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Township School District

“Managing Big Feelings: A Parent’s Guide to Kids’ Emotions”

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What Are Big Feelings?

- Intense emotional reactions that can overwhelm a child's ability to cope.
- Common examples: anger, frustration, sadness, fear, excitement.
- Big feelings are normal and part of healthy development.



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Why Big Feelings Matter

- Emotions guide behavior and decision-making.
- Learning to manage feelings builds emotional intelligence.
- Kids need support to develop self-regulation.



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What You Might See in Young Children

- Tantrums, crying, yelling
- Hitting, throwing, running away
- Clinginess or withdrawal
- Saying “I hate you” or “Go away”

What You Might See in Older Kids

- Talking back, defiance
- Avoiding tasks or shutting down
- Mood swings, irritability
- Somatic complaints (headache, stomachache)



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Why This Happens

- Kids' brains are still developing self-regulation.
- Fight/flight/freeze response takes over during overwhelm.
- They need co-regulation before self-regulation.



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Strategies to Share – Calming Tools

- Deep breathing (e.g., "Smell the flower, blow out the candle")
- Calm-down corner or kit
- Movement (jumping jacks, stretching)
- Fidget tools or squeezing stress balls



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Strategies to Share – Naming the Feeling

- Use simple feeling words: mad, sad, scared, excited
- Emotion charts or cards
- Model naming your own emotions
- Storybooks about emotions



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Strategies to Share – Connection First

- Get on their level physically
- Use a calm voice and empathetic tone
- Validate their feelings: “It’s okay to be upset.”
- Offer hugs or physical comfort if accepted



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When to Teach Coping Skills

- Don't teach in the middle of a meltdown. Wait until they're calm.
- Practice strategies during peaceful moments.
- Make it part of daily routines (e.g., bedtime talks, morning check-ins).



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Supporting Parents

- Take care of your own emotions—self-regulation is contagious.
- It's okay to take a break when safe.
- Reach out for support when needed.



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Final Thoughts

- Emotional regulation is a journey.
- Consistent, calm, and connected responses matter most.
- Every moment is a chance to build emotional resilience.



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Questions?

Thank you for your time.

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