

Emotions and self-concept

Children's emotions are not just a response to things that happen. They are influenced by what children think, especially by what they think about themselves and their abilities. Children often need support from parents and carers to manage their feelings effectively, particularly when they are young.

Showing that you understand and accept children's feelings is very important for supporting their emotional development. When children feel understood it is easier for them to learn to think through their feelings and work out effective ways to handle them.

Everyone has feelings. It takes time to learn how to manage them effectively.

Learning to think through emotional reactions helps children find better ways of managing them.

How parents and carers can help

Parents and carers can support children's emotional development by tuning into feelings, helping children understand feelings, and encouraging them to work out ways to manage feelings effectively. The following suggestions may be helpful.

- Tune into children's feelings and try to understand things from their point of view. This allows you to help them identify their feelings and the ways that feelings work.
- Show that you accept and respect children's feelings. Accepting feelings is necessary before working out a way to manage them.
- Remember that it's not always easy for children to know what is bothering them, and they may not always want to talk about it.
- Show children how to manage your own feelings effectively. If you act calmly it will help to reassure children they can manage even difficult feelings.
- Acknowledge children's efforts to manage feelings. This helps them see their progress and motivates them to use the helpful strategies they are developing in other situations.

Something to try:

- Observe your child and take note of the situations that seem to trigger a particular emotional response.
- Think about how your child might be feeling given his/her age and stage of development.
- Talk and listen to your child about how he/she is feeling. Acknowledge both your child's feelings and his/her efforts to cope.
- Talk about helpful ways of managing feelings and encourage your child to try out different options.

