



## Coping Strategies for Children

**Help your child process emotions and problem solve!**

- Children express their feelings in a variety of ways, including body language, facial gestures, and behavioral changes.
- Observe and listen to your child to identify how they generally express common feelings like anger, sadness, and frustration.
- Knowing how your child usually reacts to stress will make it easier for you to help them before they begin exhibiting misbehavior.

### Practice These Steps When Your Child Is Upset



#### Step 1: Relax

Recognize the physical symptoms that alert you to stress and take time to calm down or take a deep breath before helping your child.

*Sample actions:* Deep breathe, mental pause, self-talk, relaxed posture.



#### Step 2: Reassure

When a child is upset or exhibiting strong emotions, you can use courage, empathy, and compassion to help them. Avoid ignoring the behavior. Talk with the child. Approach them in a way that displays a desire to be supportive. A gentle physical touch can be comforting.

*Sample actions:* Physical contact — kneel to their level, hug, pat on back, cuddle, sit close, hold their hand.



#### Step 3: Be Present and Listen

Show your child they are important by being fully present. Limit distractions and give them your full attention. Listen actively to identify feelings and meanings.

*Sample actions:* Limit distractions (e.g., turn off cell phone), make eye contact, listen for meanings/feelings.



#### Step 4: Summarize

To clarify what your child is saying, briefly repeat the facts you hear.

*Sample actions:* Verbally repeat what was heard.



### Step 5: State the Feeling

When summarizing, state the potential feeling that you think your child is experiencing. This gives them the opportunity to confirm what they are feeling. It can also help your child to identify and name their emotions. Validate that all emotions are acceptable. Remember, children will be less inclined to physically or behaviorally express their emotions if they feel they can verbally share them with you.

**Sample actions:** Suggest the feelings heard — "It sounds like you are feeling..."



### Step 6: Empower

Once your child is calm and can name their feelings, guide them in identifying the source of the feelings and problem-solving.

**Sample actions:** Ask questions and allow the child to lead in processing a solution.

#### Steps for Problem-Solving

- Help your child brainstorm and list a few possible solutions.
- Discuss the possible outcome or impact of each possible solution.
- Discuss the pros of each possible solution.
- Discuss any cons of each possible solution.
- Help them select a solution to try.

## Limit and Reduce Stress for Your Child

### Establish a Nurturing Environment



#### Provide Structure:

Maintain a daily schedule and routine.



#### Validate Feelings:

Children are just learning to identify, name, and process feelings. Help them by listening and naming the emotions you hear.



#### Involve Caring Adults:

Children who are connected to at least one caring adult grow healthier and happier.



#### Avoid Comparisons and Competition:

Acknowledge your child for their unique strengths and praise their efforts instead of accomplishments.



#### Offer Praise and Encouragement:

One's sense of self-esteem and one's ability to overcome stressors is bolstered when one feels supported.

Additional resources, skills, and strategies for parents are available at no cost through the online Thrive Initiative programming. Visit the Thrive website <https://thrive.psu.edu>, and sign up today!