

EMOTIONAL EMPOWERMENT



DEAR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS,

Helping your child manage emotions can be challenging. Yet, teaching children how to identify, express and regulate their emotions—skills that lead to emotional empowerment — is one of the most important lessons a child can learn.

A Family Guide to the Five Steps of Emotional Empowerment

STEPS	HOW GROWN-UPS CAN HELP
<p>1. Identify emotions and what they mean. <i>Labeling emotions enriches emotional vocabulary and signals that feelings should be discussed.</i></p>	<p>Say things like “I’m feeling happy that we’re spending time together,” or, “It looks like you’re frustrated with finishing this math problem.”</p>
<p>2. Recognize emotions as you are feeling them. <i>Modeling the ability to recognize feelings in real time helps develop a habit to manage them before they become problematic.</i></p>	<p>Say things like, “It looks like you are feeling _____ right now. I can tell because _____.”</p>
<p>3. Notice and understand emotions in others. <i>Being aware of other’s emotions helps develop empathy and aids in developing friendships.</i></p>	<p>Talk with your child about how others in your circle may be feeling, or about the feelings of characters in books, movies, or TV shows. Discuss the range of emotions.</p>
<p>4. Express emotions appropriately. <i>Downplaying difficult emotions such as sadness, loneliness, or disappointment can cause negative feelings to linger. Expressing these emotions is important in helping your child build resilience as teens and adults.</i></p>	<p>Say, “I know you feel angry but yelling and hitting is not an appropriate way to manage that feeling. What can we do instead?” Avoid dismissive comments like, “You need to calm down.”</p>
<p>5. Regulate strong emotions through individual coping strategies. <i>Regulating stressful emotions helps keep them from taking over in our minds and causing the loss of our sense of control.</i></p>	<p>Share your own coping strategies and introduce your child to calming techniques they can use, like deep breathing, listening to music, or physical activity.</p>

Emotional Empowerment at Home

A calming basket can provide a go-to strategy for coping with stressful feelings. With your child’s help (and during a time they’re not under emotional strain), collect materials using the suggestions below and place them in a basket or container that is easily accessible. Explain to your child that items in the calming basket may be used in a “feelings emergency,” when an emotion is hard for them to manage. Encourage your child to come to you when they feel the need to use the calming basket to reinforce the skill of communicating all types of feelings first.

SUGGESTED CALMING BASKET ITEMS:

- ▶ Stuffed animals
- ▶ Paper that can be crumpled up
- ▶ Puzzle
- ▶ Coloring book
- ▶ Putty or modeling clay
- ▶ Stress ball
- ▶ A favorite book
- ▶ Crayons

For older kids, provide them with a blank Feelings Journal to write down anything they need to let out whenever emotions feel overwhelming or confusing.

For more ideas and information about Emotional Empowerment, visit OnOurSleeves.org.

About On Our Sleeves

The **On Our Sleeves** movement, powered by behavioral health experts, aims to raise awareness of and break the stigma surrounding children’s mental health. To support families and schools, **On Our Sleeves** has teamed up with the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired to provide your child’s teacher with classroom resources that support social and emotional learning. **On Our Sleeves** borrows a familiar saying to make a point that while a child may not appear to be experiencing emotional stress, they may still be living with a mental concern that affects their happiness and quality of life.

