



Helping Youth Manage Strong Feelings

Feelings: Everyone has feelings. Feelings are okay. It's what you do with the feeling that may or may not be okay. "Name it to tame it"

Feelings Recognition: This can start a young age. Identifying the basic happy, sad and mad is a good way to get started.

Labeling Feelings- Feelings can be labeled by observing the child and labeling what we see by naming the emotion. "I see that your fists are clenched. Are you mad?" The child can then respond "Yes" or "no" and as a parent you can talk about feelings.

Feelings Wheel- Parents can use a variety of different feeling wheels to expand the emotions vocabulary. These wheels can also be used to help a child identify their feelings.

Playing Games- Introducing games is another way to learn how to identify new emotions. Some ideas are charades, using puppets to play out a scenario etc.

Books and other Media- Reading books with a child that introduces different feelings and ways others deal with strong feelings is another method of feeling discussion. Some examples are *When Sophie Gets Angry- Really, Really Angry...* by Molly Bang; *Cool Down and Work Through* by Cheri J. Meiners. Parents can also use movies like Disney's *Inside Out* and TV shows to talk about feelings with their children.

Talk about Your Own Feelings- Families can talk about their own feelings with their children-- "I feel sad about..." Also you can model appropriate ways to deal with strong feelings. Example-- "I am mad. I need to take a moment by myself to breath." Follow it up about how it felt when you had a strong feeling and how breathing or taking a break helped.

R.I.V.E.R.- Try using this useful communication technique if someone is angry or upset about something
Relationship- Establish a good relationship with the person/child by playing with them, talking to them and engaging in fun activities to keep a strong bond with them.

Identify emotions- Identify feelings, such as "You sound (name the feeling)" Ask or guess what happened to make them feel that way. Repeat back what they've just said, "You feel mad because _____."

Validate Feelings- It is important to validate the feeling expressed. "I can see why you would feel that way." "I understand why you might feel that way. Validation does not mean you agree with the feeling but rather agree that they have a right to feel that way.

Emotional Release- When the feelings have been released, the person/child often visibly relaxes, becomes calmer in his/her speech, and experiences emotional release.

Redirect to Problem Solving- It is only at this point that it is possible to redirect to solve the problem. Many people want to jump to problem-solving immediately with someone who is upset. Most of us want to be heard first. **The solution is often secondary to being heard and understood.**

Mad Chart and Kit: What can anyone in your home do when they're mad? Create a mad chart and refer to it when your child is mad. Also create a mad kit with the things that can help getting mad feelings out. Some ideas: rip up old magazines, scribble/draw/write, play-doh/clay, stress balls, physical activity, deep breathing, counting etc.