



Supporting Self-Control and Emotional Regulation

PREVENTING THE BEHAVIOR

Young children are still learning how to manage their emotions and control their behavior. Skills like waiting, taking turns, calming down, and using words instead of actions take time and practice. Families can help children build these important skills through everyday routines and supportive guidance.

- **Set clear and simple expectations** – Tell your child what to do in positive terms (e.g., “Use walking feet” instead of “Don’t run”).
- **Use predictable routines** – Consistent schedules help children feel safe and know what comes next.
- **Offer choices** – Give small choices to help your child feel more in control (e.g., “Do you want the red cup or the blue cup?”).
- **Prepare for transitions** – Give warnings before changes (e.g., “In 5 minutes, we will clean up and go outside”).
- **Teach calming strategies ahead of time** – Practice deep breathing, squeezing hands, or taking a break before your child is upset.
- **Model self-control** – Children learn by watching adults stay calm during frustrating moments.

HOW TO RESPOND

- **Stay calm and supportive** – Your calm presence helps your child regulate their emotions.
- **Acknowledge feelings** – “I see you’re upset. It’s hard when playtime is over.”
- **Limit language when emotions are high** – Use short, clear phrases.
- **Redirect to a coping strategy** – “Let’s take deep breaths together” or “Let’s go to our calm space.”
- **Offer choices when possible** – “Do you want to sit with me or take a break on the rug?”
- **Focus on safety first** – Gently block unsafe behavior and guide your child to a safer option.

TEACHING NEW SKILLS

- **Teach feeling words** – Help your child name emotions like happy, sad, frustrated, or excited.
- **Practice calming strategies daily** – Deep breathing, counting, stretching, or hugging a stuffed animal.
- **Model problem-solving** – Talk through solutions: “You wanted the toy. Let’s ask for a turn.”
- **Practice waiting and taking turns** – Use games and daily routines to build patience.
- **Praise self-control** – “You waited for your turn—that was great self-control!”

REMEMBER

Self-control and emotional regulation are learned skills. Children need repeated practice, patient support, and clear guidance. With time and consistency, they learn how to handle big feelings in safe and positive ways.

WHAT IS THE PYRAMID MODEL

The Pyramid Model is a framework for supporting the social and emotional development for our children.

