



PARENT TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO BIG FEELINGS

Your children's ability to manage big feelings like sadness, anger, fear, and stress will change with their age and stage but requires practice over time to cultivate healthy skills. When children are young, they are not yet able to self-manage emotions and they depend on adults around them to help them calm down and understand their emotions. As they grow older, they will be able to better self-regulate when they have had modeling from adults around them and opportunities to practice.

We offer the following tips as examples of ways you can support your child as they grow their capacity to self-regulate and make healthy choices.

TIP 1: HONOR BIG FEELINGS IN THE MOMENT.

Example: "I can see/hear that you are upset."

TIP 2: CREATE A SAFE SPACE FOR FULLY EXPERIENCING FEELINGS.

Example: "What place would help you feel better?"

TIP 3: ALLOWING TIME BEFORE TALKING ABOUT FEELINGS.

Example: "After you have some time, we'll talk about it."

TIP 4: ACKNOWLEDGE THAT BIG FEELINGS ARE NATURAL AND HEALTHY.

Example: "It's perfectly normal and healthy to feel this way."

TIP 5: OFFER SUPPORT WITH NAMING BIG FEELINGS.

Example: "Let's try to figure out which feeling you are having right now." If your child does not have the words, try offering: "You looked frustrated. Is that right?"

TIP 6: UNDERSTAND WHAT LED UP TO THESE FEELINGS.

Example: "What happened before you felt _____. Tell me more."

TIP 7: FIND CUES FROM YOUR BODY THAT BIG FEELINGS WERE BUILDING UP.

Example: "What clues does your body give you when you were feeling this way?"

TIP 8: NAME TIPS FOR CATCHING BIG FEELINGS SOONER.

Example: "When your heart races and you feel hot, that's a sign you're upset."

TIP 9: MODEL HEALTHY RESPONSES TO YOUR OWN BIG FEELINGS.

Example: "I don't want to yell so I need a minute to breathe."

TIP 10: PLAN AHEAD WHAT YOU WILL SAY AND WHAT YOU WILL DO.

Example: "I'm planning for the times when I'm really upset to consistently say, 'I need time to calm down,' and I'll walk outside for fresh air."

