

EMOTION COACHING

A research-based approach to helping kids navigate BIG feelings

**Emotion
Coaching**
The Heart of Parenting

WHAT IS EMOTION COACHING?

Based on more than 20 years of research by John & Julie Gottman and others, Emotion Coaching, is 5 responses to your child's emotions, that will help them build stronger emotional intelligence. EQ is a greater indicator of future success than even IQ.

TWO KINDS OF PARENTS

Based on our own comfort level with emotions, as parents, we tend to either be emotion coaching, or emotion dismissing. Emotion dismissing parents are prone to minimizing or neutralizing emotions as quickly as possible, while emotion coaching parents hang in there to allow their child to experience a wide range of emotions. My default is to be an emotion dismissing parent. I want to cheer my kids up or help them gain perspective. I worry about my kids being overly emotional. But over-time, I have learned that helping my kids process, rather than dismiss a wide-range of emotions actually makes them more capable of managing their emotions, not less. Life is challenging, feelings happen, by becoming emotion coaching parents, we can help our kids prepare for all that life will throw at them.



GREAT NEWS

One of the best things about being an emotion coaching parent is, research shows, even if you only get it right 40% of the time, your kids will reap all the benefits. That is good news, because there is no such thing as a perfect parent. In this case, you really do get an A for effort!



NOTICE LOWER INTENSITY EMOTIONS

Tune in to emotions. Learn to read your kiddos cues and help them recognize their feelings before they intensify. Be aware of small disappointments, minor sadness, little sparks of excitement. Practice using emotion coaching with these lower intensity emotions so that it feels more comfortable with the bigger feelings come.

EMOTIONS: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CONNECTION

Instead of seeing emotions as an opportunity for connection, it can be common to be worried they could spiral into all kinds of difficult situations. As a result, sometimes we are too quick to try to fix our kids feelings. And when their big feelings result in BIG behavior, our reflex response is rarely to draw close and connect. But, connection is key and can often de-escalate big feelings faster than attempts to fix or minimize. Try responding with something like: "It seems like you are having some big feelings how can I help".



LABEL EMOTIONS



Help kids learn to identify and label their emotions. Grow a BIG feelings vocabulary. Ask them what they are feeling, and follow up with "what else" so you get to the deeper feelings. To help, reflect to them what you think they might be feeling and ask if you are correct. Remember to practice from time to time with less intense feelings.



EMPATHIZE & VALIDATE FEELINGS

What about when the feelings are unreasonable, exaggerated, or disproportionate? The answer is: Who cares? When I am over-reacting, it still FEELS very real. Empathy and validation do not equal agreement (even though for some of us, it may feel that way). You can say, "I can see you are very disappointed that you can't have another cookie, and maybe you're even mad at me for saying no. I

sometimes feel disappointed or get mad when I can't have something that I want too." Notice, you're not backing down, they still don't get the cookie. And you're not saying it's reasonable to feel that way, you're just labeling what is. You are simply stating the reality of how they are feeling. Whether they "should" or shouldn't feel that way is beside the point. Learning to label and express emotions in a healthy way, will eventually lead to stronger emotional regulation. So, in the end, you get better results by naming what is and acknowledging that you sometimes feel that way too.

LIMIT SET & PROBLEM SOLOVE

AFTER steps 1-4, it's important to get to step 5. (The temptation is to jump straight there). All feelings are acceptable, but not all behavior is acceptable. If there has been poor behavior because of the emotions, now is the time to address the behavior and talk about what they can do next time, or instead. There may even be repairs or consequences

necessary. If there hasn't been poor behavior, but rather it's some problem they are navigating (like being bullied) this is the point where we can help them develop ideas of navigating the problem. What can you try? Who can you ask for help? etc.



Be sure to like and follow CTKFamilies on Facebook and instagram or go to ctk.church to find out when we will offer a next class on emotion coaching.

For more information on Emotion Coaching, you can check out www.gottman.com.

5 Steps to be your Child's EMOTION COACH



Step 1:

Be Aware of
Emotions

Step 2:

Use Emotions to
Connect

Step 3:

Label the
Emotions

Step 4:

Communicate
Empathy &
Understanding

Step 5:

Set Limits & Teach Your Child How to
Problem Solve