
Working with Families to Support Children's Strong Emotions

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with "Toddler Tantrums 101: Why They Happen and What You Can Do." The article was developed by Zero to Three. The questions and activities in this handout can be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Understand the ways children express their strong emotions in the classroom and at home.
- ◆ Recognize that a family's background and experiences impact how they support children's emotions.
- ◆ Discuss ways to partner with families to support children's strong emotions in the classroom and at home.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ After reading the article, use the questions below to guide your reflection on how connecting with families helps young children handle their strong emotions in the classroom and at home.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?
- ◆ While tantrums are a normal part of development, every child expresses their strong feelings in their own way. They may express strong emotions differently at home and in the classroom.
 1. Go through your class roster and jot down how each children expresses strong feelings like excitement, frustration, or exhaustion.
 2. If you have not already, connect with families to learn how their children express these strong feelings at home.
 3. From your observations and conversations with families, are there differences in the ways children express themselves at home and in the classroom? Why do you think that is?
 - Note that some families may experience or interpret children’s emotions differently than you do. The goal is to communicate and understand how we can partner with families to support children’s emotions.
- ◆ As you just noted, children may express their strong emotions differently in different settings. Supporting children’s emotions will also look differently depending on each family or caregiver’s beliefs, cultures, and experiences.
 1. How do you think this may play a role in the way you work with families?
 2. Imagine a family handles strong emotions differently than you would. How can you continue to partner with this family respectfully and without judgment?
 3. How can you keep conversations with families about children’s strong emotions going?
- ◆ The article will be most useful to share with families if it is connected to what is happening in your classroom, especially if it prompts ongoing cooperation and communication.
 1. Draft a letter to families to go home with this article. Consider how you would:
 - **Share what you are doing with children.** For example, include:
 - Activities, visuals, songs, or strategies you’re using (e.g., “In the classroom, we...”). Share pictures or song lyrics if families want to use them at home.
 - Specific observations about their child (e.g., “I saw your child...”)
 - Be sure to include observations about what a child is doing well!
 - **Invite families to share.** For example, you can ask families:
 - To share which of the strategies in the article they already use at home.
 - The best ways to support their child.
 - To have a private meeting to share their ideas or concerns.
 2. Plan for ongoing communication and follow up. How will you continue this conversation with families around supporting emotions, so it’s not a “one and done” article sent home?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about how you can work with families to support children in managing their emotions:

- ◆ **Source:** National Association for the Education of Young Children
- ◆ **Article:** “Rocking and Rolling—It Takes Two: The Role of Co-Regulation in Building Self-Regulation Skills”
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/jul2015/rocking-rolling>
- ◆ **Description:** This article describes the importance for adults caring for young children to support self-regulation skills by providing warm and responsive interactions that model and coach children to better express their feelings.

- ◆ **Source:** Baby Sign Language Basics
- ◆ **Video:** “Baby Sign Basics- Emotions Signs”
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4i8S64K7IU>
- ◆ **Description:** This short video demonstrates emotion vocabulary in American Sign Language (ASL). Learning ASL can be valuable for all children, not just to those who may have a hearing impairment. Teachers can incorporate signing in the classroom to help children learn a different way of expressing and handling their feelings. They can also share the video with families as an alternative to spoken emotion words.