



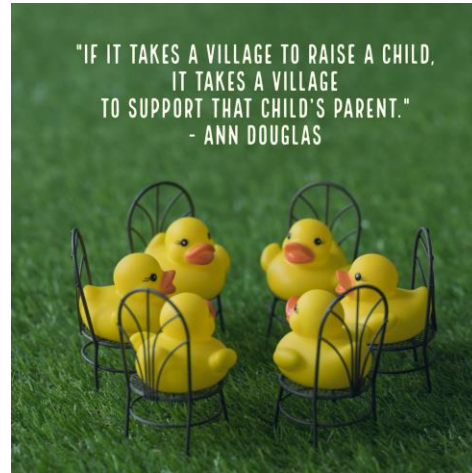
Emotion Coaching

“Emotion Coaching is a way of helping people, children and adults, to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur and how to handle them.”

How can this help?

Helps everyone, child, you as a parent, you as a person and others around you.

Supports times when you and your child are finding behaviour tricky to manage.



Why do we need Emotion Coaching?



All

What we may see in the classroom or at home - above the surface.



Anger
Raging
Running/fleeing **Screaming**
Low frustration tolerance **Violence/aggression** **Avoidance/refusal**
Verbal abuse **Loss of self control** **Hiding** **Threatening/challenging** **Crying** **Self isolation**

Sadness **Anxiety** **Unwanted** **Low confidence**
Fear **Frustration** **Distress**
Unworthy **Unloved** **Hopelessness** **Nervous** **Self loathing**
Overwhelmed **Distrusted** **Untrusting** **Attacked**
Tricked **Grief** **Failure** **Stressed**

Embarrassed **Unsure**
Exhausted **Disappointed** **Rejected**
Offended **Hurt** **Different**

Worried **Alone**
Curricular fear

What the child is really feeling.
What we cannot see. Below the surface.



Dr Daniel Siegel presenting a Hand Model of the Brain





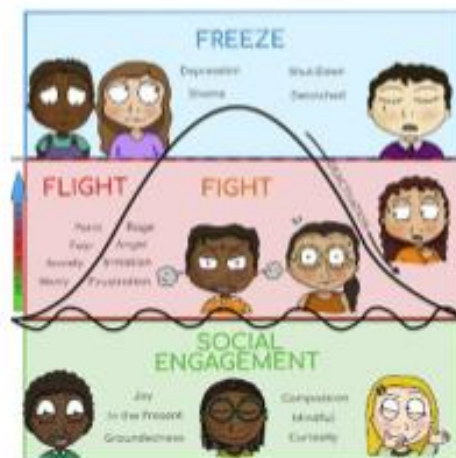
**HAND MODEL OF
THE BRAIN
FOR KIDS**
WITH JEANETTE YOFFE

Physical and mental health and wellbeing is an 'ongoing balancing act' between 2 systems -Porges Polyvagal Theory (2011)



Stress Regulation System

- Ability to regulate stress
- Ability to regulate social interactions
- Ability to regulate positive and toxic stress



Social Engagement System

- Ability to interact with others
- Ability to understand others
- Ability to make sense of social relationships.
- Ability to enjoy social relationships

Instead of denying the feeling...



...recognise the feeling and empathise



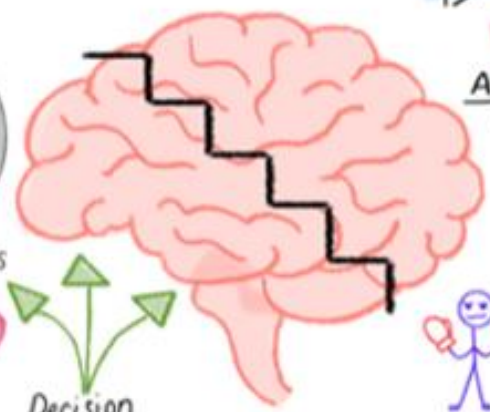
Effects of dismissing and disapproving styles of dealing with emotions upon children

- Child learns ‘what I am **feeling is not right**, my assessment of the problem is **wrong**, I must not feel this way’
- Child does **not learn to trust their own feelings** affecting decision-making
- Not given **opportunities to experience** emotions and deal with them effectively so grow up unprepared for life’s challenges.
- Not given opportunities to **self-regulate or problem-solve**
- Can lead to **suppression of natural emotions**, less or lack of self-regulation, reliance on distraction to get rid of emotion.
- Generates **more negative feelings** – resentment, guilt, shame, anger.



Upstairs RESPONSIVE

THINK before
we ACT



Decision
Making

Downstairs REACTIVE

ACT before
we THINK



Survival & Safety

big Emotions

*Ref: Dan Siegel and Tina Bryson; The Whole Brain Child
*Illustrated by: Jessica Angus

Fight Flight Freeze



The fight flight freeze response is the basic, 'primitive' part of the brain (amygdala) that is well developed at birth as a survival mechanism. The instinctive stress responses which are controlled by the 'primitive brain' are to:

- Face it and fight (FIGHT)
- Flee from a dangerous situation (FLIGHT)
- To freeze (FREEZE)

This is a normal chemical response in the brain. When this happens the thinking brain switches off and neurological responses focus on getting out of the way of trouble before it gets you.

Adrenaline floods the body which means there are physiological responses; the heart beats faster, pupils dilate, blood flows to large skeletal muscles, breathing rate increases, less blood flow to digestive system. Cortisol (stress hormone) is also released more slowly and can stay in the body for days.

When in a hypervigilant state it does not take much to enter fight, flight or freeze mode. Prolonged exposure to cortisol (particularly during early childhood) can mean that our bodies are physiologically more ready to respond to perceived threats.

Fight Flight Freeze Response



Freeze	Flight	Fight	Submit
Bored Not interested Confused Forgetful Distracted Not listening Clumsy Talking about something else Not moving to where you've asked Scanning the room Wide eyed pupils might dilate Daydreaming Staring into space	Hyperactive Manic Aggressive Threatening Stiffening up Running away Clumsy Can't cope with free play Loud and noisy Struggles to follow rules Keeping busy Bumping into people Needing to be first in line or outside Avoiding tasks	Hot and bothered Angry and aggressive Controlling Lying or blaming Shouty and argumentative Pushing friends away Lonely Demanding Inflexible Disrespectful Unable to follow rules	Socially withdrawn Compliant Quiet Unable to think Only gives yes/ no answers Passive Resigned Neutral expression Alone Low mood Head down on the table

Name it to tame it



Connect and re-direct

1. Regulate (them and you)

Calm the flight, flight, freeze response

2. Relate

Connect through attuned, sensitive, relationships. Empathise and validate feelings so they feel seen, heard and understood.

3. Reason

Now they are calm and connected, they may be able to engage in reason and learning

1. Regulate - a way of soothing

How can we help a child or young person feel regulated, not so stuck with negative feelings?

It is impossible to sit still with nervous energy.

Repetitive, sensory or **physical** activities soothe the stress centre of the brain, such as:

- Breathing techniques
- Drinking and eating chewy food
- Walking
- Stretches
- Deep pressure



Co-regulation



The lowest part of the brain needs to be regulated first:

A way to do this is through rhythm: Patterned, repetitive rhythmic activities or somatosensory activities:

Fight impulse:

Pushing, deep touch pressure activities

Flight impulse:

Running, jumping, proprioceptive activities

These might include:

Walking, running, dancing, singing, deep breathing, colouring, trampolining, swinging, drumming, tug of war, bouncing on a fitness ball, walking along balance beam, balance board, measuring heart rate...

(Step 1 & 2 of Emotion Coaching – recognising a child’s emotion, empathising with them, labelling and validating the emotion)

“I can see you and I’m going to stay near you to make sure you stay safe”

Grounding and Calming Strategies:

Grounding helps keep someone in the present. It works by focussing outward on the external world. You can think of it as distraction, centring, a safe place or looking outward.

Strategies include:

- Counting breaths in and out, watching clouds, counting backwards from 20
- Counting how many steps they can walk with a beanbag on their head
- Placing a cool cloth to their face
- Playing 54321 game

Emotion Coaching Style

- 'Tunes in' to the child's emotions
- Gives guidance on how to cope with the feelings and what to do
- Provides opportunities for learning and reflection
- Leads to internal, self-regulation

How do we do Emotion Coaching?

- Having **awareness** of your own emotions

*“Put on **your** oxygen mask*

*first **before** putting it on the child”*

- **Empathise, validate, understand!**

“Proposing solutions before empathising is like trying to build the frame of a house before you lay a firm foundation” (Gottman)



Emotion Coaching – 4 steps

Connect

- Tune in to the child's feelings and your own

Acknowledge

- Validate the feeling and label them. Name it, to tame it!

Limits (if necessary)

- Remind the child of acceptable/unacceptable behaviours

Make a Plan (together)

- Problem solving and finding solutions!

Emotion coach when in a calm enough state to hear the language

1. Connect

2. Acknowledge

3. Limits

4. Make a plan

“You’ve had to stop doing your favourite activity and I am wondering if that has made you feel angry - I can see you are clenching your fists and your face is red. I’d be frustrated or angry too if I had been interrupted from something I enjoy. It’s ok to be frustrated, it’s not ok to say mean things as it upsets others. When I feel frustrated I find it helpful to count down from 20. Let’s try it together now”.

Step 1- Connect



- Look for physical and verbal signs of the emotion being felt in the child e.g. sighing, fiddling with worksheet, scrunching up face...
- Tune in to your own emotion – press the “pause button”; stop and think
- Try to take on the child’s perspective – “a moment in their shoes”

Step 2- Acknowledge

- LABEL - Use words to reflect back the child's emotion – this communicates that you understand how they are feeling

e.g. “I can see that you're feeling a bit frustrated...” or
“I'm wondering whether....”

- EMPATHISE - Use words to empathize or validate the child's emotion – this communicates that it is OK to feel like that

e.g. “I would feel like that too if...” or “It's normal to feel like that ”

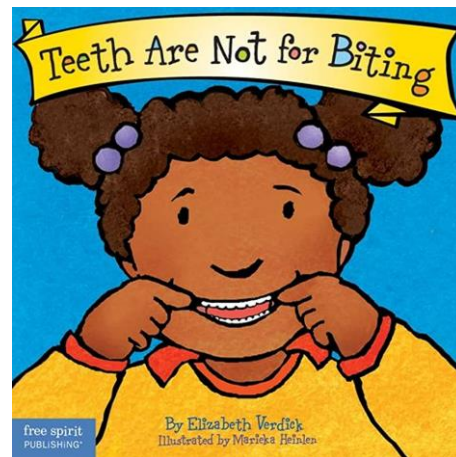
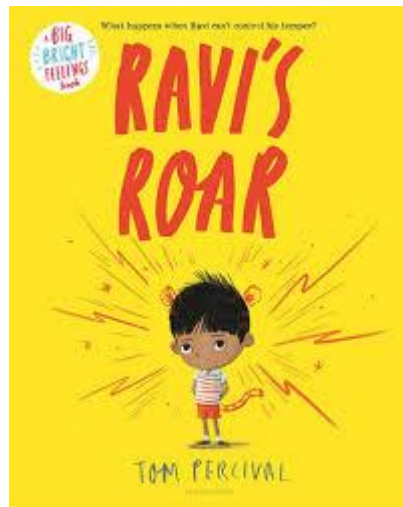
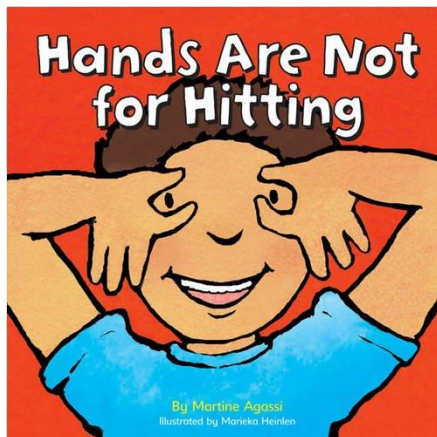
Allow them to calm down.



Step 3: Limits (if needed)

All emotions are OK
...BUT...

certain behaviours cannot be accepted.



Step 4: Make a Plan

- When the child is calm and ready, it may be appropriate to explore how they could manage those emotions next time they occur.
- There are 3 parts to this:
 - a) **Exploring** . What happened? How were you feeling when...?
 - b) **Problem Solving**. Let's think of other ways that you could..?
 - c) **Solutions**. Next time you feel like that – what will you do?

We have our own background music for how we experience children's feelings



What if...

We can't help children change their behaviour by making them feel bad for what they've done.



Remember, they already feel bad.



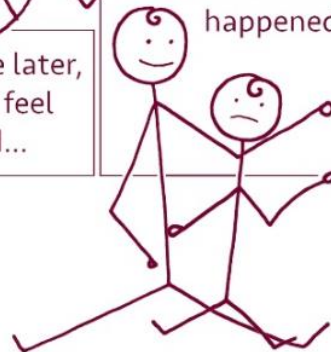
Instead, show them that you care and help them find calm.



Sometime later, when you feel regulated...



...choose a quiet moment and ask them, with kindness in your voice, to be curious about what happened...



...then you'll help them to change their behaviour.

