



Emotional Regulation for bereaved children

Children are not born with the ability to recognise, to understand or to manage the emotions they feel. So this is something they need to be taught.

When children are displaying challenging behaviours, it is often a sign that they are struggling to manage their feelings, and not, as some may think, being purposefully disobedient. When a difficult experience occurs in a child's life before they are emotionally, mentally or physically ready to deal with it, their emotional distress might be seen in the way they act - and react - to the world around them. This is a natural, human response. It is both unhelpful, and ineffective, to punish or sanction children at these times and is likely to cause confusion or further distress, which, in turn, can lead to more, or longer, periods of challenging behaviours.

All children need help to learn the skills they need to manage big emotions. This is called self-regulation. We also need to recognise that all children are different, so some will need more help than others to learn these skills. And that's ok.

Emotional Literacy

Emotional literacy is about being able to recognise, understand and express our emotions. It is essential that we help children with emotional literacy if they are to learn to self-regulate. Schools can help with this. There are also many books and resources that you can find online - or we can help you to choose appropriate resources for your child.

Breathing Techniques

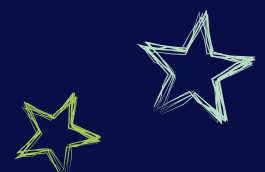
Techniques that get children to breathe deeply into their belly will help to reduce stress hormones and allow them to feel calmer and more regulated.

There are many different breathing techniques such as belly bear breathing, finger breathing and hot chocolate breathing for younger children. Or box breathing, heartbeat breathing and recharge breathing for older young people. Once your child finds the technique they like the best, encourage them to practice it regularly when they are calm so that they can use it easily when they are upset. You will find many different techniques on the internet and in books. Or we can suggest some if you need this.

Exercise and Activity

All forms of physical activity are helpful in calming and releasing difficult feelings.

Rhythm, music and movement are especially effective for stressful times. Yoga is great for dealing with any physical effects of our emotions.





Play and Creativity

Play and craft activities, such as drawing, painting, modelling with plasticine or PlayDoh and imagination or role play games can all help with emotion regulation. So too can doodling, writing and journaling.

Visualisation and Mindfulness

Children can be taught simple mindfulness and visualisation techniques to help with managing emotions. There are also lots of fun apps available to help with this.

Balance

Once children are taught the language of emotions, it helps them if we encourage or provide a balance between activity, creativity and calming techniques.

Self-regulation is a life skill all people need to carry us through the general ups and downs of life. It helps children to make and keep healthy relationships and to cope with future difficult experiences.

For further guidance and advice in supporting bereaved children and young people,
please visit our website: www.seesaw.org.uk

