

VETERAN PARENTING

Managing Emotions and Getting Help

How to Manage Your Own Emotions

- **Self-awareness is the first step**

Being aware of your own emotions is the first step to staying in control. Try asking yourself, “How do I feel right now?” before you respond to your child’s behavior.

- **Take a moment to calm yourself down**

Probably one of the best strategies to manage strong emotions is to take a break from the upsetting situation. This calming moment can be as simple as going to the restroom or staring out the window for a few seconds.

- **Take a walk or do something physical**

Another tried and true stress reliever is to do something physical. Go for a walk, dig in the garden, or throw the football—anything to burn off some energy. You’ll notice this strategy also gives you a break from the upsetting situation.

- **Talk to someone you trust**

Talking out problems really works for some people. If you’re completely frustrated with your child’s behavior, make sure they are safe and call a trusted friend. You can vent your frustration and maybe even discuss some new parenting ideas.

- **Ask yourself, “Why is my child behaving this way?”**

In most situations, you can take the time to ponder the underlying reasons for your child’s difficult behavior. If you can respond to the underlying cause rather than just reacting to the behavior, the misbehavior will often quickly stop. You will also strengthen your relationship with your child.

- **Consider seeking help (See below)**





When do I need to get help for my child or my family?

Many parents hesitate to ask for help with their children. Remember – children don't come with a manual!

Think about the following questions:

- Do any of my child's emotions or behaviors worry me?
- Has my child regressed, or gone "backwards," in any of their behaviors or skills?
- Have my child's behaviors suddenly changed from what is normal for them?
- Am I worried about losing my self-control with my child?
- Is my child in danger of hurting themselves or others?
- Is there much fighting and tension in our home?

If you answered "yes" to any of the questions, consider seeking help. It is never too early to reach out.

Whoever you ask for help will be glad that you care so much for your family.

Where do I get help for my child or family?

The type of help you seek depends on the severity of the problem with your child. If you are in crisis and anyone is in danger of being hurt, try the following options:

- Call **911**
- Go to the nearest emergency room
- The **Veterans Crisis Line** is an excellent resource if you or someone you care about is struggling with a mental health issue (you don't have to be in crisis to contact them). It is available 24/7 and is confidential. You can contact them by phone at **988, then press 1** if you are a Veteran, by text at **838255**, or online at **www.veteranscrisisline.net**. For anyone who is not a Veteran, you can contact the Suicide and Crisis Hotline by calling or texting **988** or chat at **988lifeline.org**.

If you are concerned about either your child's behaviors or your own self-control, contact any of these resources:

- Pediatrician or family doctor
- Chaplain or clergy member
- Family support or behavioral healthcare services on your local installation
- Local behavioral healthcare professional
- Behavioral healthcare services at your local VA (use the Facility Locator to find a VA near you at www.va.gov/find-locations).

