


 THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Tuning in to Kids Branch Out Talks

Presented by Professor Sophie Havighurst





Centre for Training and Research
in Developmental Health

1

Overview of the Session


This session will include:


- What is Tuning in to Kids
- Information about children's emotional development
- Information about Emotion Coaching – how and why it works
- Practice about how to use Emotion Coaching
- Reflection on how we manage emotions when parenting
- Group guidelines – confidentiality, respecting opinions
- Take home points

4TH EDITION


Tuning in to Kids® Program Manual

Emotionally Intelligent Parenting





Written by
 Sophie Havighurst and Ann Harley
 with Christiane Kehoe



2

What is the Tuning in to Kids Program

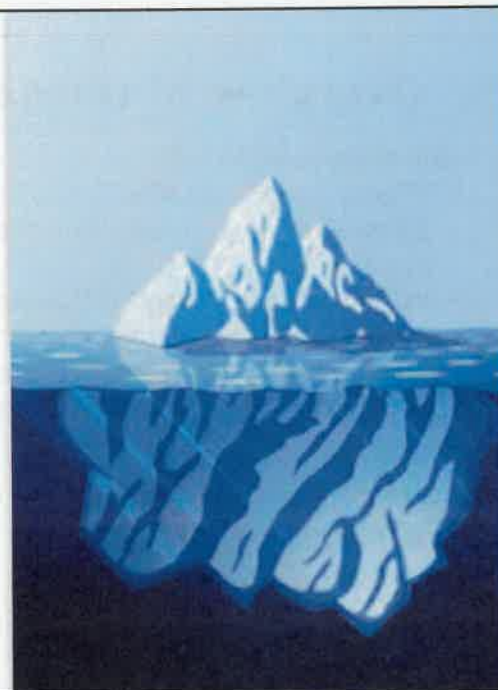
- A parenting program that teaches a way of communicating, called **Emotion Coaching**, that supports the development of children's emotional intelligence.
- Program originally created by Sophie Havighurst and Ann Harley
- Several adaptations (Dads Tuning in to Kids, Tuning in to Teens, Tuning in to Toddlers, Tuning in to Teens Whole School Approach) with additional authors Christiane Kehoe and Katherine Wilson

"Much of today's popular advice about children's behaviour ignores the world of emotions. Instead, it relies on child-rearing theories that address children's misbehaviour, but disregard the feelings that underlie that misbehaviour." Gottman & DeClaire, 1997

3

Tuning in to Kids Philosophy

- Emotions are for communicating & connecting
- All emotions are okay – they have a function
- When emotions are high, thinking is often low
- Emotion awareness, understanding and regulation – not over-control.
- Difficult behaviour often reduces when parents understand and respond to children's emotions – what's under the surface of the iceberg?
- Parents can support their child's emotional development.
- Emotion coaching is for when emotions occur.



4

Children's Emotional Development

Video on children's emotional development



5

What is Emotional Intelligence (EQ)?

Understand others' emotions and respond with empathy



Use awareness of your emotions when you are solving problems



Identify & understand your emotions

emotional intelligence



Manage distress so you are not overwhelmed and have a clear head



Deal with frustration and be able to wait to get what you want

Be in control of how and when you express your emotions



6

How does Emotional Intelligence Develop?

- Temperament
- Environment and experience
- How parents/carers model emotions, react to emotions, and discuss emotions
- Family emotional climate
- Parent meta-emotion philosophy -
- The way we think and feel about emotions



Gottman, Katz and Hooven, 1996

7

Parent Emotion Socialisation Styles

Four patterns of responding to children's emotions identified in research:

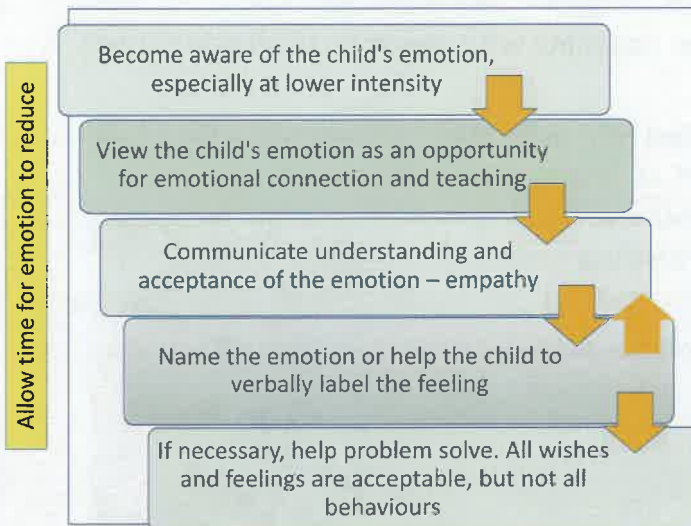
- **Emotion Dismissing:** ignores uncomfortable emotions. Often motivated by need to rescue and make things better, fix the problem, or correct.
- **Emotion Disapproving:** disapproves or is critical of emotions being expressed (particularly uncomfortable emotions). Often motivated by a need to control and regain power and/or to "toughen up" the child.
- **Laissez-Faire:** accepts all emotions but fails to educate the child about emotions and does not place guidance around behaviour.
- **Emotion Coaching:** values all emotions and helps understand feelings while also guiding behaviour.



Gottman, Katz and Hooven, 1996

8

What is Emotion Coaching?



**Try to Emotion Coach
30-40% of the time**

Adapted from Gottman, J. M. & DeClair, J. (1997). *The Heart of Parenting: Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

9

Emotion Coaching vs Emotion Dismissing

Watch video contrasting two parenting styles



10

Emotion Coaching Script

This exercise contrasts emotion coaching with emotion dismissing using the same situation.

- In pairs go through the scripted role plays. One person plays the child; one the parent. Act these out as much as you can!
 1. Together read out the dismissive script
 2. Then read out the emotion coaching script
- After reading these, discuss:
 1. How did it feel to be the parent or child?
 2. What did this communicate to the child?



11

The Hand Model of the Brain (Based on Dan Siegel's model, 2014)

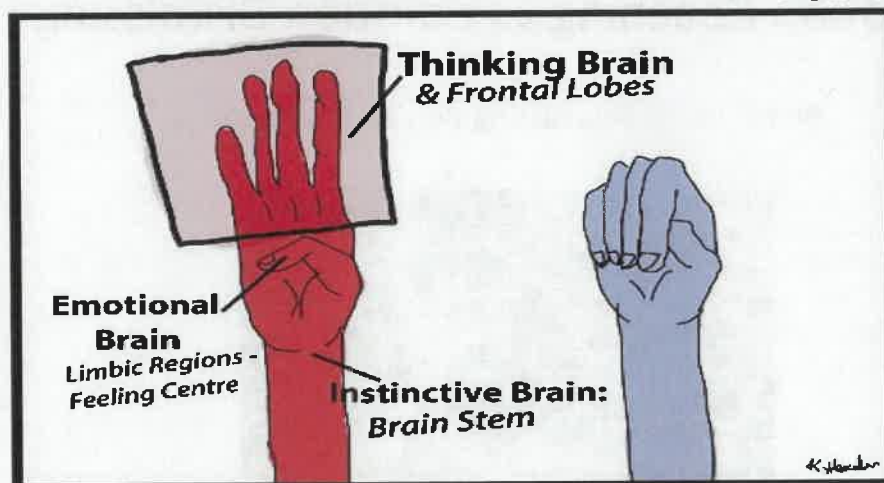


Illustration by Kate Alexander



12

Emotion Regulation for Parents



- Build in a pause:
 - Count to 10
 - Breathe slowly for 10 breaths
 - Drink cold water/suck on ice
 - Move out of the situation
 - Focus on the senses (i.e., hold a necklace, keys etc)
- Activities to calm or let off steam
- Activities to fill up your emotional tank

Havighurst & Kehoe (2023). Enhancing parental emotion regulation skills. In Roskam, I., Gross, J. & Mikolajczak, M. (Ed.s), *Emotion Regulation and Parenting*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.



13

Emotions underlie behaviour



Surface behaviours:

- Shouting, yelling, tantrums
- Withdrawal
- Distress and crying

More vulnerable underlying emotions:

- Sad, lonely, hurt
- Worried, scared
- Jealous
- Frustrated, irritated

14

Empathy

- Empathy:
 - Perspective taking
 - Listen without judgement
 - Connect with this feeling
 - Communicate understanding
- Parents learn to step into the child's shoes
- Empathy is verbal and non-verbal
- Allow time – sit with feelings
- Use the Emotion Detective



Bréne Brown on 'What is empathy?'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QT6FdhKriB8>
Inside Out Example

15

The Emotion Detective: Discovering how your child feels

Instructions

Read each of the following scenarios where your child might have a strong emotional response. Write down a similar situation for an adult and how you would feel in that situation.

Child's emotional situation	A similar situation for an adult	How would you feel in the adult situation?
Starting preschool or school for the first time		
Being told by a parent to share your special new toy		
Being told to eat something you don't like		
Birth of a sibling		
Being left out of a group of children playing		
Getting in trouble for scribbling on another child's drawing when this was in revenge for something the other child did		
Thinking there might be monsters/burglars in the dark		
Consider any of your child's common emotional challenges		



16

Naming or reflecting emotions

From early in development, it is helpful to name emotions with children

Naming emotions shifts an experience from the emotional to the cognitive brain

Gives children distance from their feelings

Helps children internalise parents' words

Assists with emotion regulation



NOTE:

SOME CHILDREN/PEOPLE DON'T LIKE TO BE ASKED:
"HOW ARE YOU FEELING?"

INSTEAD TRY:

I WONDER IF YOU'RE FEELING SAD?
THAT SOUNDS FRUSTRATING!
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE A LITTLE WORRIED...

17

Sitting with emotions

- Part of co-regulation - communicating acceptance, care, and that their emotions are okay
- Proximity, closeness
- Allow space, time, remain quiet
- Minimise eye contact
- 'Zip up your mouth!'
- Use touch, stroking, holding
- Rhythmic rocking, or movement
- Determine child's needs
- Can activate strong emotions in a parent – emotional contagion – build in a pause
- 'This is what my child needs to get back in balance.'



18

Emotion Coaching: Messages the child receives

- Emotions are natural, normal and will pass.
- Everyone feels emotions – learn to recognise them in ourselves and others.
- We can learn to regulate emotions and express them in healthy ways.
- When I have these emotions, I am not alone. I am loved, accepted, supported, cared about, understood, and respected.
- I am capable of solving my own problems.



Aim: Children develop emotion regulation strategies, including accepting their emotions and healthy self-talk.

19

Common ways to dismiss a child's emotions

- ask why your child behaved or felt this way
- talk only about yourself
- tell your child not to worry
- immediately offer explanation, advice or solutions
- take the side of the other person (for example, teacher, sister) instead of listening to the child's perspective
- offer distractions
- respond defensively
- moralise
- try to make your child 'move on from' or 'get over' their emotions too fast
- use the word 'but' immediately after naming the emotion. For example, 'I can see you are jealous that your sister got great birthday presents but your birthday is coming up soon.' BUT can undo all your good work at naming the emotion!

20

When your child is emotional...

Avoid saying ...

Calm down!

You'll be right!

Stop it!

Cheer up!

Don't worry

Get over it!

You should...

Just breathe!

Why are you reacting like that?

How many times have I told you....

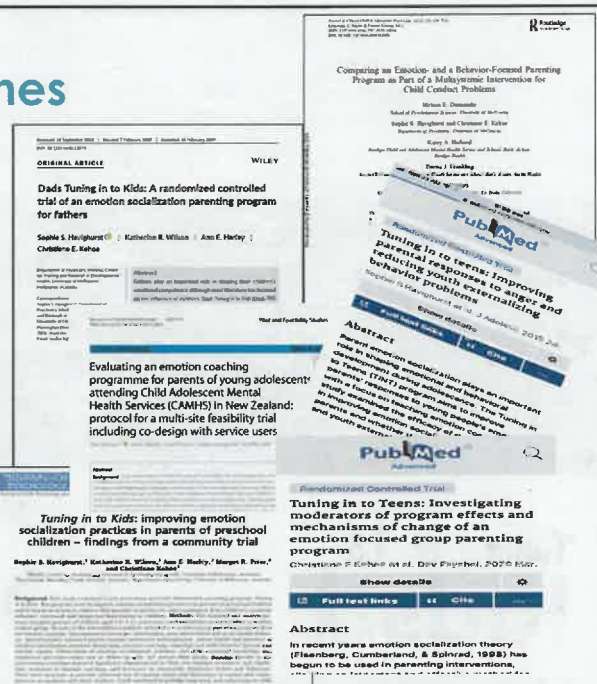
Instead try ...

- Do I need to slow down and build in a pause?
- What emotions do I see? What emotions are under the iceberg?
- Notice emotions behind words, body language, actions and situations
- Reduce questions – Use less talk!
- Slow down the 5-steps of emotion coaching (avoid step 5 until they are calm)
- Allow time – sit with them

21

Tuning in to Kids: Outcomes

- Improved emotional intelligence
- Lower anxiety, depressive symptoms, behaviour problems and family conflict
- Greatest benefit for children with higher levels of:
 - Emotional negative reactivity
 - Externalising behaviour (particularly at a young age)
 - Internalising problems



22

Final points

- Build in a pause - See if you can manage your emotions
- Notice emotions – What's under the iceberg?
- Emotion coach when no eye contact, in the car, at night
- With big emotions, avoid lots of questions or advice
- To empathise, think of a comparable adult situation and use words or non-verbal ways of showing empathy
- Use 'start ups' that are gentle - "**I wonder** if that made you angry?" "**It sounds like** you felt really sad."
- Talk about limits and solutions when everyone is calm.
- If setting limits, use empathy – "**I know how much you want to go outside and play. It's hard missing out.**"



23

THANK YOU

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24