

# Soothing Your Child's Big Emotions

You can foster your child's self-regulation skills by practicing co-regulation with them now. Co-regulation involves coming alongside your child and guiding them through accepting, interpreting, and responding to their emotions in healthy ways. Your goal is to communicate to your child that there is no bad or good way to feel; there are only unwise or hurtful ways to respond to how you feel.

This guide is a nonlinear tip sheet to help you practice different ways of emotionally showing up for your child's big emotions. You don't need to do all of these every time and different ways of co-regulating will work at different developmental stages.

## **Make curious observations about your child's behavior**

*It looks like you are upset. Do you want a hug?*

*I can hear how angry you are. What's making you mad?*

*Your face looks sad. Is something bothering you?*

*It looks like you and your sister are having trouble getting along.*

*Your body is moving all around. I wonder what you are feeling right now.*

*You just got really loud. Help me understand what's going on.*

## **Help them to physically calm down**

Offer physical touch; rub their back, give a hug

Offer proximity; sit nearby; tell them you'll be in the next room

Count to 10 slowly with them

Have them blow out candles with their fingers

Teach them to inhale the imaginary brownie in your hands; Exhale/blow on the imaginary hot cocoa

Help them make spaghetti arms through wiggling

Set up a calming corner/chair with comforting objects

Create a fidget box with sensory objects

Create an anger box with recycled items to destroy

Encourage them to jump on the trampoline or run outside

Blow bubbles with them

Offering coloring or journal time

## **Ask open-ended questions**

*What's making you feel angry?*

*What do you think made you feel upset?*

*Something seems to be bothering you. Do you know what's going on?*

*I'm wondering what's happening for you right now. Do you know what's going on inside your body?*

### **Validate whatever they feel**

*That makes sense that you feel \_\_\_\_\_.*  
*I can understand how that made you feel \_\_\_\_\_.*  
*I would feel \_\_\_\_\_ too.*  
*That's really hard/sad/upsetting.*  
*That does hurt.*

### **Reassure them**

*It's okay to feel angry and it's not okay to hit.*  
*I love you no matter what happens.*  
*There is no other (kid's name) in the whole world and I'm so glad you're mine*  
*I will help you get through this big emotion*  
*We can ride this emotional wave together*  
*I am so happy to be your mom/dad.*

### **Process what happened**

*That was a really hard moment. Let's talk about what happened.*  
*I felt upset when you weren't listening. What was going on for you?*  
*I want to talk about what happened earlier. We can talk now or later tonight. You get to pick.*  
*Let's explore together what happened just now.*

### **Tell the story of what happened**

*Take turns telling parts of the story. First, I saw this...What did you see happen next?*  
*Take turns telling your individual version of what happened.*  
*Invite them to tell the story as much as they want. "Yesterday was really hard in the morning. Do you remember what happened?"*

### **Offer options to move forward**

*What if you take turns or share with your sister?*  
*Do you want to talk through what happened now or later tonight?*  
*Do you want a redo now or do you just want to take a break?*

### **Problem-solve with them**

*What could we try next time?*  
*\_\_\_\_\_ hasn't been working. Let's brainstorm ideas to do it differently.*  
*What could we both do differently next time so that we don't end up here again?*  
*I wonder what might have made this turn out differently.*  
*I know you don't like \_\_\_\_\_. The problem is that \_\_\_\_\_. What should we do?*

