



Emotion Coaching

Children often have strong overwhelming feelings. Adults may be confused by the intensity of children's feelings, yet they want to help children understand and manage feelings. Emotion coaching helps adults master this important caregiving skill.

- Step 1 – Identify the feeling by saying something like, “It looks like you are feeling mad.”
- Step 2 – Validate/empathize with the feeling by saying something like, “I would feel mad too if someone knocked down my block tower.”
- Step 3 – Help the child to problem-solve by asking, “What can you do about this problem?” If a child needs help problem-solving, give two choices and let the child decide, “Do you want to re-build the block tower or go play with the trucks?”
- Teach children to look to their bodies for clues about how they are feeling (i.e., ask, “Where in your body are you having a strong feeling right now?” or say something like, “Your clenched fists make me wonder if you are feeling mad”).

Adults' reaction to children's feelings predicts whether children will respond with self-control or out-of-control behavior.

Emotion coaching teaches children:

- To understand their feelings
- That all feelings – but not all behaviors – are okay
- To manage strong feelings.



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Emotion coaching is a positive way adults can teach children about emotions while showing they understand and care about the child's strong feelings.

Emotion Coaching Benefits Children



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- Emotion coaching helps children understand and manage feelings, show empathy for others, have good relationships with other children and adults, and make good choices.
- When children can understand and manage their feelings, they feel less stress in their bodies, concentrate better, and learn more in school.
- When adults use emotion coaching, children have fewer behavior problems at home and school.
- Emotion coaching helps children develop the social skills that will make them happier and more successful throughout their lives.

When to Emotion Coach



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- Talking about feelings is an important way for adults and children to feel close to one another. Invite – but don't pressure – children to talk about their own and other people's feelings.
- Aim to use emotion coaching 30-40% of the time. Sometimes, coaching is not possible.
- Only coach when you are calm and have time. It is okay to revisit an issue later.
- Try to use emotion coaching when you see the first signs a child is getting upset. Emotion coaching is unlikely to work during a tantrum.
- Emotion coaching takes practice!

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