

Learning Supports at Home for Children with an Emotional Disability (Andrea Kornelis, Britnee Geringer, and Laurie Majors)

Introduction: These are tools and activities to use at home for children with Emotional Disabilities. The purpose of these tools and activities are to help your child identify different emotions in themselves and other people around them as well as find safe outlets for those feelings when they need to take a break.

General recommendations: Create and keep daily schedules and routines for your child. Schedules and routines help children regulate their emotions because it lets them know what to expect. When they know what to expect they are better able to handle their emotions. Tell your child what you want them to do, as opposed to what you do not want them to do. For example, “You can walk in the house and you can run out back.” Instead of, “Don’t run in the house!”

Title: Identifying Emotions

Author: Britnee Geringer

Resources: Emotion cards (here are some I found online for free <https://childhood101.com/helping-children-manage-big-emotions-printable-emotions-cards/>) and clothespins.

Activity: Let’s help your child identify different emotions at home that they experience themselves or see in other people around them. Start by talking to your child about how you are feeling during different times of the day. Ask them how they are feeling during those times as well. If your mood or your child’s mood changes at all talk about it. Talk about why they or you feel that way. If your child does something that makes you happy tell them and show them how happy you are. Do the same if you are feeling frustrated or mad. It’s important for them to see other people’s feelings and understand what made them feel that way.

If you can print off the emotion cards talk about those emotions on the cards. Make faces to match the emotion the child is feeling on the card. Ask why they think that child might feel a certain way? Find a place to hang up the emotion cards. Take a clothespin and write your child’s name on it. You can also put the names of everyone in your household on clothespins as well. During your morning routine have your child put their clothespin on the emotion card that corresponds to how they feel at the moment. When they do, follow up by asking why they feel that way. Make sure to have others in your family put their clothespin names on an emotion card that corresponds with their feelings as well. Throughout the day have your child check-in during different routines to see how they are feeling. Same with others in your family. At the end of the day talk about the different emotions your child felt throughout the day. Point out that we have many different emotions all day and that is ok!

These emotion cards can also be used for different games as well. You can print two sets and play a matching game. Play guess the emotion by holding one of the cards on your forehead while the other person mimics or acts out that emotion. Have the person holding the card try to guess the correct emotion.

Note: If you can’t print off those emotion cards that’s ok! Draw different emotions on paper. You can even take pictures of your child showing those emotions.

Title: I Feel____, So I Can____

Author: Andrea Kornelis

Resources:

There are many ways to construct this project so you can choose what is best for your family. Here is a list of items you will need.

1. Blank index cards or other paper cut to about the same size
2. Pictures of emotions (i.e., happy, sad, mad/frustrated, tired, silly/hyper) for pictures of these emotions you can use pictures off the internet or from an old book or magazine or even draw the pictures yourself.
3. Pictures of your child engaging in activities discussed below. If you are able to use real pictures of your child that is what I would recommend. You can also use pictures off the internet or from an old book or magazine or even draw the pictures yourself. Or you can use pictures of items that represent the activity.
4. Clear tape or another way to attach the pictures to the index cards. Clear packing tape works well.

Activity: First, we need to prepare the materials. After you decide how you are going to demonstrate the emotions, whether that is through drawings or pictures, put each emotion on an index card. Label each emotion, make sure to use language that your child can understand. Your child may not understand “hyper”, but they may understand feeling “silly.” Labeling also ensures everyone uses the same word for the same emotion. We don’t want mom to use “mad” while grandma is using “frustrated”. Emotions are confusing enough already! Don’t start with too many emotions at once, it can be overwhelming for your child. You can always add more as your child begins to understand their own emotions better.

Next, we are going to make pictures of activities your child can engage in when they feel these strong emotions. This is where your expertise about your child comes into play. What is an acceptable behavior that your child is capable of doing, that you want them to engage in when they are mad, sad, tired, and so on? A huge activity, I feel, we should all teach our children to do is take a break when they become mad or even sad. This is not a type of time-out but a positive activity. Maybe set up a special corner in your child’s room or a playroom with pillows and a picture on the wall that they drew. A place that when they go there, they will feel safe and know that they can be alone, and no one will bother them. So, your first activity could be taking a break. You would put something on your card that symbolizes taking a break. That could be anything from a picture of your child in his/her break area to just a simple picture of a pillow or a favorite stuffed animal. Anything that will symbolize a break to your child. When you have the picture of the activity use the clear tape to tape it to the index card. I would recommend taping around the entire card just to make it sturdier.

Below are some other activities that could be used on the cards. If your child has extra energy, large motor activities such as running (around a courtyard or backyard), riding on a bike or scooter, climbing (playground equipment), or jumping on a trampoline. Another good one is play-doh. Your child can pound on the play-doh or make something out of it. Your child might like to try listening to or making music, watching a movie, or taking a bath or shower when they are feeling sad or even silly. These can be calming activities. When my son was young, he engaged in a lot of property destruction. So, as an alternative to the property destruction, we taught him to ask for a box when he got very angry. He would tear the box to shreds until he calmed down. Then when he was calm, we had him clean up the box with us as we talked about what he was feeling. Cleaning up soon became part of his cool-down routine. We put a picture of him and a box on one of our cards because it was something that worked for us. You have to find the activities that work for your child.

Now to put it all together. Lay out the emotion index cards and have your child choose how they are feeling. Say, “Oh you feel _____, so what can you do?” Next, lay out the activities that are available at that time. Maybe you have watching a movie as an activity but at this time watching a movie is not an option. Simply do not put that card out. Then help your child pick an activity from the available cards. Teach this when your child is having a good day. A child cannot learn when they have heightened emotions. We want to create teaching moments when they are open to learning. When your child chooses their activity lay the two cards out. Have your child say, “I feel _____, so I can _____.” Continue to practice throughout the day with your child. Have the cards in an easy to access area because when you

notice your child starting to become upset or frustrated you want to be able to get to them quickly. This activity will help your child practice labeling their emotions and healthier ways to deal with them.

Title: Yoga

Author: Laurie Majors

Resources: Yoga cards, ideas and posters can be found for free at <https://www.kidsyogastories.com/> Also, WY Quality Counts at <https://wyqualitycounts.org/?s=yoga>

Activity: Breathing is a key to yoga. First breath in (smell the flower) and breath out (blow out the candle). Count to five when taking a breath in and count to five when breathing out. Consciously breathing helps center a person, brings down blood pressure and is relaxing.

If you can print off the yoga cards you can make a game out of the cards. Number the cards 1-6. With a die, roll for a number. The number that corresponds with the number on the card is the yoga pose that you and your child can do together. Keep rolling the die until the child has calmed down and ready to go play or do another activity.

Here are four simple poses that can be done throughout the day. Best time to do these are before a meltdown. The star pose is standing with both arms and legs spread apart like a star. Children like being stars and starfish. Down dog is another popular pose. Standing put hands down on the ground in front of you. This will make an upside-down letter "V". The third is the boat. Lay down on the ground bring your arms up and legs up. This resembles the letter "V" or a boat. The fourth is the tree pose. While standing bring your arms up over your head with your hands touching. Bring one foot up off the floor and put on side of knee or side of ankle. During all of these do not forget to breath.

These yoga activities can be helpful in calming your child and centering their emotions and thinking. They learn to count to breathe and count to five to calm down and with the poses they learn to center their bodies and minds in a fun way.