

## **The Five Steps of Emotion Coaching - Younger Children**

<http://www.parentingcounts.org/information/timeline/five-steps-of-emotion-coaching/>

Emotions...we all have them. Everything we do and everything we learn is shaped in some way by the way we feel. Feelings are a natural part of who we are. But how do children learn about emotions? How do they learn to understand their sadness or joy? What is appropriate behavior when these feelings are strong? What can a parent do when a child explodes in anger or hides in fear? Parents spend lots of time teaching children important things such as reading or tying shoes. Taking time to help children learn to understand their feelings is important too.

Research shows that children who understand their feelings and learn about their emotions have these advantages:

- They form stronger friendships with other children.
- They calm themselves down more quickly when they get upset.
- They do better in school.
- They handle their moods better and have fewer negative emotions.
- They get sick less often.

### **Becoming an Emotion Coach**

Emotion Coaching is a parenting technique that helps children understand their feelings. When parents Emotion Coach, their children learn how emotions work and how to react to feelings in healthy ways.

Emotion Coaching starts by recognizing your child's feelings. Many parents are able to see the positive emotions a child expresses, but drawing close to a child who is angry or sad can take some practice. While it takes effort to teach your child about feelings and appropriate behaviors, it is time well spent. Your relationship with your child will be stronger and your child will be more prepared for the challenges life can bring.

Here are the five steps of emotion coaching:

#### **STEP 1**

**Be aware of emotions**

Tune in to your child's feelings and your own.

- Pay attention to your own emotions, from happiness to sadness to anger.
- Understand that emotions are a natural and valuable part of life.
- Observe, listen, and learn how your child expresses different emotions.
- Watch for changes in facial expressions, body language, posture, and tone of voice.

#### **STEP 2**

**Connect with your child**

Use emotional moments as opportunities to connect.

- Pay close attention to a child's emotions.
- Try not to dismiss or avoid them.
- See emotional moments as opportunities for teaching.
- Recognize feelings and encourage your child to talk about his or her emotions.

- Provide guidance before emotions escalate into misbehavior.

### STEP 3

Listen to your child

Respect your child's feelings by taking time to listen carefully.

- Take your child's emotions seriously.
- Show your child that you understand what he or she is feeling.
- Avoid judging or criticizing your child's emotions.

### STEP 4

Name emotions

Help your child identify and name emotions.

- Identify the emotions your child is experiencing instead of telling your child how he or she should feel.
- Naming emotions helps soothe a child.
- Set a good example by naming your own emotions and talking about them.
- Help your child build a vocabulary for different feelings.

### STEP 5

Find good solutions

Explore solutions to problems together.

- Redirect misbehaving children for what they do, not what they feel.
- When children misbehave, help them to identify their feelings and explain why their behavior was inappropriate.
- Encourage emotional expression, but set clear limits on behavior.
- Help children think through possible solutions.
- Don't expect too much too soon.
- Be aware of tempting settings and be prepared to help your child through them.
- Create situations where your child can explore without hearing lots of "don'ts."
- Catch your child doing lots of things right and praise her.
- Do chores, like picking up toys, together.
- Make tasks as fun as possible.