



6 tips to help kids manage emotions

Kids experience all sorts of feelings and emotions. They aren't born with emotional regulation skills, they learn them over time through modeling, guidance, practice, and experience. When kids know how to handle their emotions, they do better in school and tend to have positive, lasting relationships. They're also better able to deal with life's ups and downs.

As a parent or caregiver, you play a key role in teaching your child emotional regulation—how to manage their emotions in a healthy way.

There are lots of ways you can help your child learn to manage their emotions. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Help them identify their feelings

Teach your child to recognize their emotions. Help them to tune into and share what they feel

in their body during both positive and uncomfortable feelings. These body signals might come up as sweaty hands and a sore tummy, or a warmth in their chest, or something different.

Teach your child to name these body signals and their emotions. Explore [the feelings wheel](#) together to help them identify the feelings they're experiencing. Start in the middle (with simple words like "sadness" or "joy"). As your child gets more comfortable, work your way outwards to more complex feelings.

Validate their feelings

Let your child know that their emotions are valid, even if you don't understand why they're feeling a certain way.

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Try not to say things like "you shouldn't be upset about that" or "stop crying." Instead, say "I can see that you're really upset. Can you tell me what's bothering you?" This lets your child know it's okay to talk about it with you.

Teach them deep breathing

Do breathing exercises together to help you both feel calm and relaxed. For example, try calm breathing:

- Take slow breaths in through your nose (for about 4 seconds)
- Hold our breath for 1 or 2 seconds
- Exhale slowly through your mouth (for about 4 seconds)
- Wait a few seconds before taking another breath
- Repeat this activity for at least 5 breaths

Practice these types of breathing techniques often so both you and your child feel more comfortable. Try them at bedtime to help your child calm down and get ready for sleep.

Practice mindfulness

Teach your child mindfulness to help them pause before reacting to big emotions. Try simple practices like "mindful minutes" where they focus on the present moment, exactly as it is, for about a minute. Or try sensory activities—ask them to calmly look around and name 5 things they can see, 4 things they can touch or feel, 3 things they can hear, 2 things they can smell, and 1 thing they can taste. These types of activities can help your child stay calm and respond thoughtfully to their emotions.

Consider mindfulness activities as a whole family, like mindful walking or yoga. You'll

connect to the present moment and get everyone moving too!

Help them express their emotions

Kids can express or respond to their emotions in all sorts of healthy ways. Here are some ideas:

- Talk to someone trustworthy
- Movement like running, jumping jacks, or dance
- Cry
- Sleep
- Draw, paint, craft, play music, or make any piece of art

Model emotional regulation

Be aware of your own emotions and how you're handling them. Children learn by watching you and by what you do to help them. When you're calm, you help your child feel soothed, safe, and cared for.

Do your best to show your child healthy ways you manage your own emotions. For example, you can say things like "I'm feeling a little frustrated right now because of this traffic," or "I'm so happy that we get to spend the day together." Teach them that it's okay to feel and express feelings.

For information, go to:

- [How to teach your child calm breathing](#)
- [Learning about managing your emotional reactions](#)
- [Mindfulness exercises](#)
- [Role modelling and self-regulation](#)