

Emotion Coaching



Practice guide developed by Surrey Educational Psychology Service

Information adapted from: Gottman, J. (1997). *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*. New York: Simon & Schuster; Siegel, D. & Payne Bryson, T. (2012). *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Proven Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind* (2nd Edition). London: Robinson.

What is Emotion Coaching?

Emotion Coaching is a universal approach that helps children to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur and how to handle them. It is based on the principles of **empathy** and **connection before correction**.

It aims to:

- ▶ Teach children about the world of positive and negative emotions '**in the moment**'
- ▶ Give children **strategies** to deal with ups and downs
- ▶ **Accept** negative emotions as **normal**, which aims to **reduce** negative **shame** cycles
- ▶ Use moments of negative behaviour as **opportunities for teaching**
- ▶ Build **trusting and respectful relationships** with children

How to Emotion Coach

Step 1: Recognise the child's feelings and empathise with them (take a pause and be curious as to why the child is reacting this way)

Step 2: Validate the feelings and label them (accept that all feelings are valid, 'Name it to tame it!').

Step 3: Set limits on behaviour, if needed (accept that all feelings are valid but not all behaviour is ok).

Step 4: Problem-solve with the child (it may not be possible to immediately talk through but consider how distraction or a change of scene, pace, or activity may help, be explicit about what may help).

Emotion Coaching script examples

Emotion Coaching step	Script examples
Step 1 Be curious and empathise	Say nothing, in the first instance you need to pause and be curious. What is happening for the child?
Step 2 Validate and empathise	<i>'I wonder if you are worried, it can be hard trying something new'</i> <i>'I can see that you get angry when that happens. I would feel angry if that happened to me. It is normal to feel like that'</i> <i>'I can see you're frowning and you're kicking the wall and you're expressing a lot of energy. I would be feeling like that too if I didn't want to do something'</i>

Emotion Coaching continued.

Emotion Coaching script examples continued

Emotion Coaching step	Script examples
Step 3 Setting boundaries	<p>'These are the rules that we have to follow. Doing that is not ok'</p> <p>'We can't behave like that even though you are feeling angry, because it is not safe'</p> <p>'You didn't put the ball away as we agreed. You're probably angry that you can't play with Billy now because you have to stop now'</p>
Step 4 Problem solve	<p>'This is not a safe place to be angry. Let's go to a safe place and then we can talk (<i>or other calming activity</i>)'</p> <p>'Next time you're feeling like this, what could you do? How do you think you will react next time or if this happens again'</p> <p>'You need to do X or Y – which do you want to do?'</p>

Why do Emotion Coaching?

Emotion Coaching helps:

- ▶ Children/young people to regulate, improve and take ownership of their behaviour
- ▶ Children/young people to calm down and better understand emotions
- ▶ Allow adults to be curious about what is going on emotionally for children/young people
- ▶ Adults to be more sensitive to children/young people's needs
- ▶ Create more consistent responses to children/young people's behaviour
- ▶ Adults to feel more 'in control' during incidents
- ▶ Promotes positive relationships between adults and children/young people

For further information please talk to your link EP.

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