

Raising Great Kids



NOVEMBER

Raising an Emotionally Healthy Child

How do you respond to your child's feelings? Do you ignore them? Do you tell him he shouldn't have those feelings? Do you feel guilty for your child having certain feelings? When parents learn effective ways to respond to their children's feelings, they will raise children who have a greater understanding of their own emotions and have empathy for others' feelings. Here are four steps to raising an emotionally healthy child.

1. Be an empathic, understanding parent.

★ One of the most amazing aspects of empathy is our helplessness in the face of it. When we understand our children, we want to act on their behalf and meet their emotional needs. We literally experience our children's feelings as they express them.

★ Learn to see things from your children's point of view. Try to remember what it was like to be young. Put yourself in their shoes and walk around.

★ Empathetic parents can read their children's nonverbal cues and help them discover what is troubling them.

★ Empathy helps us stay out of the common trap of getting angry with our children when they are experiencing strong emotions. We realize they don't do most things just to make us mad.

2. Be a parent who teaches children about emotions by labeling their feelings as they express them, and who teaches them to monitor their intense emotions and to learn ways to calm themselves.

★ Give them a rich feeling vocabulary so they can identify their own feelings as well as the feelings of others. Teach children that feelings are neither good, nor bad. Feelings are different from behavior. They can express feelings without acting them out in negative behaviors.

★ Help your children learn to monitor their own feelings and develop strategies to help them calm down when feelings are getting too strong. When their emotions are running high, they need to be taught to take a break and spend some time alone. Other activities that help children when they are becoming overwhelmed by intense feelings are talking with others, being held, deep breathing and getting physical activity such as running, walking, bike-riding, throwing soft objects and swimming.

3. Be a parent who listens to words and feelings. By simply acknowledging their feelings, children know they are being heard. Listening helps children feel understood and understand themselves.

★ Good listeners get down on their children's level, hold them close, stop whatever they are doing and give them their full attention. They look their children in the eyes and "active listen" by identifying the emotions, which the children are expressing. These parents are respectful and open, and expect the same type of communication in return.

★ They do not "catch their children's feelings," getting angry just because their child is angry. They do not interrupt, put down feelings, preach, shame or lecture children about their feelings.



Safety Scoop

Many children die each year from choking caused by toys and household items. Don't allow preschoolers to play with toys designed for older children, e.g. toys with small movable parts. Any toy small enough to fit through a 1¼ inch circle or smaller than 2¼ inches long is not safe for children under 4 years old. Never let young children play with or chew broken or uninflated latex balloons. Frequently check under furniture and between cushions for dangerous items young children could find, e.g. coins, buttons, marbles, watch batteries that look like buttons. Z

Source: Preventing Choking among Infants and Young Children
www.kidsource.com/safety/prevent.choke.html

★ These parents set up regular times each day to invite communication such as phone calls after school, dinners eaten together and a quiet, calm bedtime when feelings can be shared.

4. Be a parent who sets limits on behavior.

★ Empathic, listening and teaching parents set limits and do not excuse self-centered, negative behavior. They follow through with consequences when words are not enough.

★ Limit-setting parents trust in their children's ability to handle their emotions and the limits on their behaviors. They do not spoil or indulge their children.

★ They remember to keep their feelings separate from their children's feelings. They do not yell, scare or bully their children into obedience, but keep their patience. They remember that children learn from experiencing mistakes and the consequences that result from these mistakes.

★ They discipline with assertive, respectful and consistent discipline strategies while avoiding reactive, blaming strategies. Z

Source: *Family Information Services*, March, 2004, Focus Issue-Basic Parenting: Responding Effectively to Young Children's Feelings.

Did You Know?

Did you know that you can use pasta for fun times with you and your child? Here are two ideas.

Pasta Math

Set out a muffin tin and six types of pasta, e.g. *rotini*, *macaroni*, *bowties*, *penne*, and other varieties. Guide the child as he sorts the pasta by shape.

Pasta Art

Have your child glue the pasta you just sorted on a piece of cardboard to make a pasta collage. Z

Q & A When my son is upset with me because I've said, "NO" to his request, he hits me. I've tried to explain to him that hitting hurts mommy and is wrong, but he keeps doing it. Do you have any suggestions?

Hitting someone is a serious action and should be treated as such. This behavior should be corrected immediately.

1. Every time your son hits you, immediately take him by the shoulders, without hurting him, look him in the eye and say in a firm voice, "Hitting is unkind; time-out." Take him to the time-out place and be firm that he must stay there a while (the recommendation is a minute for each year of age). When both of you have calmed down, you may give him permission to get up. It is okay to talk to him briefly about what happened, but avoid a long lecture. It is important that you respond appropriately each time he hits you or someone else.

2. If you think your son is hitting to get your attention, do not give him the attention he is seeking. Each time he hits you say in a firm voice, "Hitting hurts." Stop talking to him and walk away. He will soon learn that hitting caused you to walk away. Remember, if you give him the attention he seeks by hitting you, he learns this is the way to get what he wants. Z



Thanksgiving Sandwich

½ cup chopped cooked turkey
2-3 tablespoons lowfat yogurt,
grated cheese or lowfat cream cheese
2 tablespoons cranberry sauce
4 slices whole wheat bread

Mix turkey with cheese, yogurt or cream cheese and cranberry sauce. Spread on two slices of bread. Top with remaining slices of bread and enjoy. Z

Kids Can Help

Children can help collect and measure the ingredients. They can mix the turkey with the cheese and cranberry sauce. They can spread the mix (using a plastic knife or spoon) on the bread and top with remaining slices.

All children must be supervised when they are in the kitchen.

