
Working with Families to Support Children in Managing their Emotions

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with "Teaching Your Child to Identify and Express Emotions." The brief was developed by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning at Vanderbilt University. 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

- ◆ Identify ways you can partner with families to help children manage their emotions.
- ◆ Learn how you can work with families to give them strategies for supporting their children's strong emotions.
- ◆ Recognize that a family's background and experiences may impact how they support children's emotions.

Activity

- ◆ Read the brief.
- ◆ Use the reflection questions to guide how to engage with families in supporting their children's strong emotions.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ The brief 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. Make a list of the strategies that you already use in the classroom or that you plan to start using soon.
 2. Draft a letter to families to go home with this brief. Consider how you would:
 - **Share which strategies or activities you are using with children.** For example, have a section for “At school we...”. Or a section to share specific observations about their child, “I saw you child...”. Be sure to include observations about what a child is doing well!
 - **Prompt families to share.** For example, you can ask families:
 - To share which of the strategies in the brief they already use at home.
 - The best ways to support their child.
 - To have a private meeting to share their ideas or concerns.
 - **What else?** Do you have visuals, songs, activities, feeling words lists that you use with children that you can send home? For example, if you use a visual picture to prompt children to calm down at school, send a copy home.
 3. 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?

- ◆ Think back to one or two discussions you had with families about strong emotional situations. This can be something that a family told you about that happened at home or a situation in the classroom that you discussed with a family.
 1. How did you listen and work together to plan how to support them and their child?
 2. What worked? What, if any, resources did you share?
 3. In a similar future situation, how might you use some of the steps (i.e., explain, teach, praise, support) shared in the brief to improve your support?

- ◆ Supporting children’s emotions will look different for each family due to their 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 support this family respectfully and without judgment?
 3. How can you learn more from families about what works best for their child? Why is this important?

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. Although it is written primarily for the infant and toddler age range, many of the suggested tips will work for preschoolers as well. Teachers can use these tips to engage families in helping children learn to regulate their emotions.

- ◆ **Source:** Edutopia
- ◆ **Video:** “Building Emotional Literacy in Preschoolers”
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cO3JjMxDzU>
- ◆ **Description:** This video offers more examples of how to teach children self-regulation through language. Teachers and families can use this resource to get ideas on how to help children gain the language to manage their emotions.

- ◆ **Source:** Denver’s Early Childhood Council
- ◆ **Blog:** “Using Sign Language to Enhance Language Development”
- ◆ **Link:** <https://denverearlychildhood.org/using-sign-language-enhance-language-development/>
- ◆ **Description:** This short blog is written by a hearing individual who grew up with two Deaf parents and learned American Sign Language (ASL). She outlines the value that learning ASL brings 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 managing their feelings. They can also share the resource with parents as an alternative to spoken emotion words.