

How to use 'Emotion Coaching' with your child!

AN EXPLORATION OF TECHNIQUES, STRATEGIES AND PHRASES TO USE WHEN YOUR CHILD IS ANGRY OR UPSET



Response to our thoughts and feelings because of what is happening around us

Happy

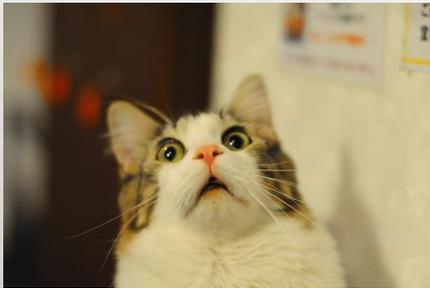


Sad

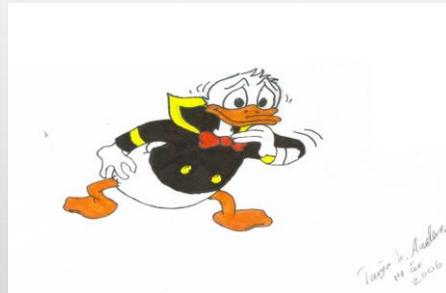


Angry

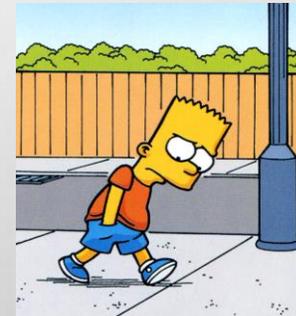
Worried



Scared



Bored



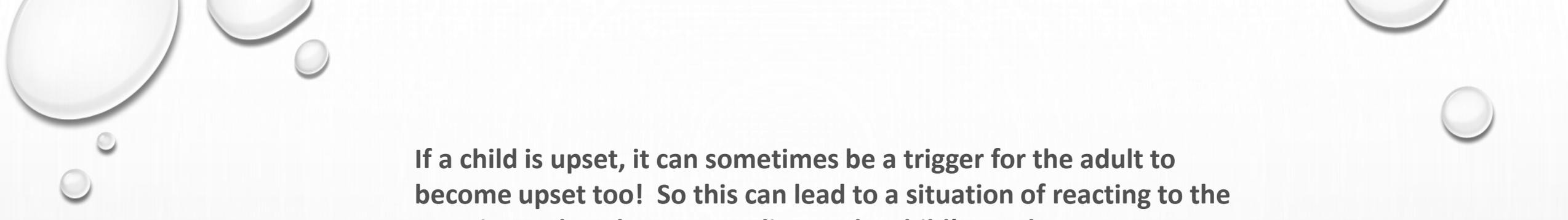
Regulating our emotions is a skill

Parent's view

'Sometimes my child's emotions take me by surprise. Things that haven't caused a huge reaction before are suddenly very hard to handle.

For example when Dad left for a business trip saying goodbye was unexpectedly hard. At this particular time he fell down and though he wasn't badly hurt, it was the last straw — on any other occasion he would have just stood up and brushed himself off.

That wave of emotion comes out of him and it catches me off guard. Maybe it's because I expected him to be able to **handle it.**

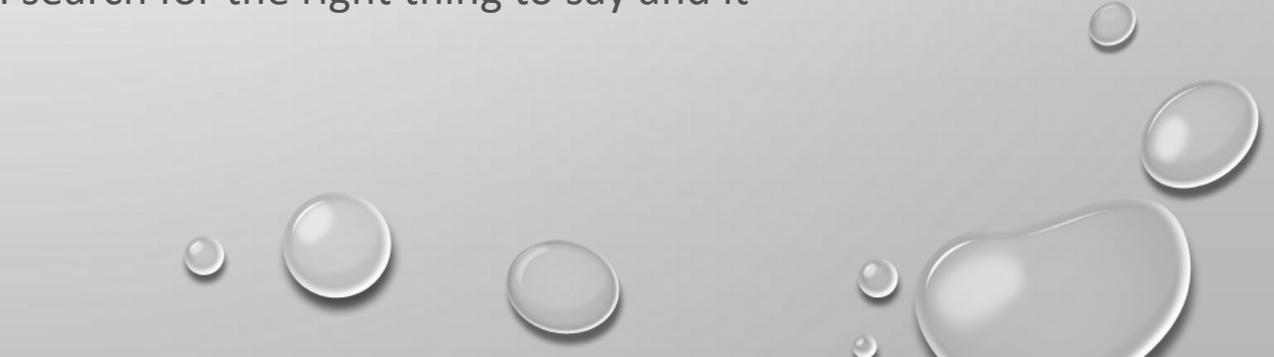


If a child is upset, it can sometimes be a trigger for the adult to become upset too! So this can lead to a situation of reacting to the emotion rather than responding to the child's needs.

“In these moments when my child's feelings are big and his reactions intense, I find myself being more dismissive of his emotions than I intend to be. I tell him; *“you're okay”* or *“shake it off”* or *“calm down.”*”

It can often be the case that when a child is upset and needs an adult the most this is the exact moment we are not necessarily prepared for. This is likely to be due to our own tiredness and stress.

“I feel like my words fail me — I search for the right thing to say and it escapes me.”



Coach your child through their feelings

It is possible to lead your child from experiencing those feelings to expressing them.





‘It’s okay to be upset — it’s good to let it out.’

As your child’s emotion-coach, the first thing you want to teach them is that emotions are meant to be experienced, in fact, that their emotions *need* to be felt.

By doing this you are both acknowledging how they feel, validating that feeling, and showing that the emotion itself, even negative emotions, are not something to be feared or avoided.

‘It seems like you are cross, it’s okay to be cross. It’s good to let that anger come out.’

‘Your face/body looks sad. It’s okay to feel sad. It is sad to say goodbye.’



‘I’m here for you — When you are ready I will listen!’

It’s important to keep emotionally connected using a calm voice

‘I can see that you are upset, let’s sit here for a moment. I’m with you, I’ll stay with you — it’s okay to feel _____. I won’t leave you.’

The key is being able to separate your child’s emotion from their behaviour — sometimes what we inadvertently do is see the behaviour we want to change and inadvertently dismiss the emotions.

“It’s okay to feel how you feel. It is not okay to _____.”
“Use your kind hands/words.”

Sometimes it is necessary to use a very clear limit in *how* our children express their emotions. It isn’t the emotion itself that needs to change, but rather **how** they are expressing it.

‘You look like you are really, really angry. It is okay to be angry. It is not okay to hit. I will keep you safe. Let’s go and play on the trampoline, go for a walk, go to your bedroom.’

This is a very clear statement — **hitting is not okay**. As your parent, I will keep you safe, I will help you regulate your anger, being angry is okay, hitting is not okay.



'How you feel right now won't last forever. It's okay to feel how you are feeling. It will pass and you will feel better again soon.'

In-the-moment your child feels (and acts) as if their entire world is ending. Their emotions are big and overpowering and they feel that they will never feel better again — which only compounds how they feel.





Taking a break when we are angry, walking away for a moment is a good way of regulating anger.

You are teaching your child to give themselves a little space to breathe and time to process what has happened.

"I can see you are really upset about this. It's okay to be upset. It doesn't seem like what I am saying is helping. You remember what to do when you're upset, and you remember how to calm down. I'll be over here when you need me."

After taking a break you can coach your child through their anger and help them find a better way to solve their issue/frustration.

'What happened? What were you thinking? How did this make you feel? What can you do next time you feel this way?'

Modelling

A good way to build your child's emotional intelligence is to model and describe how emotions feel to you. As you talk, they may relate or change what you say with their own descriptions.

'When I feel that upset, I feel like I can't catch my breath, so I try to breathe slowly. Sometimes I feel a little embarrassed too, and a little hurt, I feel like my heart is a bit bruised. After a few minutes, my heart feels better and I feel like I can go on with my day.'

Using visuals that will help them identify their emotions is powerful. Emotions are abstract and children, even adults, find it hard to describe them.





Happy



Angry



Scared



Sad



Worried



Bored

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 5 | I AM GOING TO EXPLODE!!! |
| 4 | I AM GETTING ANGRY |
| 3 | I AM A LITTLE NERVOUS |
| 2 | FEELING OK |
| 1 | CALM AND RELAXED |

Regulate
yourself



Get close



Make eye
contact



Listen



Be curious and seek to understand



Show
empathy



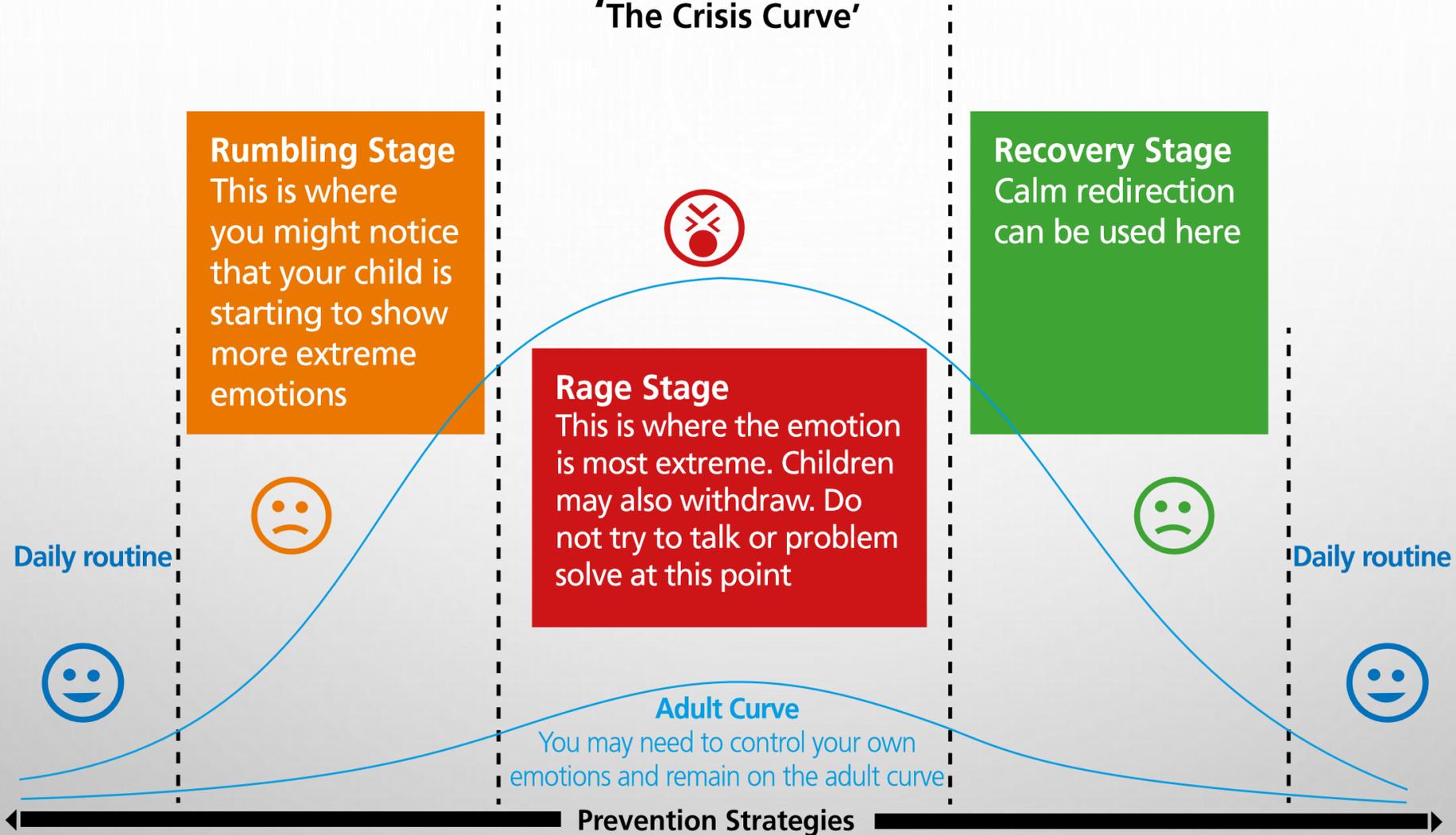
Listen
again



Offer warm
affection
(with consent)



'The Crisis Curve'





You are good and kind.

Being dysregulated is not being bad or naughty. Being angry or frustrated is not being bad. Yet, sometimes when we are emotional, we don't always make the best choices.

'You were angry. You didn't mean those unkind words about your brother. Sometimes we say things we don't mean when we are cross. You are a kind person. What do you think would make your brother feel better?'

This also helps our children with their friendships..

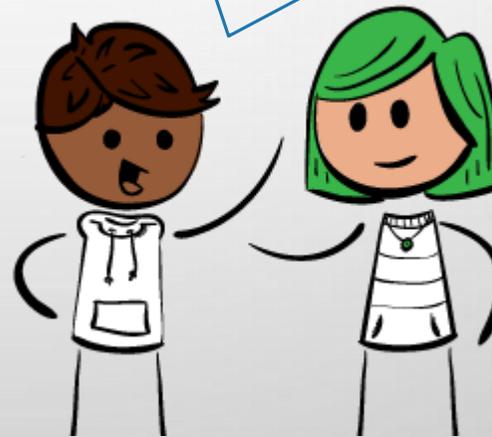
Let's start again!

Situation: You've planned a fun activity. You are so excited!! You are trying to get everyone out the door — emotion and excitement are high. Something happens — now your partner is upset — your child has acted up — the children are fighting and you are so disappointed.

*'Whoa!!! Stop!!! This is not the fun we had planned for today! This is not fun for anyone. Everyone stop! That was not the way to handle that situation, was it? She didn't mean to hit you in the eye with her coat sleeve and you know it's not okay to hit **ever**. Let's start again!! Let's try it all again!! How can we do it better this time??*

Through our
mistakes we grow

This is not just true for academic situations or achievements. It is true for relationships, for friendships, for dealing with hard social situations. It is true of things that make us feel sad, things that make us doubt ourselves.



Rumbling Stage

- Stay calm
 - Talk quietly
 - Take deep breaths
 - Stay close (if your child likes or wants this)
 - Avoid conflict
 - Don't get into a battle for power
 - Be empathetic and understanding
 - Use some of the suggested strategies
 - Attempt to distract or redirect your child
- Be flexible; your child may not be able to.

Rage Stage

- Protect your child and others from harm
- Don't punish
- Don't take your child's behaviours personally.
- Remove any witnesses.
- Be aware of your body language.
- Avoid conflict

Remain calm.

Recovery Stage

- Be aware that your child could go back to the Rage Stage
- Give your child time to become calm
- Offer gentle redirection and distraction
- Use calming and relaxation strategies
- Allow sleep
- Be aware that your child may become upset, embarrassed, and want to say sorry.

Do not talk about the rage behaviours at this time unless your child wants to