

Teaching Your Child How To Handle Their Emotions

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Emotions are an important part of creating a healthy family unit. Many adults can easily express what and how they are feeling at any given moment; however this is not the same for many children. Just like throwing a ball, some children are naturals and some need to be taught. Teaching your child to identify and express their feelings is a vital step in developing the ability to effectively deal with life's situations.

In order to be able to express emotions, children need the words to identify with their particular feelings. One way to do teach this skill is to read with your child and talk about the characters in the story. Use phrases that identify key feelings, as well as discuss whether or not they were handled well. For older children, videos and television shows are a good platform for open discussion as well.

The saying, "children are a product of their environment" is applicable in this situation. Most children will look to their parents as models. Some families talk about feelings more openly than others – Keep in mind that each family should have a time where feelings can be shared freely and safely. One way to start this sharing session is to have the family get together and take turns sharing their feelings. Establish some ground rules, such as no interrupting and no laughing at someone else's comments. Try to work out solutions as a team! Let your child see that they can always let you know what is bothering them and you will ALWAYS be there for support!

By teaching your child to express their feelings, you are letting them know that you are trying to see things from their point of view. For example, if your child falls and starts to cry, it is emotionally confusing when the parental response is "That didn't hurt!" Their mind and body are telling them one thing, yet you are denying them that feeling. A better response to encourage resiliency is "Uh oh! Let's get up and try that again when you're ready." Make sure to emphasize that ALL feelings are okay, it's the manner in which we handle them that makes the difference!