



How to Help a Child Who Is Struggling With Big Emotions

“When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it’s our job to share our calm, not join the chaos.” –L.R. KNOTT

- ✓ Stay calm. Big emotions can seem scary to little people. They need your demeanor to say, “I will keep you safe. Everything will be okay.”
- ✓ Quiet yourself. Do not try to talk your child out of her feelings. The quieter you become, the more quickly the child will regain calm.
- ✓ Ask your child for permission before offering gentle physical support, such as a hand on the shoulder.
- ✓ Look your child in the eyes. Say, “I see how sad and frustrated you are. I want to help you.”
- ✓ When your child is calm and ready — and only then — help her discuss her feelings and begin to find solutions.
- ✓ Try a few solutions. Are they successful? If not, try something else.
- ✓ Observe your child to understand what her behavior is communicating. Does she understand your expectations? Is she capable of complying? Is she feeling distress or sensory overload?
- ✓ Teach emotional literacy. Talk about your feelings and things you do to feel better. Encourage your child to talk about her feelings.
- ✓ Be flexible. If your child is happily engaged in building a block structure, for example, could you extend the play longer or allow your child to leave his block structure up to return to later?