

Supporting Children's Big Emotions



Children can (and do) have big emotions that range from happy, sad, mad, scared, unsure, anxious, excited and so many more. Their ability to cope with these emotions takes time and lots of practice to be able to work through them. As caregivers we need to find out what's going on and support our children in trying some strategies to make these challenging moments less frustrating for everyone.

Things to consider when you see Big Emotions:

- Are their basic needs met? Are they tired, hungry, or unwell?
- How are your emotions today? Are you feeling big emotions that your child is reacting to?
- Do I have clear and age appropriate expectations? - "When you are cleaning up your toys, toys go in this bin or on that shelf."
- Practice makes better - How does your child learn? Are reminders helpful? Visual or sound clues? How can you make it fun?
- What happens before Big Emotions arise?
- When do you see Big Emotions from your child?
- Recognize how you are feeling in the moment and find support from a partner or friend if needed or find a way to step away safely for a few minutes

Tips as you work through the Big Emotions:

- Help your child name their emotions - "Your red face and crossed arms show me you are angry!"
- Validate their feelings - "It's okay to feel angry about..."
- Share calm not chaos, teach them coping skills (i.e. deep breaths, take a walk, count to 5)
- Acknowledge positive behaviours with genuine praise, high fives, hugs when it happens
- Stay positive and calm - you've got this!
- Instead of saying "No" try "Yes after we..." or "Yes when you..."
- Read books about Emotions
- Use a soothing voice

Articles:



Parenting Now – Parenting now website is overseen by KW Counselling. This short article lays out some very simple techniques that you can use to not only calm your child, but also help you to calm yourself.

<https://parentingnow.ca/whats-new/tips-to-help-self-calm/>



Sick Kids Community for Mental Health – This article from Sick Kids Community for Mental Health digs deeper into helping children cope with their feelings while also considering your feelings as a parent or caring adult. They talk about how to help the child express themselves, calming strategies as well as the importance of providing a consistent and calm environment.

<https://www.sickkidscmh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Big-Feelings-Final-May-2020.pdf>



Parenting Now – Another great article from Parenting Now from KW Counselling that speaks to ways to help develop emotion regulation skills in children. We are walked through the stages of managing emotions that are noticing, expressing and managing.

<https://parentingnow.ca/articles/helping-small-children-with-big-emotions/>



Raised Good – Raised Good is website created by Tracy a writer, advocate and mom. In this article she shares many different strategies to help children learn and handle their emotions such as validating their feelings and providing an emotional outlet.

<https://raisedgood.com/9-simple-ways-to-help-children-handle-their-feelings/>

Videos:



Play and Learn – The Play and Learn website was created by the Infant and Child Health Lab (INCH) that is a lab at both the University of Toronto and McMaster University. In this short video we see a simple daily activity to support the development of sharing as well as social and emotional skills.

<https://playandlearn.healthhq.ca/en/toddlers/social-and-emotional>



Parenting Now – From Parenting Now this video talks about the brain's role in our emotion regulation and supports how we can help our child and ourselves through connection. Simple things such as staying close and using a soothing voice will help when children's emotions overwhelm them.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4F6_KN0gD9k