

Kindy Kids Connect

Build & cultivate resilience in children.



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HELPING KIDS MANAGE THEIR BIG EMOTIONS

Everyone experiences big emotions, it's a normal part of life. Learning to cope with these big feelings is the tricky part, and for children it's extra hard. Their brains are still developing – even through adolescence – and they're taking in so much new information every day. Things that don't seem like a big deal to adults can be immensely overwhelming for kids.

It's natural to not want your child to experience big or uncomfortable emotions – it's hard to see them hurting, and can often feel overwhelming and stressful. However we can also utilise these moments of big emotion as opportunities to teach our children; coping skills, to practice problem solving and healthy communication skills, and to reinforce for your child that you're going to be there for them through difficult times.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Pay attention to possible big emotion triggers

It is almost impossible to 'stop' a big emotion once it has reached overwhelm stage. But if we pay attention to emotional triggers we can help children put coping strategies in place earlier. Some of the most common emotional triggers for younger children include: feeling hungry, sick, uncomfortable, tired, bored, embarrassed/rejected, having their routine changed, too much sensory input (i.e. noise, light, touch) or feeling frustrated or misunderstood because of communication difficulties.

Replace unhelpful coping behaviours with healthy coping behaviours

Big emotions can come with big behaviours. Some behaviours help kids to avoid or escape the feelings, while other behaviours help them release the feelings from their body. Responding to a behaviour without acknowledging the underlying emotion is unlikely to be successful – because the child only learns what they're not allowed to do. They don't learn how to handle that emotion better next time. You can teach your child that it's okay to get angry or upset, but it's not okay to hurt others or break things. Just remember to teach them a coping skill to replace those behaviours.

Teach your child how to understand and communicate their emotions

Children often don't know what they're feeling or how to describe their feelings. Plenty of adults struggle with this too. You can help your child build their feelings vocabulary and comprehension by naming emotions during day to day activities (i.e. when watching movies or reading books together). Try speaking about your own feelings aloud too, so your child hears how normal emotions are and can see what they look like e.g. "Being stuck in traffic earlier has made me feel really frustrated", "I'm a bit tired today and it's making me cranky".

Supports available at school:

School staff
Pastoral care staff
CatholicCare school counselling program

Contact your school for more information!

How do I know whether to get additional support for my child?

Some children struggle with their emotions and behaviours more than others, and this can be for a variety of reasons. Putting additional supports in place early can help set them up for success in their futures. These supports could include things like Psychology, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, School Counselling and parenting courses. If you're unsure whether your child might need some additional support, consider some of these questions:

- Are the emotions/behaviours stopping your child from achieving their goals or getting through typical daily activities?
- Are the emotions/behaviours making it hard for your child to make or maintain friendship?
- Are the emotions/behaviours resulting in your child hurting themselves or others?
- Is your child spending more time stressed/distressed than regulated/calm?

123 Magic and Emotion Coaching

Supporting your child through the many challenging behaviours they may display each day, can be difficult and exhausting. This group will help you understand why the behaviour may be occurring, and simple effective strategies to manage the behaviours in a safe and effective way.

To learn more about 123 Magic and Emotion Coaching as well as our other courses visit our website: <https://www.catholiccare.dow.org.au/services-and-programs/family/family-care/courses/123-magic-and-emotion-coaching>



GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL FOR MORE INFORMATION

Schools are there to help. If your child or family are experiencing challenges, reach out to see what help is available. Schools can also make a referral to the CatholicCare School Counselling Program.



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