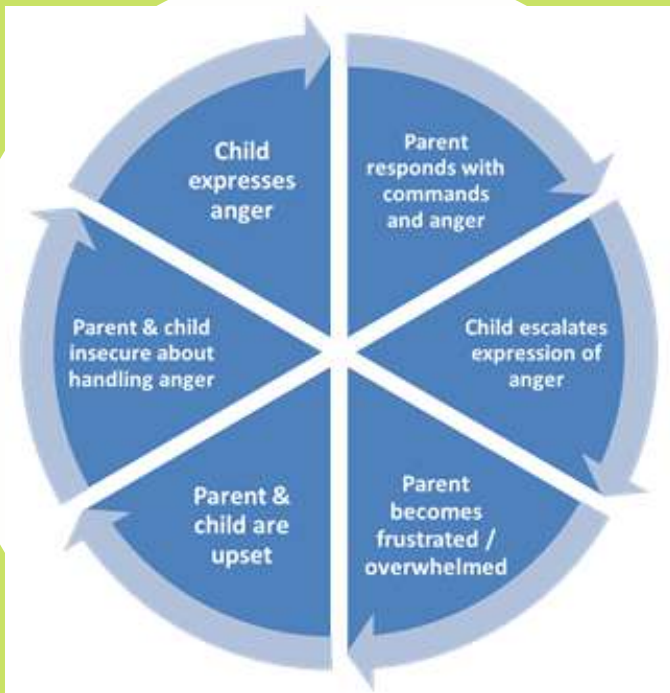
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Dealing with BIG feelings

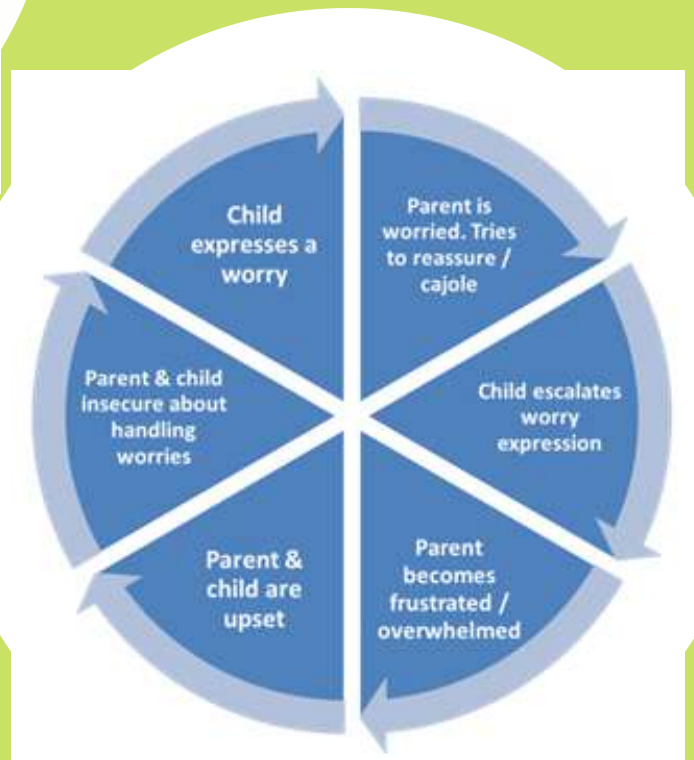


What happens when we...

1. Respond to anger with anger

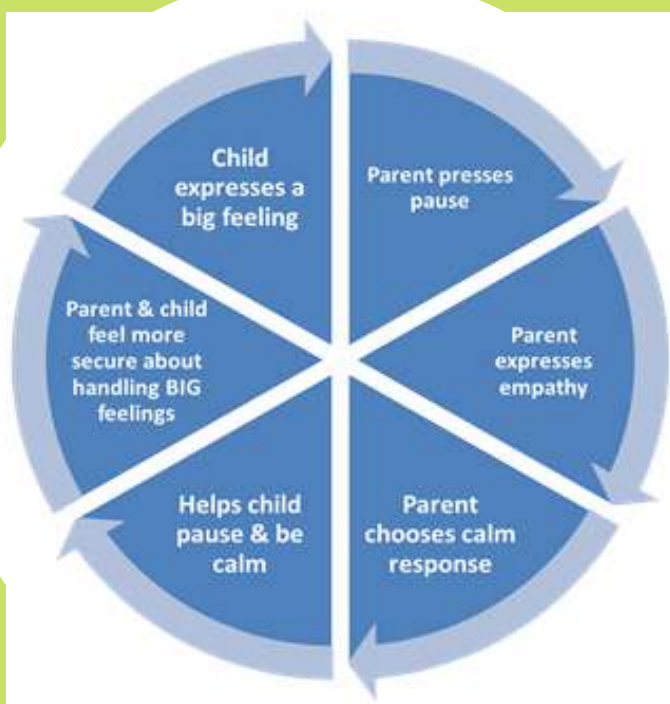


2. Respond to worry with worry/reassurance



3. Pause in the face of big feelings

- Stay calm- offer brief reassurance
- Take a step back if needed, once your child is safe
- Use your breathing
- Think positively
- Affirmations- "Whatever happens, I will remain positive and calm"





Encouraging feeling talk

View every emotional expression as an opportunity for talking about feelings

Avoid:

- Responding by giving your opinion on the child's actions or giving advice
- Dismissing emotions (communicates that it is not ok to have that emotion)
- Excessively reassuring (relieves anxiety in the moment, but keeps it alive in the long run)

Emotion regulation: Recognising feelings

- Feelings expressed in the body (e.g. tummy ache, sweating, red face)
- Feelings expressed in behaviour (e.g. withdrawal, crying, hitting, disrupted sleep)
- Feelings expressed through words (e.g. "I feel.....")

As we grow up we all move from expressing feelings only in our bodies to then starting to express emotions through our behaviour. With time we learn to express our emotions through words.

REMEMBER!

- Consistent limits, clear rules, and predictable routines help children know what to expect and are soothing.
- Emotional outbursts are not intentional it is just a sign your child needs help making sense of their emotions.
- Listen carefully to children when they are talking about emotions without giving advice or judgement. This is difficult to do! But think about the last time you had a strong emotion – did you need someone to listen?
- Use when children are starting to become dysregulated.
- "Tune in" to the underlying emotion.
- Make a simple statement identifying the emotion and linking it to the current situation. (e.g. "I can see you're feeling sad that it is time to leave the playground").
- Using emotional literacy promotes children's emotional literacy.

Key message: Importance of being with the feeling and not doing something about the feelings.



Dealing with BIG feelings

5 Steps to Calm and Centered

(Even When Your Child is Out of Control)

Observe

your child's emotions with an open-heart. See their smallness and how the emotions are bigger than they are.



Get Centered

Your emotions are separate from your child's. Root yourself to the earth and engage your core. Say your mantra. Ride this wave Mama!



Acknowledge
Connect
Teach!



Have a Plan

Build up your parenting toolbox so you have a plan on how to help your child regulate.



Take Care of Yourself

You cannot pour from an empty cup. Live in the moment. Find ways to take breaks and savor, even with the kids around.



Don't be Perfect

It's impossible! Know what to do when you do lose it. Own it. Apologize, and Identify.



Ashley Soderlund Ph.D.

For more on how to implement this guide visit NurtureandThriveBlog.com

Helping children recognise emotional build up

1. Early Warning Stage- grumbling, sulking, body aches and pains, looking for reassurance
2. Second Stage- Looking tense, worried, moody
3. Explosive stage- very distressed, emotional/explosive outbursts

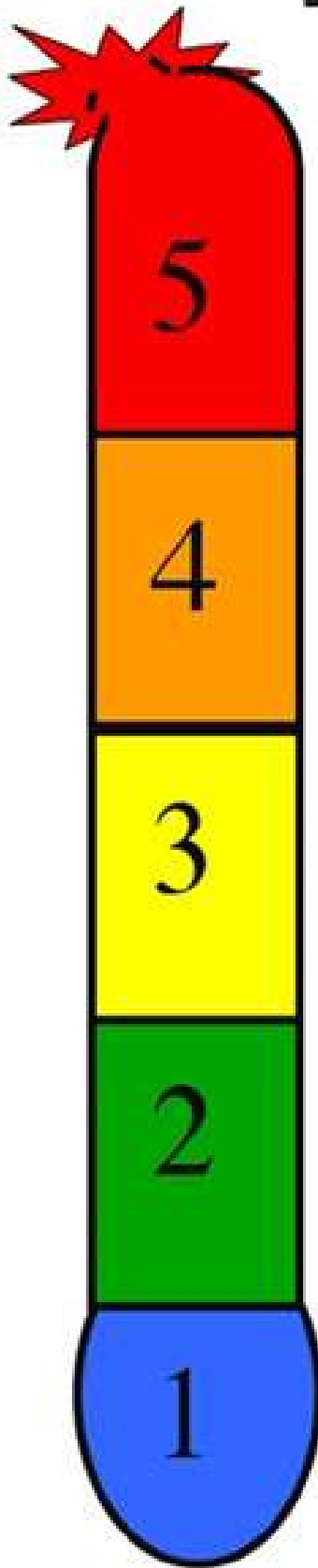
What do these stages look like for your child? You can complete the template below with them to identify their different stages.



Helping children to recognise emotional buildup

- Help children track changes in the build-up of tension
- Make them aware when they are regulating their emotions and praise their efforts (e.g. I can see that you are angry that your brother knocked over your toys and I really like how you are trying to stay calm).
- Teach positive self-talk (e.g. I am good at making nice dinners for you).
- You can intervene early before they are too distressed or after incident is over (children are usually too dysregulated during a tantrum to respond to parental intervention).
- At lower levels of distress encourage children to talk about their feelings and to express frustration (e.g. “How does that make you feel?”, “can you show me on your feeling thermometer how you are feeling?”, “sometimes when I don’t win I feel sad, do you feel sad?”).
- Afterwards problem solve and discuss what happened and how the child might handle it differently next time (e.g. “How did you feel when that happened?”, “What else can you do when you feel worried?”, “Next time you feel angry you can try taking deep breaths to help you stay calm”).

's Stress Scale



Looks like	Feels Like	'I can''

PARENT EMOTION COACHING UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

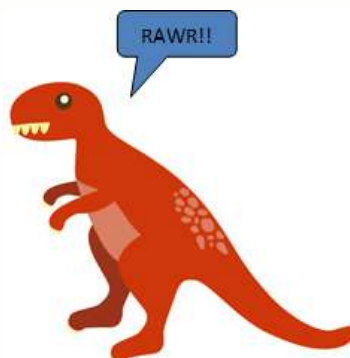


Anxiety:

- Is a normal feeling experienced by everyone on a daily basis.
- Is an evolutionary aspect of development that is essential to keep us alive. If we didn't feel anxious we would not avoid risky situations (i.e. moving out of the way of cars on the road).
- Has a function. It prepares us when under threat so that we can deal with danger.
- Prepares our body and minds to fight, flight, or freeze- uses our resources to protect us.
- Is part of life and something to cope with rather than expect to get rid of.

What are the physical sensations that everybody gets in their bodies when they are feeling anxious?

The Fight/Flight Response



The bit of the brain that deals with being scared is exactly the same as it was 10,000 years ago. So, when we feel scared, or when our child feels scared, we act as if we have just seen a dinosaur, and our body tries to make us run away. Now, running away might not be the best way of dealing with being scared of the dentist, of school, or of the toilet, but it is what our caveman brain tells us to do.

Can the flight/fight response be harmful?

No it's not harmful at all. Although it feels like something awful is happening to your child when he/she has the fight/flight response, in fact they are not in any danger. You can not faint during fight/flight. The physical sensations your child feels when upset or anxious are completely harmless

THE ROLE OF AVOIDANCE

Here's a short story you can tell your children about avoidance:

Once upon a time, a long, long, long time ago, there was a little tribe of villagers. These villagers were poor, but they were happy, for they lived at the bottom of a huge volcano. And, as you know, volcanoes are very lush and fertile places. They would wake up in the morning, and go up the mountain to collect a wonderful feast. All sorts of things grew on this volcano = peach trees, chocolate hobnob bushes.

Then one day, something terrifying happened. There was a storm. But the villagers hadn't seen a storm before, they were terrified! What is happening to our mountain? They said. Just then, one of the villagers elders spoke up "ahh, it is the dog in the mountain. He is angry with us for taking his food". The next day the sun rose, and it was time for the villagers to go up the volcano to collect their food....but no one dared go up the mountain....and so it continued for years.

The villagers scraped a living and life was not easy but they survived. As the years went by, the rumours about the volcano grew and grew. Soon, it was not a dog in the mountain, but a lion in the mountain, then a dragon, and eventually, a fire, breathing, baby-eating, dragon in the mountain, and there was No way that anyone was going up there to get food.

Then, one year, the rains didn't come, and the crops failed. The villagers had nothing to eat, and soon they were on the verge of starvation. They called a village meeting, to decide what they should do. They decided to send an elder to go up the mountain, so see if there really was a dragon. So, the old man started walking up the mountain. His legs were shaky, his chest was tight, he felt that he might faint, but still he walked, up and up the mountain. Soon, he reached the top of the mountain to discover there's no such thing as dragons. He filled his baskets with food, and climbed back down the mountain where they all had an enormous feast and lived happily every after.

SO, WHAT CAN THIS STORY TEACH US ABOUT AVOIDANCE?

- Avoidance behaviour maintains anxiety.
- If we avoid things that we are frightened of, we do not get the opportunity to find out that they are harmless.
- We also miss out on opportunities to learn new coping skills.
- The longer we avoid, the bigger the fear gets.
- You have to go “up the mountain” to test it out.
- If you do not test a fear as soon as possible, it gets bigger, and bigger and bigger until it is the size of a terrifying dragon.



Going up the mountain “to push or not to push?”

Pushing your own child to go “up the mountain” and test out their fears can be the toughest thing you will do on this course so it is important that you are prepared for it. We have found that parents are much more likely to help their children test out their fears if all of their own worries and concerns about doing this have first been heard and addressed. It can be helpful to make a list looking at the pros and cons of encouraging your child to face his/her fears. Have a look at our example below.



Pros:

- "My child will be more confident"
- "He/she will have a better life"
- "He will feel good about himself"
- "I will feel great at as a parent "
- "Family life will be easier"
- "She will have learned a useful skill"



Cons:

- "It could harm my child"
- "It could go wrong"
- "my child will hate me"
- "I will get upset"
- "It will be hassle"

BEING AN ANXIETY COACH



- Name feelings
- Link bodily sensations to underlying emotion e.g. butterflies in stomach = nervousness.
- Encourage your child to talk about feelings e.g. if they are upset ask them about it and encourage them to open up about it.
- Validate your child's emotions e.g. if your child is scared, let them know that this is okay and hear them out and do not minimise their feelings.
- Don't swoop to reassure- brainstorm for solutions, work with your child to take small steps to be brave (stairway to bravery).

Encourage your child to talk about how their body feels when they experience different types of feelings. If they complain of a tummy ache/headache etc., explain that it might be their body's way of telling them something e.g. are they feeling worried or nervous about something? Talk to your children about anxiety – children can think they are the only one experiencing anxiety.

Do kids copy their parents?

Remember your child's stress radar! If you are a parent of an anxious child, you have to be extra careful to model ways of coping with anxiety to your child.



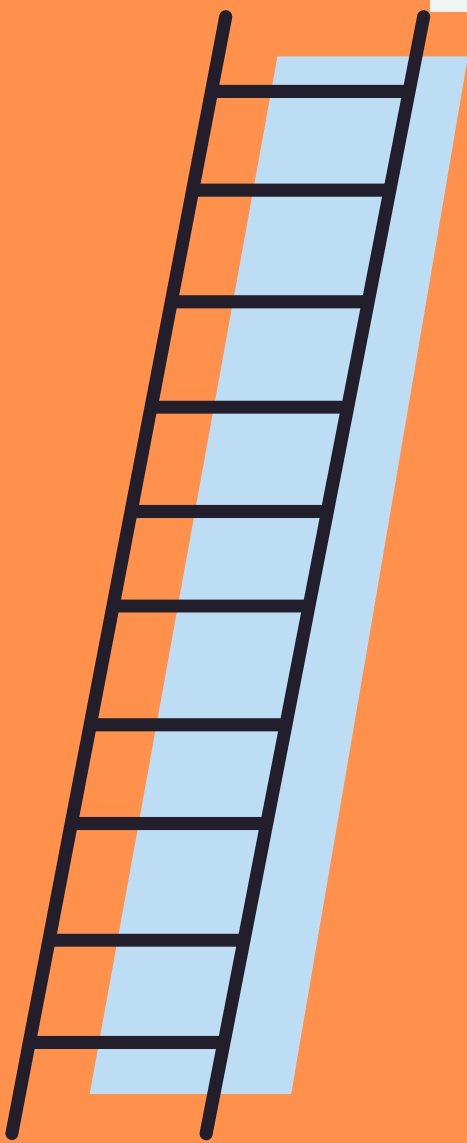
Supporting Exposure: Stairway to bravery

- Taking the problem step by step
- Bottom step – should be achievable and just about what a child can comfortably do now
- Top step - Ultimate goal
- Creating a hierarchy of fears
- It DOESN'T MATTER how many steps there are!!



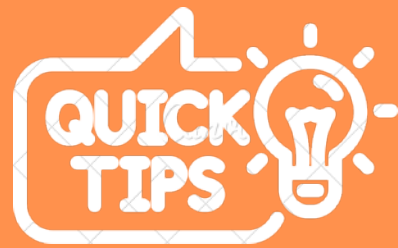
STAIRWAY TO BRAVERY

LETS BREAKDOWN OUR GOAL INTO SMALLER STEPS



GOAL

STAIRWAY TO BRAVERY



1) Explain to the child what you are doing – get them involved in planning the stairway and the rewards, if possible.

2) Start on the bottom step. This should be pretty easy, as this should be something that they child can already just about do. This ensures that they child has an early experience of success with the stairway, and quickly and painlessly becomes familiar with it's workings.

3) Give tons of praise for each step – even if it doesn't go particularly well. Small rewards should be planned well in advance.

4) Repeat each step, several times if necessary until the child is really pretty comfortable with it, before moving onto the next step.

5) Pay attention to how the first attempt goes, if it goes really badly then consider making the step a little easier. It's completely normal to tweak the stairway as you go.

6) It is important to consider the best time to attempt a new step i.e. not tired and in a good frame of mind. You might also consider your own frame of mind and its impact on the process.



What kind of fears could be faced using a hierarchy?

Brainstorm: How would you break a simple phobia into steps?

Check out this example:

STEPS	FEAR FACTOR
Go to sleepover at classmates house	10
Invite classmate over for a sleepover	9
Go to classmates birthday party	8
Arrange to meet classmate at the weekend	7
Call classmate and invite to a movie	6
Invite classmate after school	6
Join classmate in game in the yard	5
Ask classmate to eat lunch together	4
Ask a classmate about homework	3
Suggest a game to a class mate for the yard	2
Ask classmate what they did at the weekend	1

‘YOU DON'T HAVE
TO SEE THE WHOLE
STAIRCASE, JUST
TAKE THE FIRST
STEP.’

PARENT EMOTION COACHING

WORRY

Is worry normal?

Yes it is completely normal for young children to worry about things. The aim is for children to worry in a productive way and have some control over their less useful worries.

When is worry good?

Worry is normal and can be sometimes useful when used properly and in the right circumstances. For example how many of us would have ever passed exams if we hadn't got a little worried about them?

What can you do to help?

It can be useful to distinguish between worries that just need a bit of problem solving and those that need challenging.

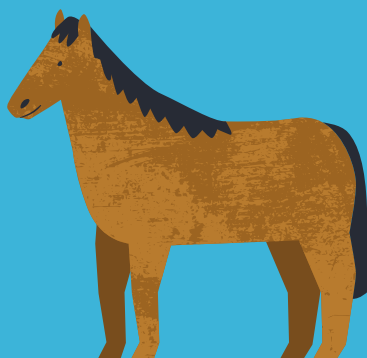
UNREALISTIC WORRIES:

those that are unlikely to come true or at least, not for a very long time. A child may be worried that the monster under their bed will get them or they will be expelled if they do their homework wrong. Worries like this need to be tested to see whether they are likely to happen or not.

REALISTIC WORRIES:

those that are real life problems. Realistic worries are not the child's imagination. For example, if a child finds spelling difficult and is worried that he or she may fail the spelling tests on Friday; this may be a realistic worry. Worries like this need problem solving!

Does your child have more realistic or unrealistic worries or a mix of both?



STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH WORRY

- Important to do so without reassuring worry
- Remain Kind, Calm and Empathetic
- Listen to the worry
- Acknowledge worry and how uncomfortable it feels
- Help your child to externalize worry and talk back to it (See the Worry Monster below!)

Worry Monster

This is the Worry Monster. He gets joy from picking on children and making them worried and scared. The more you talk about the Worry Monster and gang up on him with your allies, the weaker he will get and the sooner he will go away!

Ask lots of questions about 'the Worry Monster':

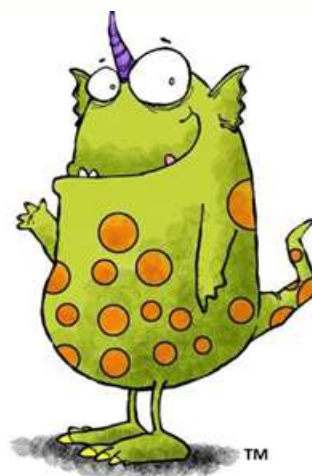
"What is it making you do?"

"How is it making you feel?"

"What is the worry saying to you?"

"That sounds like the Worry Monster talking, what do you want to say back?"

Be clear that you are no longer going to give worry what it wants or fall for its tricks!!!



Different Ways Kids Can Talk to Worry

Expect it

"I know you're just trying to help..."

"You usually show up at these times so I am not surprised by you..."

Boss it around

"Not now, worry, but I'll get back to you on that..."

"You're not helping me, so I am going to ignore you..."

After the worry...

- Distraction with something absorbing & fun.
- "We've dealt with that worry, let's forget about it until tomorrow".
- It is important to let children deal with a worry and LET IT GO!
- Once a worry has been listened to and a plan made then it is important to move on. This isn't always easy.

- When the worry pops into the head again most parents think the right thing to do is to go through the problem again. But this means that the problem is getting attention again!!
- Calm message "We've dealt with that worry"



WHAT TO DO WITH EXCESSIVE WORRYING?

Have rules around worry. Make a Worry Box and schedule Worry Time: “I don’t need to worry about this now, I can do it later”.

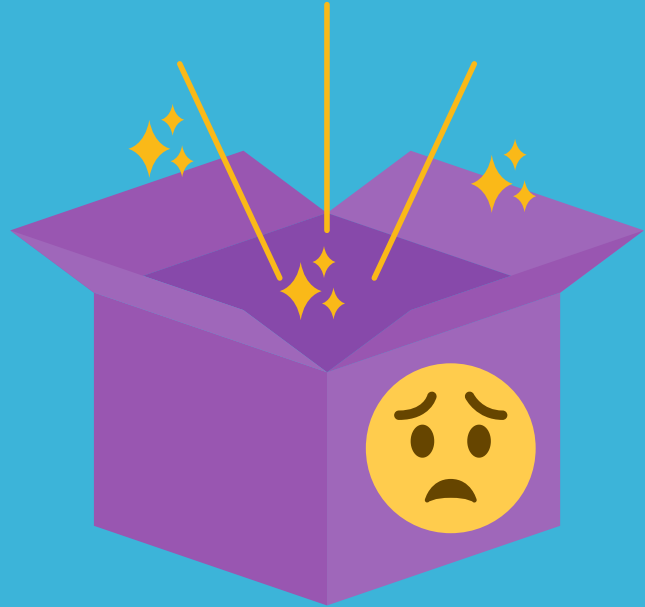
Worry box

Step 1. Encourage your child to help make and decorate the box.

Step 2. Let them help you choose a place in your room where you can keep the box safe.

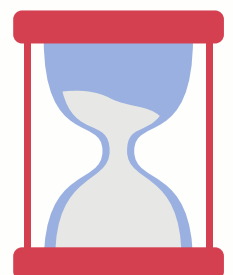
Step 3. The child writes down or draws any worries that they have as they occur and post it in the box.

Step 4. Take out box at worry time and talk about them for 10 minutes.



Worry Time

- 1) Set time each day for your child to worry (although it should not be right before bedtime).
- 2) This can be a time to look through the written worries from the worry box if this is used, or a general space to discuss, think, write or draw their worries.
- 3) If your child expresses worries outside of worry time, suggest that this worry is put in the worry box (if being used) and/or can be discussed during the next Worry Time.
- 4) Parent’s role is to help externalise worry, help the child problem solve or help the child challenge unrealistic worries through thinking up behavioural experiments



BEHAVIOURAL EXPERIMENTS



Example of a behavioural experiment:

Alexa thinks that her teacher will shout if she gets her homework wrong! The parent knows the teacher and knows that this is an unlikely outcome. Therefore this is a simple but unrealistic worry. Remember the tale of the dragon and the mountain? What was the moral of that tale?

So in this case – Alexa needs to go “up that mountain” and find out whether her worry is true or not. How could she do this? Make a deliberate mistake, and see if the teacher will shout at her!



Try it out yourself!

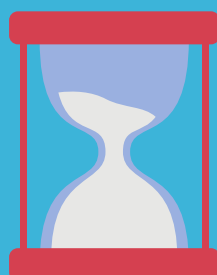
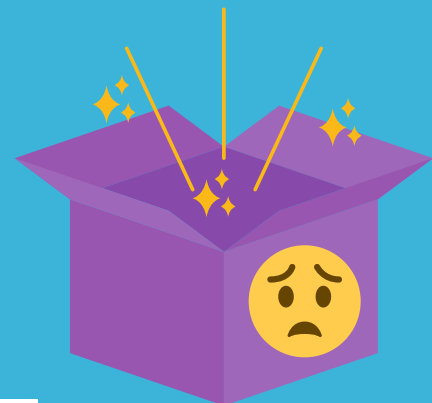
The first step is to think about a thought or belief that you are trying to test.

Next think of an alternative prediction or belief? For example I will find at least one person to talk to and will have an okay time. Now design the actual experiment - what will you do to test your prediction, when will you do it, how long will it take, and with whom?

The final step is to do the experiment!

Summary for supporting your child with worry:

1. Listening
2. Realistic or unrealistic worry
3. Talking back to the worry
4. Not giving in to worry
5. Distraction
6. Setting worry time
7. Behavioural experiments



PARENT EMOTION COACHING

ANGER



All children -- like all adults -- get angry sometimes. Anger is the body's "fight" response, to keep us safe when we feel threatened.

But humans don't only get angry in response to outside threats. When something happens today that reminds us of a past upset, we get angry to protect ourselves -even if the threat today isn't really much of a threat.

We also get angry in attempts to maintain our equilibrium. So when our own fear, hurt, disappointment, pain or grief is too upsetting, we tend to lash out. The anger doesn't get rid of the hurt, but it makes us feel less powerless and temporarily numbs the pain. This explains why anger is part of the grieving process.

So humans mobilize against any perceived threat (even our own upset feelings) by attacking. This is true for children too. And because children don't have a context for their upsets, a small disappointment can seem like the end of the world. Worse yet, since they don't have a fully developed frontal cortex to help them self-regulate, children are even more prone to lashing out when they're angry.



Doesn't it seem funny that we expect children to handle anger constructively, when so often we adults don't?

Sometimes attacking makes sense when we're angry, but only when there's actually a threat. That's rare. Most of the time when children get angry, they want to attack their little brother (who broke their treasured memento), their parents (who disciplined them "unfairly"), their teacher (who embarrassed them) or the playground bully (who scared them.)

Luckily, as children's brains develop, they gain the capacity to manage their anger constructively - if they live in a home where anger is handled in a healthy way.

Research has shown that aggressive, impulsive and hyperactive children receive more critical feedback, negative commands and less praise than other children – even when they are behaving appropriately.

In essence, they train their parents not to praise or reinforce them for their positive behaviours because their emotional responses are so exhausting to deal with. In addition, since they have trouble noticing their own feelings, they may not be aware of times when they are regulating their emotions. But labelling these times, and providing children with praise for their emotion regulation efforts, you are providing much needed positive attention as well as making them aware of their internal regulation processes.



Strategies for Supporting Your Child with Anger

Start with yourself

Shouting at a child reinforces what they are already feeling- they are in danger. If you are in the habit of shouting at your child you are modelling behaviour that your child will copy. It can be tough to stop ourselves from shouting but if you give in, you can't expect your child to control themselves. Your child learns from watching you how to handle disagreements and conflict.

Remember that feelings are allowed

All emotions are acceptable, it is only actions that need to be limited. When your child expresses anger, the best thing you can do is listen and acknowledge how upset they are. You don't have to agree with the reasons to recognise that they are angry and have a right to be. Don't tell your child to calm down or act appropriately as that just makes your child escalate in an attempt to get you to hear them. Instead open the door to communication: *"You must be so mad to speak to me like that. I want to hear about it. Can you tell me so I can hear, without shouting?"*

Get good at de-escalating

Your job when your child is angry is always to restore calm, because kids can only learn and understand how to "do better" when they're calm.

Your calm presence, even when they're mad, helps your child feel safe. And that's what helps them develop the neural pathways in the brain that shut off the "fight or flight" response and allow the frontal cortex, the "reasoning brain," to take over.

Give your child ways to manage the angry impulses

Children need ways to manage anger in the moment. When they are calm, make a list with them of constructive ways to handle emotion, such as breathing or stomping their feet, and practice them. Model using the tools yourself when you are mad.

Help your child be aware of their warning signs

Once kids are in a full flush of adrenaline managing angry impulses is almost impossible. We can all offer children a safe space for while the storm sweeps through. But if you can help your child to notice when they are becoming angry and help them to learn to calm themselves. E.g. *"You're getting upset. We can make this better. Let's take a deep breath and figure this out together"*.

Set limits on aggression

Allowing feelings does not mean that we allow destructive actions. Children should never be allowed to hit others, including their parents. When they do they are asking us to set limits and contain their anger.

Don't send a child away to calm down by themselves

Your goal when your child is angry or upset is to restore a sense of safety, which requires your calm presence. Remember that kids need your love most when they seem to be pushing you away. Instead of a time out try a "time in" during which you stay with your child and help them to move through their feelings.

Relaxation Techniques:

Turtle Technique

First ask your child to imagine they have a shell, like a turtle, that they can retreat into. Next teach them how to go into the shell, take three deep breaths, and to say to themselves, "Stop, take a deep breath, calm down." As the child takes these slow deep breaths, ask the child to focus on their breathing and to push the air into their arms and legs so the muscles can relax. Sometimes it helps to picture a particular relaxing scene. As your child continues this slow breathing, they are coached to say themselves: "I can calm down. I can do it. I can control it." The child can stay in their shell until they feel calm enough to come out and try again.



1. Imagine you have a shell like a turtle
2. Go into the shell and take 3 deep breaths
3. Focus on breathing
4. Imagine that you are pushing the air into your arms and legs so that you can relax your muscles
5. Say "I can calm down" "I can do it"



Deep Breathing:

The simplest way to relax is to become aware of your breath. Try breathing in through your nose for a count of 4, pause, and breathe out through your nose for a count of 4. Repeat this a couple of times.

Grounding/Awareness:

Focus on external information as opposed to internal information (thoughts, feelings).



Guided Imagery:

You are encouraging your child to think about their safe place, either real or imagined.

Focus on sensory experience – use sights, smells, tastes, feelings to help the child imagine that they are there e.g. “On the beach you feel the lapping of the warm waves against your toes. You dig your toes deeply into the cool wet sand. The sun shines brightly and gently warms your skin.” You can use the script on the next page or create your own.

BREATHE IN

1..2..3..4..



PAUSE 1...



BREATHE OUT

1..2..3..4..



PAUSE 1...



Treehouse Relaxation Script



- Get your body comfortable and gently close your eyes.
- Slowly take three deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Spend a moment or two, relaxing your feet and legs. Letting go of any tightness and letting them become heavy and relaxed. Imagine a wave of blue light traveling up from the earth into your feet and legs, relaxing everything it touches.
- Now relax your tummy, chest, and shoulders. Imagine this wave of blue light sweeping through and relaxing this area for you.
- Pay attention to your arms and fingers, allow the blue light to move through. Feel how relaxed you are.
- Finally bring the blue light to your head and allow it to flow out of the top of your head and into the air around you. Beautifully done!
- Imagine you are standing in front of a massive tree. This tree has deep, deep roots and branches that reach out in every direction.
- This tree is home to your very own treehouse. This is a treehouse of your own design. Picture how you would like your treehouse to look.
- (Pause between each idea) You can add swings, windows, trapdoors, plants, animals, your favorite things, your favorite colors, just allow yourself to design the treehouse anyway you like.
- Can you see it? Good. Now allow yourself to travel inside the treehouse. (Pause) Are you inside? Good.
- Inside the treehouse, imagine anything that makes you feel good to think about. Place pillows, waterfalls, plants, trees, birds, pictures of mountains, anything that you would like that you feel good when you think about it. Go ahead and design the inside of your treehouse now.
- Know that when you go inside your treehouse you feel really really relaxed. This is a place to let go of all your thoughts, all your worries.
- Take a deep breath and allow yourself to feel very peaceful and relaxed inside your treehouse.
- This is a place that you can go any time you would like to feel more peaceful and calm. Know that your treehouse is available to you any time you would like. You can visit here whenever you would like.
- Now take a deep breath and imagine yourself walking down out of your treehouse. Gently bring your attention back to the room.
- Rub your hands together to make them warm. Gently place them over your eyes.
- You can open your eyes whenever you are ready.

CALM DOWN YOGA FOR KIDS



I am strong.

Use your strength to catch tricky waves.



I am kind.

Stretch high and spread kindness all around.



I am brave.

Be brave and fearless as you fly down the ski run.



I am friendly.

Stretch like a dog wagging its tail.



I am wise.

Be a wise owl perched on a tree branch.

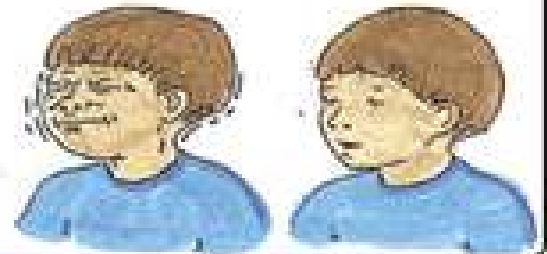


Progressive muscle relaxation.

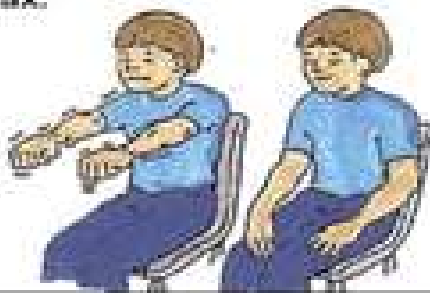
1. Sit on a chair.



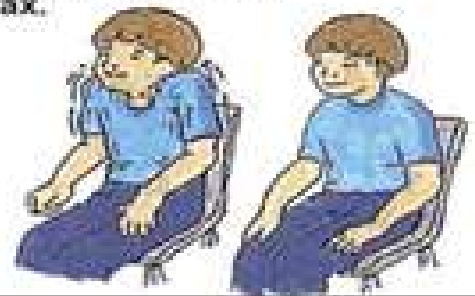
2. Scrunch your face.
Count to 3.
1,2,3...
Take a deep breath.
Relax.



3. Tense your arms
Count to 3
1,2,3..
Take a deep breath
and relax.



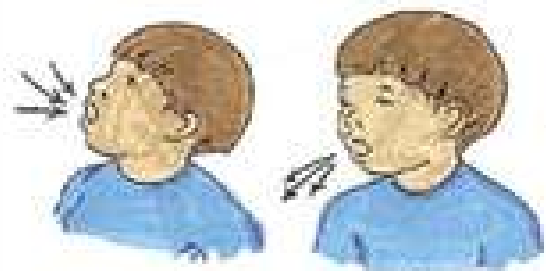
4. Tense your arms and shoulders.
Count to 3.
1,2,3...
Take a deep breath.
Relax.



5. Tense your legs.
Count to 3.
1,2,3...
Take a deep breath.
Relax.



6. Breathe in relaxation
breathe out tension.



Coping Cards

- 1) Identify negative thought that might underpin your child's worry.
- 2) Transform this into a more helpful balanced thought.
- 3) Write it out as coping card.

PARENT EMOTION COACHING

RESILIENCE

What do you think of when you think of the word resilience?
What does it mean to you?

Can you think of someone that you would describe as resilient? It might be someone you know or a famous person. What is it about them that you consider to be resilience? Is it something they do or how they think?



Resilience is:

The ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; elasticity.

The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

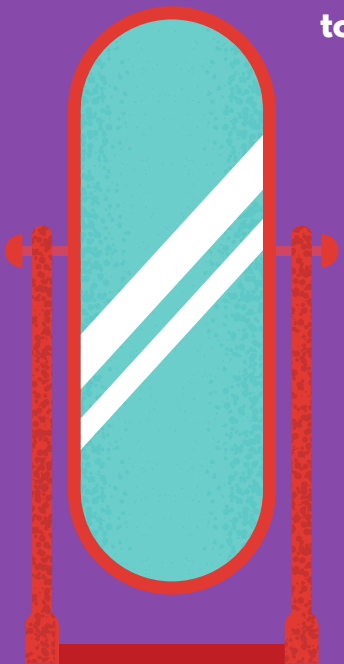


Key ingredients of resilience:

Agency (assertiveness/empowerment): The power to make decisions about your life.

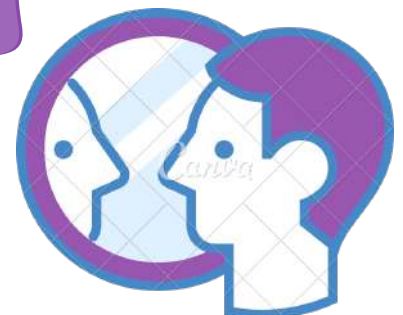
Reflection: Reflection is like looking into a mirror and describing what you see. It is a way of assessing yourself, your thoughts, and your feelings.

Relationships: The quality of a child's relationships with the people in their life.



Parental Reflexive Function

Parental reflective functioning (PRF) also plays a key role in the development of resilience in children. It refers to a caregiver's capacity to reflect upon their own internal mental experiences as well as those of the child. PRF plays a key role in fostering the developing child's own capacity for reflection, which in turn is important for the development of emotion regulation, a sense of personal agency, and secure attachment relationships.



Tips for Problem Solving



LISTENING:

- Find some time to bring your attention to your child
- Look at child
- Reflect back what the person is saying to help them feel understood. Sometimes you might use their words, sometimes you might rephrase it and then check back if you have understood them correctly.



HEAR THE FEELING:

- Listen to child's words and ask yourself what are they feeling?
- Why are they feeling this way?
- What led to the feeling?
- Reflect the reason behind the feeling e.g. I wonder if you are feeling X because of Y - this gives the young person a chance to explain how they feel and what might be behind it.

BODY LANGUAGE/TONE:



- Comment on body language and how it might relate to feelings e.g. the look in your eyes...your face says....
- Use a respectful tentative tone.
- May take time for child to get used to approach.



TALKING IT THROUGH:

- Use open-ended questions
- When talking is hard stay respectful.
- Talk about the real problem. It can be helpful for each person to take responsibility for their roles in the situation. You can start by being clear about the ways you would like to manage differently and encourage your child to think about how they might manage things differently.
- It's ok to wait until everyone has calmed down before discussing what has happened.
- Agree to be respectful of each other.
- If you agree changes you want to make in how situations are managed it can be helpful to write them down and put them somewhere prominent to remind everyone.
- Try to put yourself in their shoes e.g. how would you like to be supported if you were feeling nervous or stressed about something?

FAMILY MEETINGS:

- Share things that you appreciate about each other.
- Model respect and problem solving techniques.
- Give everyone time to speak.
- Agree to be respectful of each other, if it is difficult for people to be respectful of each other it is ok to wait until another time to discuss things.



Coaching Problem Solving

PROBLEM SOLVING IS A KEY PART OF RESILIENCE.



PROBLEM SOLVING EXAMPLE:

Young person who is unhappy in school.



- 1. Find some time to bring your attention to your child. Some children are more comfortable chatting in the car or while watching TV, others like you to make eye contact to show you are focused on them.**
- 2. Hear the feeling. Listen to the child's words and ask yourself what are they feeling? Why are they feeling this way? What led to the feeling?**
- 3. Use reflective listening. Reflecting back what the person is saying to help them feel understood. Sometimes you might use their words, sometimes you might rephrase it and then check back if you have understood them correctly. Also reflect the reason behind the feeling e.g. I wonder if you are feeling X because of Y - this gives the young person a chance to explain how they feel and what might be behind it.**
- 4. Comment on body language and how it might relate to feelings e.g. the look in your eyes...your face says....**
- 5. Use a respectful tentative tone. May take time for child to get used to this approach.**
- 6. Is there anything that you can think of that would help in this situation? What are the pros & cons of the different options? Are there any that you think you could try? How will you know if they are helping?**

FROM PROBLEM THINKING TO SOLUTION THINKING...

What will you do if a problem happens?

What can you do to cope?

Who can you get to support you?

We have talked about the worst thing that can happen –but what is more likely to happen?

What is the best thing that can happen?

How can you ensure the best thing can happen?

Coaching Resiliency

Developing an emotional toolbox with your child and practicing these strategies when calm.



**Emotional Toolbox:
To help with big feelings**

Brainstorm different tools:

Physical: Exercise; movement breaks

Social: Playing with friends; groups

Relaxation: Deep breathing; guided meditation

Special interests: Reading; music; hobby

Healthy Mind: Coping messages; breathe-think-do (Before you act pause & take a breath, think about your options, & then act); worry box; building in own rewards

Sensory: Fidget toys; massage; quiet space



COACHING CONFIDENCE AND SECURENESS



How can you deliver and reinforce the message of confidence and secureness?

Safety: Modelling; supporting children to try new things.

Ability to cope: Specific praise when they make an effort to handle a situation; supporting mastery and what they are good at; giving appropriate responsibility.

Bad things: Framing of bad things to not just focus on the negative; watch out for self-fulfilling prophecies e.g., not studying for a test because they think they will fail anyway; giving advance warning rather than springing things on them with no notice; contextualising.

Control: Giving choices; giving responsibility.

Others: Acknowledging kindness by them and others; modelling a respectful attitude to others and your children; enjoying them for being them.

For children

"This is normal. S/he is just learning to regulate his/her emotions"

"This is not about me. S/he is just letting me know that s/he needs my help"

For parents

"I can handle this"

"This is hard. I am doing my best"

"I have managed this before and I can manage it again"



Parenting Mantras



REFLECTION

Did I achieve my goal for the programme?

What will I do differently as result of this programme?

What is unresolved for me?

We do not learn from
experience... we learn
from reflecting on
experience.

- John Dewey

Congratulations!!!!

