

A Brief Introduction to Supporting Young Children's Behaviour and Emotional Regulation

Below is a guide to how we can help young children to manage their feelings and regulate their behaviour. Some of this you will already be doing without realising what a great starting point you are giving to your child's emotional development. It is important to remember that all children develop at different rates and some may learn these skills more easily than others.

Attachment:

A strong healthy attachment with a parent or carer is central to children's emotional regulation. With a secure attachment children can learn to regulate stress in times of distress or anxiety. Spending time tuning in to children and enjoying each other's company will help to strengthen this bond, which should in turn impact on their behaviour.



Emotional Outbursts (often referred to as "Tantrums")

Having overwhelming emotions is a normal part of a child's development. However challenging, adults should:

- remain calm
- make sure the child is safe
- de-escalate the situation by talking calmly
- find a way that works to help your child calm down
- when calm, discuss the problem, find a solution together



Rewards and Sanctions

These have very limited benefits. Rewards can help with changing some very specific behaviours but should be used with caution as can also be detrimental. This approach focuses more on behaviour and doesn't teach children how to deal with difficult emotions.

- For further reading and more information on any of these points or strategies for more specific behaviours such as gun play or biting see the "Behaviour support for parents" document attached
- If you are concerned about your child's behaviour or would like help with this, speak to your child's key person or class teacher

Conflict: Sharing is incredibly difficult for young children to do and so there will always be conflicts when children play together. Learning to resolve problems themselves is a valuable skill that will help them as they get older. Here is a simple model to help you teach this skill:

6 Step Conflict Resolution

- Step 1. Approach Calmly** - Deep breaths
- Step 2. Acknowledge Feelings** - I can see you're feeling...
- Step 3. Gather Information** - What happened?
- Step 4. Restate the problem** - I will repeat what you said
- Step 5. Brainstorm Solutions** - 'What should we do now?'
- Step 6. Follow Up** - I will help you with your plan...



Emotion Coaching

Emotion coaching uses incidences of "negative behaviour" as opportunities to teach children strategies for coping with difficult situations and emotions. It also reduces stress and builds trust and positive attachments.

The key things to remember are:

1. Recognise the child's feelings and empathise
 2. Labelling & validating (*use words to name the child's emotion*)
 3. Limit setting if needed (*make it clear that certain behaviours are not accepted but retain the child's dignity*)
 4. Problem solve with the child
- Address the emotion your child is feeling **before** discussing the unwanted behaviour so they are calmer and more rational*

Calming strategies

In situations where emotions are running high it is crucial to ensure everyone is calm before it's possible to deal with behaviour, think rationally or sort out a problem. Try:

- Take deep breaths
- Count to 10
- Squeeze a stress ball
- Watch the glitter settle in a sensory bottle or snow globe
- Play with a favourite toy
- Movement -Rocking, swinging
- Pictures of favourite people
- Why not make a calming box?*

*For instructions/ideas see attached sheet "Making your own calm box"

