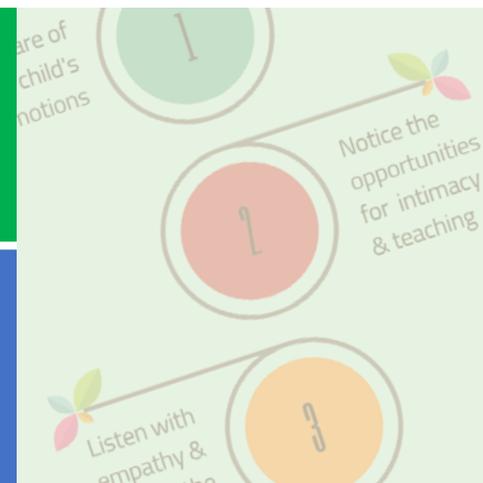
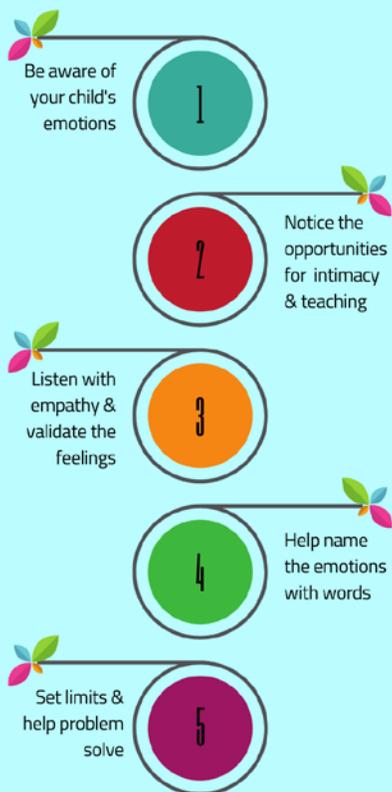


WELL-BEING SNAPSHOTS K-7

EMOTION COACHING



5 STEPS OF EMOTION COACHING



© Karen Peters, PhD
Information source: The Gottman Institute

Emotion coaching is a strategic way of communicating with children and youth about “negative” or difficult emotions. It is an approach based on research by the Gottman Institute and shows better outcomes for kids when parents use this way of communicating with them.

A foundational principle of emotion coaching is validating your child’s feelings. Instead of dismissing or disapproving of our child’s “bad moods,” we view them as opportunities for connection and teaching. Our child’s ability to manage difficult emotions grows when we help them name what they are feeling and work through the problems. If we dismiss how they feel, we are telling them their feelings are wrong or unimportant. In contrast, emotion coaching validates your child’s experience so they can feel supported and understood. Your connection offers them a path through the hard feelings rather than getting stuck and feeling isolated.

Emotion Coaching happens in 5 steps:

1. *Attend to the emotion.* This requires you to notice what your child is feeling, or be tuned in to their experience. You acknowledge what is being felt. It sounds like, “I can see something’s up”
2. *Name it.* Identify and say out loud what emotions are coming across. Feel free to name a range of them to reflect what they might be feeling. This sounds like, “You seem sad”.
3. *Validate the emotion.* This can be the most challenging step in the process, but also the most important. Your job is not to say what they should or shouldn’t be feeling, but show your understanding of what they are feeling and accept these emotions as true for them. It is important that you do not minimize their experience.

This sounds like, “You are feeling a mix of disappointment and embarrassment when you got your test back. I can see how you’d feel that way. You sound worried about what your teacher and friends might be thinking”.

4. *Meet the need.* If your child is sad, soothe or comfort them. If angry, help your child feel safe by setting boundaries and helping them feel defended. If fearful of real danger, help protect them. If anxious or worried, help your child face the fear with love and support. This can sound like, “Come, let me hug you. I’m sorry today was hard for you.”
5. *Problem solve.* Steps 1-4 can significantly reduce the pain of the feelings and should not be skipped. Once you have noticed, named, validated, and met the emotions involved, you can partner with your child to fix the perceived problem. Engage your child’s own problem solving ideas first. Ask them what they think might help and assist them in breaking down the steps to make that happen. If unrealistic, talk about other alternatives.

Information source:
www.emotionfocusedfamilytherapy.org

Supporting your child as their emotion coach helps them develop skills for themselves and feel more connected to you along the way. ●

RESOURCE LINKS:

[Emotion Coaching Webinar](#)
[Gottman Institute blog post](#)

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