**My Many Feelings**

As young babies begin to explore their world and develop important language and learning skills, an odd thing happens. You wake up one morning, and they have grown into tiny little people. Though still small in size, these young people are capable of expressing some BIG feelings and emotions.

And just like that, you are a parent explorer helping your child to weather the storm and navigate a seemingly unpredictable sea of emotion.

According to a national parent survey conducted by Zero to Three (2015), two-thirds of parents (66%) believe that children age 2 or younger should have the ability to control their emotions (aka not throw a tantrum when upset). Yet, according to research, this ability begins to develop around 3.5 to 4 years old. Understanding what your child is capable of when it comes to emotions and self-control is half the battle when figuring out how you can help your child through the many ups and downs of the early years.

As you begin to think about how you might help your child develop important emotion regulation skills, it is equally important to consider how these skills are modeled in the home.

Consider ways that you (and other members of your family or home) can model healthy processing of emotions. Take some time to reflect on the strategies you use to manage complex emotions (such as anger, guilt, or fear).

**Big Feelings in Public Places**

You walk into the grocery store armed with crackers, a drink cup, and favorite toy. Things are going quite swimmingly until... that one moment when your child goes from zero to raging hero in the store. Here is your parent survival guide for those public meltdowns.

- Assess your child’s needs. Is she tired? Hungry? Needing a diaper change?
- Pull over and try to talk it out
- Take a breath and decide on your plan
- Remind yourself of what you can expect for your child’s age, and personal growth

It can feel embarrassing, but ultimately if you can model these skills (in the moment), you will be teaching your child a valuable lesson.

**The Book Nook**

*La Catrina: Emotions/Emociones*
  By Patty Rodriguez

*The Worst Day of My Life Ever / El Peor Dia De Toda Mi Vida*
  By Julia Cook

*In My Heart: A Book of Feelings*
  By Jo Witek

"Behind every child behavior, there is a feeling."  - TalkingIsTeaching.org
Understand!

Emotions are complex. Understanding emotions helps children learn to relate to each other and develop empathy and compassion. Here are some ways to help your child understand big feelings or emotions:

- While reading (or after TV time), discuss how a character might be feeling
- When asking your child about her day, ask how she felt at different times of the day
- Spend time talking through your own day and emotions with your child

Engaging children in lots of conversations about how they or others are feeling is important for helping them to learn.

Remember to acknowledge that sometimes we feel many emotions at the same time (such as nervous and excited), and that is okay too.

Express yourself!

In the early years, a child has little control over how he expresses feelings, but as he gets older, this is a skill you can help develop. Around preschool age, children begin to use words to express feelings. Remember, it’s important to support the expression of both negative and positive emotions. Here are some tips for supporting children as they learn to express big feelings:

- Pretend Play: Act out different scenarios with toys. Talk about how characters might respond.
- Express through Art: Ask your child to draw how she is feeling. Talk through the drawings.
- Take a Minute: If you know (from past experience) that your child has a hard time with a situation or event, talk about it ahead of time. Talk about the feelings she might feel and how she can express them in the moment.

Regulate!

“Regulating emotions is not just about moving away from or getting rid of feelings we don’t like to have, or calming down when we are upset. It’s also about having emotions we want to have, like feeling happy, calm, and loved.”

-Rivers & Tomainey, Fisher-Price Blog August 2016

Teach your child to identify the signs of feeling upset or frustrated, then work through different strategies for feeling better. Model your own strategies for calming down (such as taking a few deep breaths).

For more information on emotional regulation, check out this article: https://www.fisher-price.com/en_us/parenting-articles/early-child-development/regulating-emotions

References

ZERO TO THREE’s Tuning In: National Parent Survey (2015)
https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1601-tuning-in-self-control
Fisher-Price: Understanding Emotions
Fisher-Price: Expressing Emotions
Fisher-Price: Regulating Emotions

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