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# Confronting Our Biases About Children's Strong Emotions

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## INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with "Crying Helps: How Tears Support Emotional Development." This blog was written by the Virginia Infant and Toddler Specialist Network. The questions and activities in this handout can be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

## Goals

- ◆ Acknowledge our feelings and biases about how young children cry to express strong emotions in the classroom.
- ◆ Recognize that a child's background and experiences impact how they express their strong emotions.
- ◆ Discuss ways to disrupt the impact our biases have on our interactions with young children as we support them to handle their strong emotions.

## Activity

- ◆ Read the blog.
- ◆ After reading the blog, use the questions below to guide your reflection on how you can acknowledge and disrupt your biases to support young children's strong emotions equitably.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the blog? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?



- ◆ Our culture and background influence our emotional responses, including when and why we cry. They also influence our expectations of others' emotions, including the children in our care. When we understand how we handle our emotions, we can begin to understand and appreciate how others express their emotions.
  - Generally, how do you express strong emotions?
  - How do your culture, background, and experiences influence the way you express strong emotions?
  - How do you expect young children to express and handle their strong emotions? Where do those expectations come from?



- ◆ A child's identity (e.g., gender, race, home language) can play a role in how we perceive and respond to their crying. That's because we all have biases that guide our expectations and interactions with others, sometimes without us being aware of it. The first step to disrupting the negative effect of biases is to acknowledge they exist. Use the following questions to uncover your potential biases:
  - Who do I feel cries most often?
  - Who do I feel most comfortable comforting when they cry?
  - Are there times when I feel a child's crying is an inappropriate response?
  - When an individual child cries, what is my initial response? Does this differ across children?



- ◆ It is important to confront our implicit biases because they prevent us from equitably supporting children to handle their emotions in the classroom. Identify one specific way you could disrupt your implicit bias to support their strong emotions.
  - What resources or support do you need to put this idea into action?
  - When and how will you check in to see if your plan is working?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about how you can support every child to handle their emotions:

- ◆ **Source:** National Association for the Education of Young Children
- ◆ **Article:** “Rocking and Rolling—Reflection: The First Step for Addressing Bias in Infant and Toddler Programs.”
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2017/rocking-and-rolling>
- ◆ **Description:** This article share key steps teachers can use to reflect on and address bias in infant and toddler programs.

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- ◆ **Source:** Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
  - ◆ **Booklet:** “Discovering Feelings”
  - ◆ **Link:** <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/discovering-feelings-eng.pdf>
  - ◆ **Description:** Caregivers can use this workbook to introduce a range of emotional vocabulary to young children, validate their emotions and experience, and help children connect emotions to words. It includes tips for introducing each emotion word to young infants.