




Good Beginnings

Early Child Development · Parenting Education · Learning and School Readiness Tips

the Buzz...

Have you ever felt like jumping for joy? Have you ever been so angry that you just wanted to scream? Have you ever had something work out just right and you wanted to hug everyone in sight?

Joy, anger, sadness, frustration, and excitement are a normal part of life. For very young children, however, these feelings can be very hard to control. Learning to understand and handle feelings in healthy ways is what we call **emotional development**. The emotional development of your child is just as important as her physical or mental development. Why? Because how a young child feels affects how she thinks and acts.

Young children have many emotional **ups and downs**. They feel things with an intensity that most adults have forgotten. Parents need knowledge and skills to handle the challenges of meeting children's emotional needs in the early years. In this issue of Good Beginnings, you will find tips and suggestions for encouraging children's healthy emotional development.

When a child can control and express feelings in good ways, she will feel more confident and better able to face new people and new situations. She may even jump for joy!



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You can encourage healthy emotional development in your child in many ways. The first step is to help young children learn words that **describe** different feelings. The words "mad," "sad," "happy," and "excited" are as important to teach your child as the words "eyes," "mouth," "hands," and "feet." Teaching your child the words for her feelings will help her learn better how to control them.

EMOTION TALK

Making time to **talk** about emotions will also help children better understand emotions. A good time to do this is when you and your child are reading a story or looking at a book. You can talk about the facial expressions and behaviors of the characters in the book. For example, "She has a frown on her face. Do you think she is feeling happy or mad?"

Another opportunity for **emotion talk** is when you notice that your child is not himself. Asking him how he **feels** will help him think about and express his emotions. For example, you might ask, "What's the matter, Jamal?" If he replies, "There's nothing to do," tell him the name of the emotion he has described. "Oh, you're feeling bored." You might describe times when you have felt the same way. "I get bored sometimes, too, when it seems like there are only the same old things to do."

Describing your own feelings or other children's emotions can help your child understand that emotions are a part of **being human**. Understanding feelings, talking about them, and finding healthy ways to express them will help children learn to get along better with others and be able to behave better in school. ●



happiness



frustration



excitement



anger



sadness

MONKEY SEE, MONKEY DO

Young children pay very close attention to the adults they depend on. Although your child may not understand the **adult** meaning of your moods and behaviors, he is likely to be influenced by them. Young children are very **sensitive** to the way their parents feel, act, and react. Your child will notice how you **react** to stressful situations and how you express your emotions. Do you lose your temper or become frustrated easily? Keep in mind that your child is **learning** from you about handling emotions. Set a good example.

LOVE, ANGER, & FEAR

Among the most common emotions of one- to three-year-olds are **love, anger, and fear**. Let's look at how young children express these emotions and what parents can do to help children recognize and express them in acceptable ways.

LOVE AND AFFECTION

Young children learn to love through **experience** and **practice**. Relationships your child has in her early years will form the basis of her capacity for love later in life. When a child is born, love is first given for those who satisfy her physical needs. As she gets older, her affections will grow towards others.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Respond **calmly, sensitively, and consistently** to your child's needs and moods. This gives her the love she needs to form other positive relationships.



a.



b.



c.



d.



e.

Can you name the emotion?

A N G E R

Temper tantrums are common until about the ages of two to three years. Often, they come from feelings of **frustration** or **confusion** that a young child can't express in words. Children who are **uncertain, insecure, or anxious** may be angry more often than other children are. These children are also more likely to lack self-control.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Be **aware** of situations that cause your child frustration. Avoid those situations when possible. Be able to **respond** when necessary, for example, by showing understanding and offering an alternative. Be **consistent** with your discipline. Children will become frustrated less easily. Give children **acceptable** ways of expressing their anger. Help them use words to describe their upset feelings. Show them how to let off steam in activities such as pounding or twisting clay dough or punching a pillow or cushion. Ask them to draw a picture that shows how angry they are.

F E A R

Every stage of children's development will have its particular **fears**. Children must overcome many fears to develop emotionally and socially.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Respect your child's feelings. **Avoid** shaming him for his fear. Ask your child to describe his feelings. Listen carefully to be sure you understand. Offer simple, honest explanations about the frightening situation. Remind your child of times when he has shown courage or creativity in other situations. Teach your child how to control **scary** situations. For example, if he is afraid of the dark, teach him how to turn on the light. Discuss **new** situations and events before they take place so your child will know what to expect. ●

He or She? We take turns referring to children as he or she. When we use he or she, we mean to include all children.

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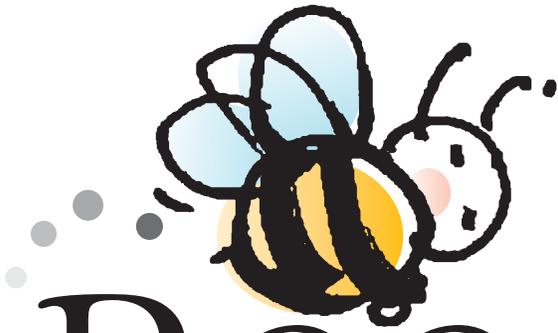


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