



Helping Your Child Cope with Difficult Emotions

There are many ways of helping your child cope with their strong emotions. Here are a few ideas to consider and perhaps try out. You know your child the best, so be sure to match the strategy to your child's age and personality.

Control your own feelings

If you are angry with your child because of their behavior, don't respond immediately unless they are in danger. Get in control of your own feelings before you try to respond to your child's emotions or behaviors.

Consider the underlying reasons for your child's emotions and reactions

Ask yourself, "Why is my child acting this way?" For instance, toddlers will get cranky and have more tantrums when they are tired. Your teen may avoid you when they are worried about your reaction to something. Respond to your child's emotions, not just their behaviors.

Model effective ways of managing emotions

Consider how you model coping with strong emotions and problem situations around your child. What do they see you do? That old saying about "Do as I say and not as I do" doesn't work. Children will do whatever they see you do. You are their best teacher.

Talk with your child about their feelings

Start with less intense emotions and reactions. Acknowledge their feelings. Say, "I can see you're really mad about something." Ask questions about the problem. Listen. If appropriate, share a time that you had such feelings and your healthy way of coping.

Comfort your child

Everyone needs comfort when they are feeling down or upset. But each child is different. Find the comforting strategy that "fits" for you and your child. When you comfort your child, you are showing them that their feelings matter to you and you are there to help them through the difficult times.