

Haringey Educational Psychology Service

Help your child manage their emotions: 'Emotional Coaching'

Emotion coaching is based on research developed by John Gottman (1997) who proposed that children need to learn the language of emotions and they need their emotions acknowledged. When this is in place, they are able to better explain how they are feeling and they will become more empathic. They will also improve in their ability to regulate their emotions, self-soothe and solve problems more effectively. During this process, they can also learn about more positive strategies in managing strong emotions from you as parents. Responding to children when their feelings are still at a low level of intensity means it reduces the need for them to escalate their emotions and behaviour.

5 steps:

1. **Become aware of your child's emotions, especially lower intensity ones such as disappointment, sadness and frustration, not just anger**
2. **Try not to be frustrated if these are negative expressions and try to see it as an opportunity for teaching**
3. **Communicate that you understand and accept these feelings**
4. **Help your child to use words to describe how they feel**
5. **Help set limits/boundaries and problem solve (you may need to say that any feeling is ok but the behaviour may not be)**



Examples of possible ways to label emotions:

For younger children:

- You seem so excited about seeing your friend
- Well done for waiting your turn, you're being so patient and I know how hard that is for you
- You look like you're having fun playing games with your friend

For primary aged children:

- It's really impressive how you are managing to keep going with that handwriting
- You seem frustrated by this, I would also feel like that, it's a really hard thing to do
- I was wondering if you were feeling a bit worried as you were checking the clock a lot

For older children:

- You look really fed up, I can see something isn't right
- I can see you feel angry when that happens, I would also feel angry if that happened to me, it's normal to feel like that

Examples of emotion coaching

- 'You look like you're getting annoyed with your sister taking your toys. I would be annoyed too if someone took my things without asking. It's not ok to hit though. Let's see if we can think of some other ways to sort this out'
- 'It looks like you're feeling frustrated with those tricky maths problems. I feel frustrated when I find my work difficult too. Sometimes it helps to take a few deep breaths then come back to it. Shall we go through the first one together?'

For further information:

<https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/parent-carer-resources>