

— FOR PARENTS

6 Tips for Teaching Emotional Regulation



Kids learn to handle big feelings the same way they learn anything else: with practice, modeling and simple tools.

1 Name it to tame it

Kids can't manage feelings they can't identify. Naming a feeling lowers its intensity and builds awareness.

"It sounds like you're frustrated."

"Your shoulders are tense. Are you feeling nervous?"

"I see a big feeling coming. Let's slow down together."

3 Create a calm-down toolbox

Give kids easy, accessible tools for when emotions rise. Ideas for a calm-down kit:

- Stress balls or fidgets
- Coloring or drawing supplies
- Bubbles, for slow breathing
- Weighted blanket
- Scented lotion
- An "I need a break" card

5 Practice when they're calm

Kids can't learn new skills in the middle of a meltdown. Teach during low-stress moments.

- Role-play "what to do when you feel upset"
- Draw a feelings thermometer
- Practice breathing before bed
- Make a plan for overwhelming moments

2 Model healthy emotional management

Kids learn regulation by watching you do it in real time. Let them see you regulate.

"I'm feeling overwhelmed, so I'm going to take a breath."

"I'm frustrated, but I can handle it."

"I need a minute. I'll come right back."

4 Teach breathing and grounding skills

Simple techniques that calm a child's nervous system:

- Square breathing: trace a square, in for 4, hold 4, out 4, hold 4
- Smell the flower (breathe in through the nose), blow out the candle (exhale through the mouth)
- 5-4-3-2-1 grounding: name five things you see, four you hear, three you feel, two you smell, one you taste

6 Break big feelings into manageable steps

Regulation is about tolerating discomfort, not eliminating it. Prompt them with:

"What's one small thing you can do right now?"

"Is your feeling getting bigger, smaller or staying the same?"

"Let's take this one step at a time."