Emotional Regulation Activities for Kids

Emotions: Five Ways to Handle Big Feelings

These emotional regulation activities help children learn ways to handle big feelings, with a parent, caregiver or therapist by their side. Psychologist James Gross described five points where people can manage a feeling, from choosing where to go to calming the body once a feeling is big. Each one is turned into simple activities below. Work through the sheet together, a little at a time, when your child is calm.

1 How big is my feeling?

My feeling is called:

Color in how big it feels:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

tiny *huge*

Where do I feel it in my body?

2 Five ways to handle a big feeling

Pick your place Situation selection	Plan ahead for places that feel hard. Bring a comfort toy to the doctor, or choose a quiet spot at a busy party.
Change it up Situation modification	Change what is happening. Ask for a break, a hug or help, or move away from the noise.
Move your attention Attentional deployment	Point your mind somewhere else. Find five blue things, hum a song, or play I spy.
Think again Cognitive change	Be a feeling detective. Is there another way to see this? What would I tell a friend?
Calm your body Response modulation	Smell the flower, blow out the candle: breathe in through your nose and out slowly through your mouth. Squeeze your fists tight, then let go.

Why does this work? *Feelings build up in steps, so there is more than one chance to help. Studies with adults show that hiding a feeling does not make it feel smaller inside, so these activities teach kids to handle feelings instead. Kids also learn a lot by watching the adults around them.*

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

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3 Try it out

Pick one activity from each of the five ways and try it this week. Write down how it went.

Activity we tried	The feeling it was for	Did it help? A lot, a little, or not yet

If slow breathing makes your child feel dizzy, stop and let them breathe normally.

4 Tips for grown-ups

- Calm yourself first. Your calm voice and body help your child settle.
- Name the feeling you see without judging it: "You look really frustrated."
- Practice these when everyone is calm, not in the middle of a meltdown.
- Praise the trying, even when an activity does not work the first time.

If your child's feelings often seem out of control, talk to their doctor or a child therapist. If your child is in crisis or talks about hurting themselves, call or text 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

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5

My feelings plan

When I feel…

I can…

A grown-up can help me by:

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