

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

There are many factors that impact on a child's emotional development, such as their temperament, that is their personality, and their developmental stage. Despite this, parents can have a significant role in supporting their child's ability to regulate and manage their emotions. Here are some of the ways that parents can support their child to self-regulate:

PROVIDING STABILITY AND CONSISTENCY

A **predictable** and **consistent** home environment can support children to feel safe. For example, having a predictable routine, clear limits, household rules will help children know what to expect. This will also help them to feel calm and be able to cope with the less predictable factors and events outside of the home.

ACCEPTING A CHILD'S EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

It is normal for children to express their emotions through their behaviour, for example having tantrums and shouting when feeling angry or withdrawing when they feel anxious. While these can be really difficult for parents to manage, modelling **patience** and **acceptance** of these emotions are important to help children learn to manage these emotions. By showing your child that you understand how they feel, you are helping them to learn to tolerate difficult emotions.

TALK ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL

A powerful way of helping children to learn to express and manage their own emotions is to see parents expressing themselves and using the same language. It also helps when parents might interpret the emotional states of others "I imagine he was sad when he couldn't play with the toy anymore". This helps

children to **identify how they are feeling** and become **used to talking about feelings**. Research has shown that children who are able to communicate how they are feeling with words are less likely to use their behaviour e.g. shouting to express their feelings and more able to regulate their behaviour.

MODELLING EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Children learn from what they see and observe. For example, if we as parents display angry outbursts when something has gone wrong or withdraw when we are upset, children might copy what they have seen us do. By **verbalising how you're feeling** and **how you might cope with it**, children will learn that it's ok and normal to feel sad or angry but we can have **some control over how we respond to it** and there are different ways we can express these feelings.

MODEL CALMING STRATEGIES

Our emotions can be influenced by what we say to ourselves. For example, if a child is thinking "I'm no good at football" it might make them feel sad, disappointed or frustrated. Parents can have an important role in supporting children to develop **self-talk** which **helps** them to calm down and **manage their behaviour more appropriately**.

As well as our thoughts, we can have physiological reactions when we get worked up. For example, if a child is feeling frustrated because their team lost at football, they may have a racing heart and tense body. Parents can support children to develop other tools to calm down. These may be:

- Taking deep breaths
- Counting to 10
- Going to a safe and comfortable place to calm down

CALMING SELF-TALK

I can stay calm

He didn't do it on purpose, it was an accident

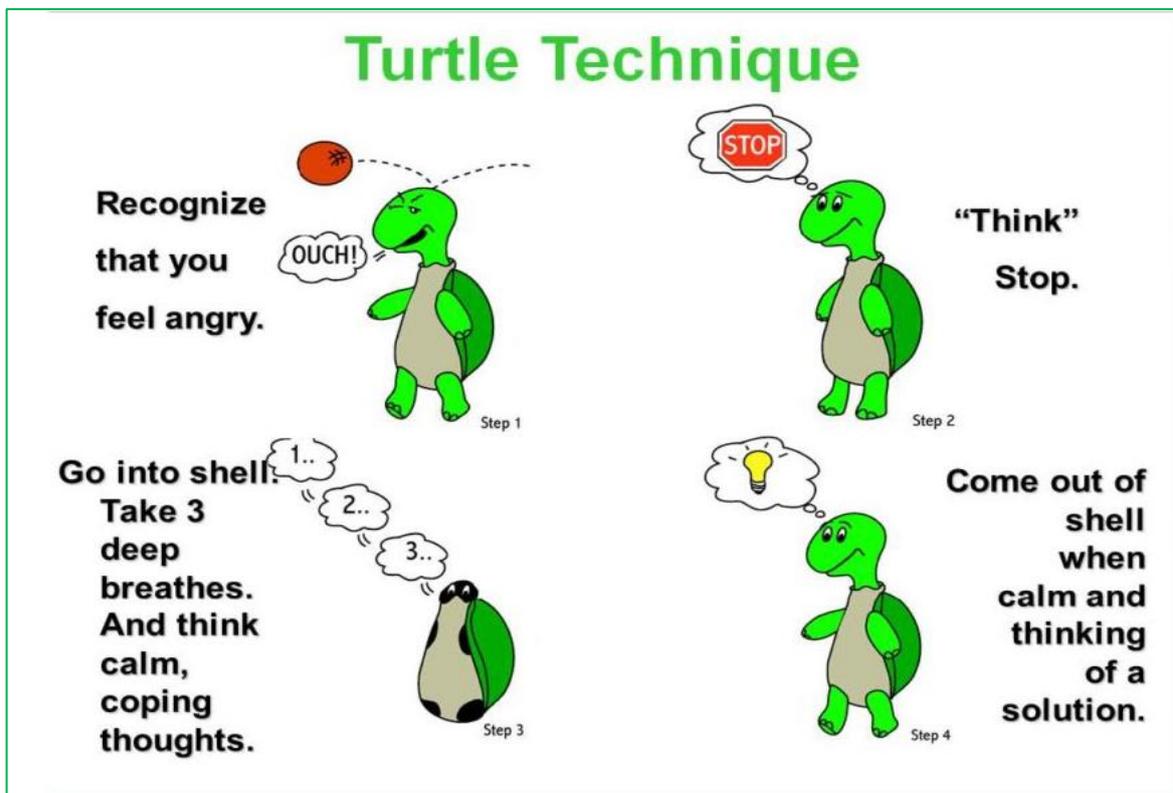
Take deep breaths to calm down

I played well, maybe next time we will have more luck

Other ideas:

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Another strategy is the 'turtle technique' where a child is encouraged to retreat into their shell to calm down.



PRAISE CHILDREN'S EFFORTS TO REGULATE EMOTIONS

Praising children when they have managed to stay calm or keep self-control is important, particularly for those children who are more likely to communicate their emotions through their behaviour. By praising a child for staying calm, we are giving attention to and reinforcing the appropriate response. This will help children to start to believe that they are a person who has the ability to control their behaviour and manage their emotions.