

When children are anxious, worried, or panicky...

It can be really difficult when your child is having a hard time with some big feelings. These steps may help you help your child learn how to manage when their feelings are big.

1. Feeling first (contain the feeling)
 2. Validate (let your child know their feelings are ok)
 3. Listen (let your child communicate with you)
 4. Do (support your child with next steps, if appropriate)

1. Feeling first

Try a grounding technique. You may need to practise this technique when your child is calm in order for them to use it successfully when they are having a big feeling.

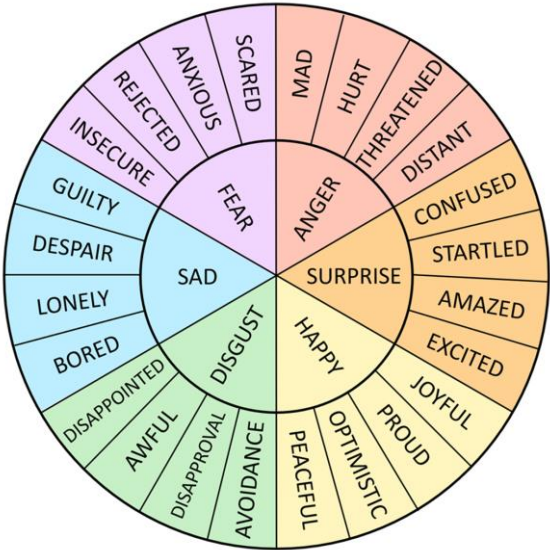
Tip: you could try the mindfulness activity to the right while eating a sweet or sipping a drink.



2. Validate

Your child’s feelings may be inconvenient. You might feel that they are overreacting, or you might be overwhelmed yourself. But try to be empathetic, even when you are feelings strained. Your child’s feelings might be scary to them, or they might feel out of control. Letting your child know that their feelings are ok can help them feel safe and help them start to regulate.

All feelings are ok!



3. Listen

Try to resist the urge to solve the problem for your child as soon as possible. Rather, allow them some time to try to talk about how they feel. This can be harder than it sounds, because your child might expect you to do something, or they might not know how to put their experience into words! If this is something you find challenging, there are lots of tips on this blog post on Young Minds: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/blog/how-to-really-listen-to-your-child/>

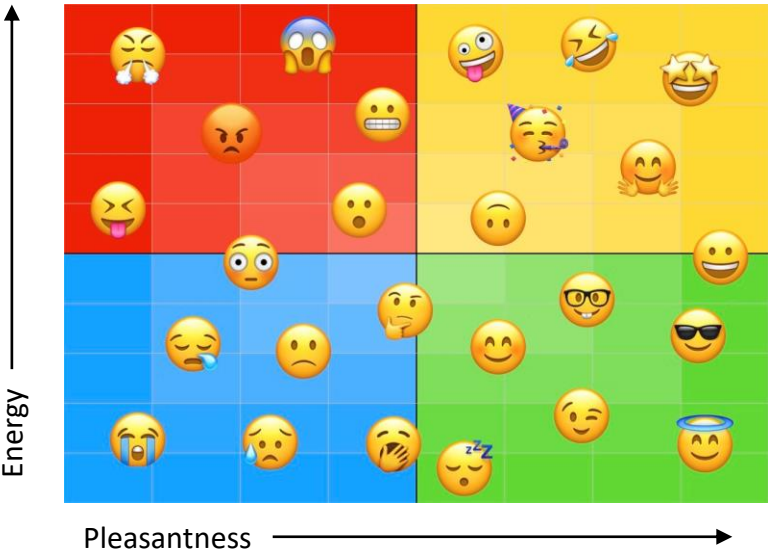
- Give your full attention and use positive body language
- Use statements as well as questions
- Be empathetic
- Reflect key information and label emotions
- Be curious
- Encourage problem solving



Images from
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/blog/how-to-really-listen-to-your-child/> and
<https://www.vox.com/even-better/23818627/how-to-talk-to-kids-adult-conversation>

4. Do

This does not mean that you should solve your child’s problem for them. Instead, consider what they might need to start solving their problem themselves. They might need something as simple as a hug or encouragement, or they might need you to model some ideas for solving the problem. It’s hard to solve a problem when you’re worried or frustrated, but going through the other steps first should help calm the feeling.



The chart to the left shows the level of pleasantness and energy of different emotions. For example, frustration is unpleasant but high energy, while devastation is unpleasant and low energy. Get your child to show you where they are on this chart. They might already know about Zones of Regulation! The best zone for solving problems is the green zone. This is where you feel pleasant and with a medium amount of energy – for example feeling calm, curious, or cheeky!