

Top tips for Emotion Coaching

Acknowledge low levels of your child's emotion before they escalate to full-blown crisis.

Acknowledge all emotions as being natural and normal and not always a matter of choice.

Recognise your child's behaviour as communication of an emotion they are experiencing.

Check on how you're feeling. Are you calm and ready to Emotion Coach your child?

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The four steps to Emotion Coaching and how this might be used at home:

1. Notice your child's feelings and empathise with them.

Notice any judgements your child's behaviour and emotion cause in you. Remember not being picked for a team is the same feeling as not getting that job you applied for.

2. Label and validate the feeling your child is experiencing right at this moment

'I can see that you get angry when that happens. I would feel angry if that happened to me. It's ok to feel angry'

3. Set limits (if needed)

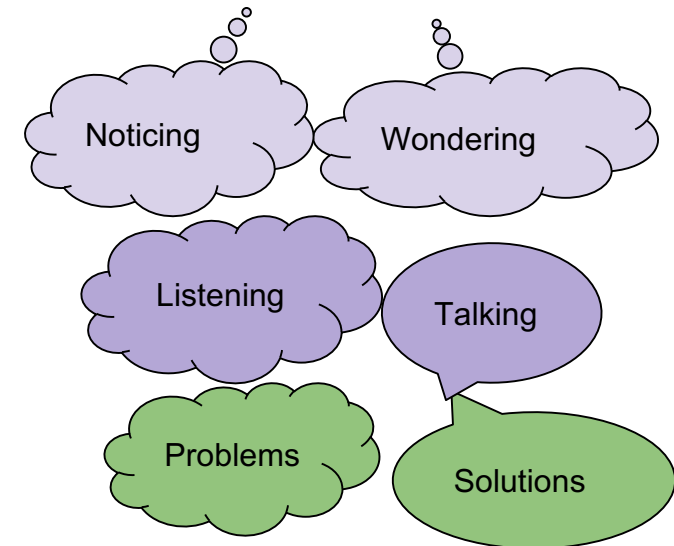
Emotion Coaching is not about ignoring the fact that some behaviours are not acceptable. After steps 1&2 you need to make clear which behaviours are and are not acceptable.

'I understand you're feeling really sad today, but one of our golden rules is kindness, so hitting your friend isn't an ok thing to do'

4. Problem Solving

When the child is calm, help your child to consider what they could do when they feel those strong emotions next time. Explain why their behaviour was inappropriate or hurtful, find solutions for what they did, not for how they feel, give your child time to suggest solutions and when possible follow his/her lead in picking a solution.

A Pocket Guide to Emotion Coaching




Emotion Coaching ^{UK}
a way of being, a way of becoming

Step 1: Notice your child's feelings and empathise with them

It is important to be aware of the different emotions a child may feel. In this stage it is valuable to observe, listen, and learn how your child expresses different emotions and to watch for changes in facial expressions, body language, posture, gestures, speed of words and tone of voice. Look beneath the behaviour you see and wonder what emotion was informing this.



Recognise that your child's behaviour tells you that they are struggling with how they are feeling right now and need your support. It is important not to ignore or avoid the emotions your child is feeling. See this as an opportunity for you to connect with your child. By accepting their emotion and not blaming them for it you can help them to understand and learn to manage that feeling. It will help you to de-escalate a situation or prevent it from getting worse. For example, I can see you are angry today".

Be curious rather than furious

When you listen to what your child has to say or notice their emotions, you are letting your child know that their emotions are important, that you don't blame them for feeling emotions and that you take their concerns seriously. This will help your child to feel seen and safe, it will help to soothe and start to calm down.

Be a STAR for your child

S STOP - don't act or react straight away.
Notice any emotions the child's emotion/behaviour is making you feel.

T THINK - what is going on for the child right now? What feeling might lay underneath the behaviour I'm seeing?

A ATTUNE - yourself with that feeling by putting yourself in the child's shoes and maybe

R REFLECT - What would be an equivalent situation for you that could cause you to feel that way?

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Step 2: Label and validate the emotions your child is experiencing

Sometimes a child can't tell you what they are feeling, so you can help him/her to do this. When your child is crying and complaining at their big sister's party, you could say "you look sad, I bet you wish it was your birthday party" or when there is a fight during play, "it must have made you mad when he took your toy". By putting your child's feelings into words you are comforting them but also showing you care and understand. It puts you in a better position to help them find a solution to the problem they were experiencing.

Name it to tame it

Step 3: Set limits on behaviour if needed

Assuming that your child is safe and no one else is at risk of harm or danger, limit setting is an opportunity to teach your child the behaviour that is expected of them. Rather than assuming that your child knows or is always able to respond appropriately - so reprimanding them when they do not, how can you establish and maintain acceptable boundaries positively? Rather than punishing what you don't want your child to be doing, think about what it is that you wish your child to be doing instead. What are the important boundaries and behaviour your child needs to understand, accept and practice? Focus on that. Perhaps a reminder is all that is needed from you; "we agreed that you need to put your toys away before bedtime". Kind reminders acknowledge that none of us learn things straight away and we need practice. Remember how long it takes us to learn some important skills e.g. reading and writing. Managing your emotions is no different, it takes time, teaching and lots of practice.

Step 4: Help your child to problem solve

Reinforce the idea that your child has the capacity within themselves to develop skills to cope with their own emotional worlds.

You might: 1) Talk about feelings that gave rise to the problem; 'How were you feeling when that happened?' 2) Identify more productive ways of expressing those feelings; 'Let's think of what you could have done instead.' 3) Help them find and agree a solution; 'You could ...or.... which one sounds good to you?' 'How can you practice to.....' 'What will help you to remember to do this?'

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