



## BIG FEELINGS AND TANTRUMS: FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE

As we mentioned from the start, there's no such thing as perfect parenting and there are no right answers! But because it's such a complex and meaningful role, there's much we can learn from one another if we share our ideas and strategies with an open mind and open heart. Sharing our failures and successes can provide invaluable support and help us feel like we are in this together!

### DISCUSS GROUND RULES

- Set an intention to create a safe space together for sharing.
- Open your mind and heart to learn from others.
- Listen with empathy for thoughts and feelings.
- Look for common ground and learn from diverse opinions.
- Suspend the voice of judgement.
- Do not fix other problems or problem-solve for another.
- Pause and offer quiet before responding.
- Use mirroring—Reflect what you hear with feelings, images, metaphors and gestures.

### BEFORE WE BEGIN, HERE ARE SOME FACTS

#### A tantrum is...

- Normal for children and can happen with teens and adults too.
- An experience of an overflow of challenging emotions a person is unable to manage. It may involve stomping, yelling, crying, throwing their body around or hitting.
- Is common in young children since they do not have the words yet to fully express the big feelings they are experiencing.
- An opportunity to promote social and emotional skills in your child and in yourself.

#### A tantrum is not...

- showing sadness, crying.
- voicing unhappiness.
- begging for something desired.

### SCENARIO

You're in the store shopping as a family when your youngest child points to candy in the checkout line they like and asks if they can have it. You tell them that you are not going to buy the candy. You are aware your child is tired, hungry and likely overstimulated by all that they've seen in the store. At this point, your child begins to throw a tantrum.

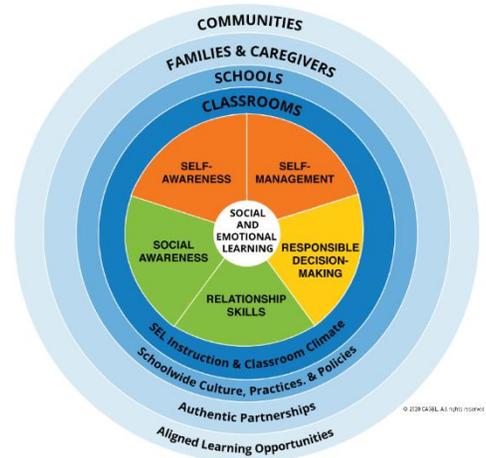
First, YOU are not alone if this has happened to you! This scenario or a similar version happens to nearly every parent at some point. There's NO one way to respond!



**TALK ABOUT IT!**

Build your parenting social and emotional intelligence collaboratively by sharing thoughts and ideas. Before sharing how you might respond in this situation, discuss your thoughts on the following questions:

- How would you feel in this situation? How do you believe your child is feeling?
- What social and emotional skill(s) do you have the opportunity to promote in your child?
- What social and emotional skill(s) do you have the opportunity to promote in yourself?
- How might you respond to your feelings if you acted on impulse or quickly reacted?
- Using social and emotional skills as a way to think about your responses, in what ways might you react to this situation that models and builds skills?



**PTA**  
**HEALTHY**  
**LIFESTYLES**



### DID YOU KNOW?

When you or your child are incredibly upset, your brain capacity is limited! You can only think about fight, flight or freeze. But none of those options are healthy and reasonable in many parenting situations. And for a child, they cannot learn the lesson we are hoping to teach when they are emotionally hijacked. That is why including time and space to calm down in your strategy is key! When you and your child deeply breathe in and out, your brain opens up and your ability to think creatively and problem-solve increases.

Does this information change how you might respond?

### NEXT STEPS...

Want to take the learning home with you? Teach and practice ocean wave breathing with your family as a way to calm down in heated moments. Hang up this simple print out on [Ocean Wave Breathing](#) that will guide you!

