



LOOK Strategies for Families: Working Through Emotions

WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Children experience many emotions throughout the day. You support your child to **work through their emotions** when you:

- ◆ Help them *notice* how they are feeling by naming and describing it.
- ◆ Support them to use a *calm-down strategy*.
- ◆ Help them choose *how to respond*.

These skills support children to get along with others and respond to their own feelings in healthy ways. Preschool-aged children are still learning how to manage their emotions. They often need our help. This support is extra important when children have strong feelings. These may include anger, frustration, sadness, fear, or excitement.



HOW TO AND TIPS:

Prepare your child to handle emotions:

- ☑ **Notice** your child's emotions. Let them know that *all* of their feelings are okay, even if they feel mad or sad.
- ☑ **Show** your child *many different emotions* through books, song, and play.
- ☑ **Practice** calm-down strategies with your child regularly. This helps your child use them when they become mad or upset. Examples include breathing, counting to five, or choosing to go to a calm down spot with an adult.
- ☑ **Point out** what *helps* your child when they are upset. For example, snuggling with a stuffed animal or blanket, listening to music, getting a hug, shaking a sensory bottle, or drinking water.

When your child is feeling a strong emotion, help them to:

1. **Name the emotion.** Ask your child how they are feeling. If your child is having a hard time telling you how they feel, you can label the emotion for them. Check that your label is correct. Then, you can help make connections between the emotion and what caused it (for example, "You're feeling sad that your friend can't play today.").
2. **Describe the emotion.** Ask your child to tell you the size of the emotion (big or small). Ask how it feels in their body. You can tell them what you notice, such as, "It looks like you're excited because you are smiling and jumping up and down. You seem *very* excited!"
3. **Manage the emotion.** After your child understands how they are feeling, help them to decide what to do. Support them to choose a calm down strategy (*see page 2*).
4. **Solve the problem.** Once your child has calmed down, you can help them to think of ways to fix what made them upset.



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WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Working Through Emotions at Home

- ◆ Label your child's emotion. For example, "You're feeling sad that it's time to leave the park."
- ◆ Model expressing emotions and problem-solving by saying, "I'm frustrated that I can't get this remote for the TV to work. I am going to see if I can find some batteries."
- ◆ When your child becomes upset, give them support in-the-moment:
 - Label the feeling, "It looks like you're feeling mad." Explain how you know, "I can tell because you yelled."
 - Try to figure out why, "Are you mad that your sister knocked down your tower?"
 - Suggest a calm down strategy before problem-solving, "Let's take some deep breaths to calm down."
 - Then, help them solve the problem, "Great job using your breaths to calm down. Now, how can we fix your tower?"



STRATEGIES TO WORK THROUGH EMOTIONS

Teaching your child to **stop and breathe** gives them a way to calm down in the moment.



- ☑ Make sure to *practice* regularly.
- ☑ *Model* using breathing to calm down. For example, "I'm feeling frustrated that I can't open this jar! I am going to take three deep breaths to calm down."
- ☑ Remind your child to breathe in the moment or offer to use this strategy together.
- ☑ **Examples of child-friendly breathing exercises** you can teach your child include:
 - *Breathing in through your nose* like you are smelling a flower and *breathing out through your mouth* like you are blowing out a birthday candle.
 - *Putting your hands on your stomach* and noticing your belly rise and fall as you *breathe in through your nose* and *out slowly from your mouth*. You can find an example of Rosita from Sesame Street teaching belly breathing here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xq3DwzX6MUw>

Use the **Tucker Turtle** story to help children learn and practice steps to work through their emotions.

- ☑ You can find the story along with how to use the strategy here: https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/TuckerTurtle_Story.pdf
- ☑ Read the *Tucker Turtle Takes Time to Tuck and Think* story with your child.
- ☑ *Practice* the strategy.
- ☑ When your child is feeling a big emotion, you can encourage them to be like Tucker and...
 1. Recognize their feelings
 2. Stop their body
 3. Tuck inside their shell and take 3 deep breaths
 4. Come out when they are calm to think of a solution



LOOK at you: You are the expert on your child. We'd love to hear from you! What helps your child to calm down or manage big emotions? Are there feelings your child has a harder time expressing and working through? What works for your family?