



Community Children's  
Health Partnership



# Emotional Regulation

**Top Tips from  
Speech & Language Therapy**

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As your child goes through each day there can be times when they feel sad, anxious, confused or frustrated. Regulating emotions is challenging for anyone. It is important to try and draw upon positive emotions and strategies to support children at difficult times.

A good place to start is to feedback to your child about emotions in daily situations, e.g. "you seem worried about this". Give your child chance to talk to someone or write down things when they need to process emotions either at home or in school.

Try not to ask Why? How? When? Questions when your child is stressed. Why did you do that? How do you think I/they felt? It can escalate the negative behaviours. Wait until your child has calmed down to talk about an incident.

An 'emotions toolbox' (see 'Exploring Feelings: Cognitive Behaviour Therapy to Manage Anger' by Tony Attwood ) can be useful to support your child when they are very upset or angry. It can help them to calm down before you try to talk with them. Think about what works best and identify these things in advance. The 'Emotions Toolbox' resource has the following suggestions:

- **Physical Activity Tools.** This enables a quick release of emotional energy. For example: walking, running, trampoline, drumming, sewing, squeezing an orange, punching a punch bag.
- **Relaxation Tools.** This allows a slow release of emotional energy. For example: Relaxation training, music, solitude, massage, comedy programs, repetitive action, sleep
- **Social Tools.** For example: time with a family member, being with a pet, helping someone, being needed, talking to a counsellor or mentor.
- **Solitude.** Some children find socialising mentally and emotionally exhausting. One hour of socialising needs one hour of solitude.

- **Thoughts and Perspective.** For example: replacing poisonous thoughts (I am being silly) with antidotes (I think differently from other people).
- **Special Interests.** Special interests help keep anxiety under control, act as thought blocking and are a means of relaxation, and pleasure. Special interests can act as a distraction during a meltdown. Special Interests should not be the only tool, as the interest can become obsessive.
- **Sensory Tools.** For example: sounds (ear plugs, headphones), light (hat, sun glasses), aroma (deodorants, cleaning products - not using those that cause overload), tactile (clothing).

Another useful strategy is the self-management or 'five-point' scale

- The scale breaks down feelings into manageable chunks – starting with feeling calm and going up to very upset/angry. It focuses on triggers for the feeling, how it looks/feel and what to do next.
- It is often easiest to start by filling in one and five on the scale, as these extremes are easier to identify.
- This gives children and young people a manageable, step-by-step way to feeling calmer. The aim is to identify strategies that the child or young person can use to work their way down the scale, one step at a time.
- Complete this with a child or young person when they are feeling relaxed and calm. The scale should be personalised to suit them.
- To start with, you may need to use lots of example of things you have noticed, for example, "I notice you tend to.... When ...."  
The child or young person may need help thinking of ways to solve the problem.

## Resources:

- Emotions Toolbox: Exploring Feelings: Cognitive Behaviour Therapy to Manage Anxiety' by Tony Attwood;  
Exploring Feelings: Cognitive Behaviour Therapy to Manage Anger by Tony Attwood
- Five Point Scale: <http://www.5pointscale.com/index.htm>
- Emotional Regulation: [zonesofregulation.com](http://zonesofregulation.com)

## Advice and Support

For further advice and support from a Speech & Language Therapist, please contact us via our Telephone Advice Line 07825 016 335 (Wednesdays 9am-12pm) or by email [sirona.slt@nhs.net](mailto:sirona.slt@nhs.net)

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## Let us know what you think and get involved

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\*Calls from landlines are charged up to 10p per minute; calls from mobiles vary, please check with your network provider. This is not a premium-rate number.

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