

Participant Handbook

Tuning in to Kids[®]

Emotionally Intelligent Parenting



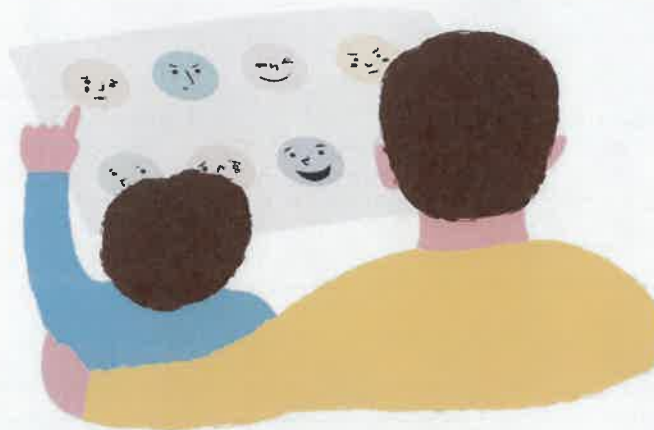
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Emotion Coaching

To emotion coach your child you:

- 1 Become aware of their emotion, especially at lower intensity (such as disappointment or frustration)
- 2 View their emotion as an opportunity for connection and teaching
- 3 Communicate your understanding and acceptance of the emotion – empathise and validate
- 4 Help them use words to describe how they feel
- 5 If necessary, help them to solve problems. You may also communicate that all wishes and feelings are acceptable, but some behaviours are not.



Adapted from Gottman, J.M., & De Claire, J. (1997)

Being dismissive: Mum/Dad and Josh

This is a situation of a 10-year-old boy being dropped off at a party with all his class mates where he does not know many people because he is new at the school. Mum/Dad and Josh walk up to the front door which is open.

Mum/Dad: Okay, we're here. Have a nice time.

Josh: (quiet and doesn't go inside)

Mum/Dad: Off you go. I'll be back at 6 to get you.

Josh: (Looks into the house looking nervous)

Mum/Dad: Hey! I've gotta go now.

Josh: (Big sigh). I don't want to go. Can I go shopping with you?

Mum/Dad: No! You'll be fine. Why don't you want to go? Everyone in your class is going to be there?

Josh: I don't want to. Terry doesn't even like me. I bet his mum made him invite me.

Mum/Dad: Why would you say that? Of course he likes you. Don't be silly.

Josh: I'm not silly. I just don't want to go!

Mum/Dad: Of course you do. Come on – I've gotta run. You'd be fine. I'll see you at 6.

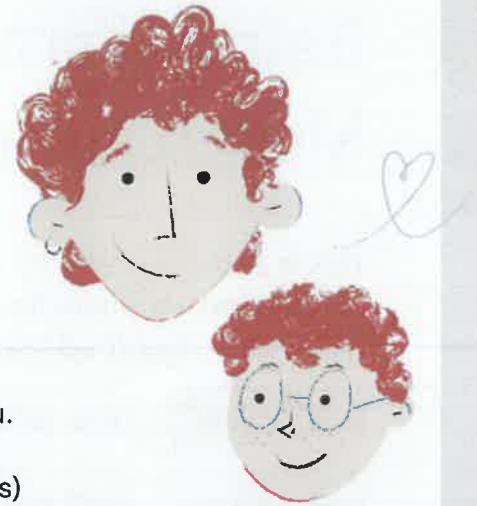
Josh: You can't make me! (Starts walking away from the house to the car)

Mum/Dad: Look! (Becoming annoyed.) Don't be ridiculous. We're here, just go. Look –other kids are there already.

Josh: (stops and turns back looking angry and surly - and walks slowly towards the house).

Mum/Dad: (leaves feeling irritated and guilty).

Emotion Coaching: Mum/Dad and Josh



Mum/Dad: Okay, we're here. Have a nice time.

Josh: (quiet and doesn't go inside)

Mum/Dad: Off you go. I'll be back at 6 to get you.

Josh: (Looks into the house looking nervous)

Mum/Dad: Hey. I've gotta go now.

Josh: (big sigh). I don't want to go. Can I go shopping with you?

Mum/Dad: (slightly surprised) Oh. You don't want to go?

Josh: No (slightly irritated). Terry doesn't even like me. I bet his mum made him invite me.

Mum/Dad: Oh ... you're worried he doesn't want you there?

Josh: Yeah. I don't even talk to him at school. Or his friends.

Mum/Dad: Oh. (said gently)

Josh: Can't I just come with you?

Mum/Dad: Ah. It sounds like it's really hard going into the party.

Josh: Yeah. (looks down, teary)

Mum/Dad: (gives him time to feel the feelings and lightly touches his arm)

Josh: (after 10 seconds he looks up and gives a big sigh).

Mum/Dad: It's a tough one. (Pause.) It can be awkward with no one to talk to at a party. I find that hard too, especially when I don't know people very well. (Pause)

Josh: (Big sigh). Mmmm.

Mum/Dad: Can you think of anything that would make it easier?

Showing empathy

Key points:

- You can use words or gestures to show empathy
- Empathic sounds, touch or a hug are often effective
- Your facial expression and body language can also show empathy
- Empathy may or may not involve naming the emotion
- Use few words. Often it is just about being there.

Examples of empathy statements include:

- You love playing with that toy
- You're having such fun!
- Wow that makes me happy too!
- Oh, dear...
- That really hurts!
- That's scary
- Yikes!!
- Oh, how sad
- You couldn't find me!
- Oh, you're really upset!
- You want one too!
- It's tricky!
- I'd be angry too if I got left out
- Gosh, how annoying!
- That'd make me mad too!
- I know. It's so hard to wait!
- Yes, it's difficult to make that work.

Oh, how
sad!

I'd be angry
too if I got
left out...

It's so hard
to wait!

Naming feelings

It looks like you're really happy

You seem a bit sad

I can see you're very frustrated

Are you feeling fed up?

You look really angry

It sounds like you were really scared

It seems like you are a bit anxious

How did you feel when your toy was taken?

Maybe you felt frustrated when your teacher told you to share your favourite book?

I bet you felt pretty grumpy

I wonder if you feel a little jealous?

Useful sentence starters:

- It sounds like ...
- I wonder if ...
- It looks like ...
- It seems like ...
- Maybe you feel ...
- You look ...
- Perhaps you're feeling a little ...



Helpful hints for the first 4 steps of Emotion Coaching

There are a number of different ways that you can tune in to your child's emotions.

Notice the emotion

Notice how you think your child is feeling.

- What facial expression/body language/tone of voice does your child have?
- What sort of emotions might your child feel because of the situation?
- How might you feel in a comparable adult situation?
- Does your child regularly talk about headaches, stomach aches or sore shoulders? Could they be worried? (Always check whether there is a physical reason first).
- Are they quieter/agitated/louder/angrier than usual?

Connect and explore

- Come close.
- Pause, focus on your child.
- You may come down to your child's level.
- You may explore what is going on by gently asking questions:
 - You look pretty worried. Do you want to talk about what is going on?
 - I wonder if you are feeling mad at your sister?
- You may use physical touch or just be closer.
- You may not always need words – sometimes sitting quietly alongside is what a child needs.



Reflect and/or name the emotion

- It looks like you're very happy
- You seem a bit sad
- I can see you're very frustrated
- It seems like you are a bit anxious
- I bet you felt pretty grumpy

Children will generally tell you if you are right or wrong about their feelings, especially if you say it in a gentle way. Often when children are learning to put words to their feelings, it helps if you label the emotion and explore whether this is correct.

Locate emotion in the body

You could ask where the child feels the emotion in their body. It is important for children to learn that emotions are in their head and in their body.

- Where in your body do you feel angry?
- I wonder if your tummy feels a bit anxious?
- It looks like you might feel your sadness in your shoulders.

Empathise – communicate understanding and acceptance

How might this experience feel for your child?

Communicate your understanding and acceptance of their feelings with your body language, facial expression, sounds or words.

You might talk about how you would feel in a similar situation.

- You loved that toy.
- Oh, that's so sad.
- That looks really hard.
- I would have felt angry if my sister had been allowed to go out and I had to stay home.

Be careful not to put your emotions first, especially when you are just starting to Emotion Coach.

You might follow this up with another question or comment to find out more.

Build in a pause

When we have strong emotions, we might need to stop ourselves from reacting. This can be difficult! Explore ways to 'build in a pause' that can help you from reacting hurtfully or destructively. Strategies could involve using your senses, breathing, movement or changing the space you are in.

Different strategies work for different people. Try out some of the following to see what works for you.

To build in a pause you might:

- Stop and look around.
- Breathe slowly – take long breaths in and out; or give a long, deep sigh.
- Close your mouth; break eye contact.
- Tense and release your muscles.
- Feel your feet on the floor; your bottom on the seat or rub your hands together and notice the feel of your skin.
- Move, stretch or walk to a different space.
- Count to 10.
- Listen to sounds around you.
- Take off your shoes and feel the grass under your feet.
- Reduce the heat – have a cold drink of water or suck on ice.
- Shift your weight from one foot to the other.



Emotional self-care

The following are ways you can look after your emotional wellbeing. For some self-care activities you might be alone, while for some you might be with other people. Activities could be either relaxing to calm, or physically active to let off steam.

Try to do at least one of these each day:

- sitting for a cup of tea/coffee
- one long deep breath
- watching the sun set
- have time with a friend
- meditate
- go for a walk, play a game of sport, or do some other exercise
- have a bath
- read a book/magazine
- have one to one time with your partner
- go to a movie
- listen to your favourite music
- do something creative like writing, painting, playing an instrument
- write in a personal diary
- cook your favourite meal
- go out for dinner
- do some gardening.



Self-care can be small things and need not cost money or take a lot of time!

My personal favourites are:

1

2

3