



Ascension

Ascension WI
Employee Assistance Program

Parenting During COVID

Helping Children Manage Emotions

Emotional intelligence skills help kids be less reactive and impulsive. They are better able to identify and verbalize their emotions, as well as pause to think before they act on their emotions. Emotional intelligence skills are important at any age, and there are many things you can do to help your children learn them even from a very young age.

Deep breaths – When your child gets anxious or angry, encourage them to take a couple of very deep, slow breaths. This will help to activate the body's relaxation response and de-escalate the fight or flight system. If the child used inappropriate language, have them take some deep breaths and try to express themselves again, this time using respectful words.

Time out! – Time outs are not a punishment; they can be a tool to regulate and manage very intense emotions! Teach children to walk away when angry. Encourage them to say, "I need a break!" versus screaming or yelling when angry. Allow them to take the time they need to calm down, maybe in their bedroom or another safe place.

Some kids will engage in quiet time out activities, while other kids may scream, hit pillows or make vigorous body movements (jumping, tensing, moving heavy objects, etc.) Either is ok, as long as behaviors don't become disrespectful or dangerous. You may suggest other soothing activities like reading, drawing, or listening to music, but kids with very

intense emotions might need very intense stimuli, such as a cold shower, blaring music, or snapping a rubber band on their wrist.

After a cool down period, or time out, it is important that your child can come back to the situation and work it out respectfully by expressing feelings, asking for what they need, and sometimes, tolerating disappointment. Conflict resolution is a complex skill that even many adults have not mastered, so practicing early in life is very beneficial.

Mindfulness – Have your child sit or lie on the floor with eyes closed, breathing deeply, for 5–10 minutes (or as long as they can handle. You might increase the time as their skills improve). Encourage your child to notice what thoughts and feelings come and go. Ask if they notice any tension in their body, starting from the top of their head, slowly moving awareness down to the tips of their toes.

Mindfulness practices are wonderful for both the brain and the body. Not only does it help to improve focusing skills, but it also builds self awareness (part of emotional intelligence) and increases feelings of peace and calm. Consider making this part of your daily routine. Check out YouTube for mindfulness videos for children. GoZen has some cool ones for kids.

For more ideas, contact your EAP. Free and confidential help is just an email away.