



"The child who needs love the most will ask for it in the most unloving ways." – Russell Barkley

USEFUL RESOURCES

- 📌 NHS Start for Life – www.nhs.uk/start-for-life
 - 📌 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Guidance – www.gov.uk/early-years
 - 📌 Parenting Advice (NSPCC) – www.nspcc.org.uk
- By responding with patience and understanding, you are helping your child develop the skills they need to manage their emotions and behaviours as they grow.



PARENT TOOLKIT:

Helping Your Child Regulate Their Big Feelings

PIP SBS PROJECT
Buckinghamshire

A PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR EARLY YEARS
PARENTS

ALL BEHAVIOUR IS COMMUNICATION

Young children express their needs, emotions, and struggles through their behaviour. When a child is overwhelmed, they may cry, hit, shout, or withdraw—not because they are "naughty," but because they don't yet have the skills to regulate their emotions. By understanding what your child's behaviour is communicating, you can help them feel safe, supported, and ready to learn self-regulation skills.

WHEN TO SEEK EXTRA SUPPORT

If your child frequently struggles to regulate their emotions, or if their behaviour impacts daily life, you may find additional support helpful. Speak to:

- 👤 Your child's health visitor or GP
- 🏫 Nursery or early years staff
- ☎️ Parenting helplines like Family Lives (www.familylives.org.uk)

What Happens When Children Have Big Feelings?

Big feelings happen when a child experiences more than they can handle. This might be due to:



Strong emotions – frustration, excitement, sadness, fear

Sensory overload – too much noise, bright lights, crowded spaces

Tiredness or hunger – basic needs not being met

Unexpected changes – disruptions to routine or situation.

When a child has big feelings, their brain may switch into "fight, flight, or freeze" mode. This is when they may struggle to listen, refuse to cooperate, or have a meltdown.

Strategies to Help Your Child



1. Stay Calm and Connect

- ◆ Your calm presence helps your child feel safe.
- ◆ Get down to their level, use a gentle tone, and offer a reassuring touch.
- ◆ Say, "I can see you're upset. I'm here to help."

2. Help Them Name Their Feelings

- 🗣️ Naming emotions helps children process them. Use simple phrases like:
 - ✓ "You're feeling frustrated because your tower fell over."
 - ✓ "You seem really excited about this!"
- 📖 Use books and emotion cards to teach feeling words.

3. Create a 'Calm Corner'

- 🏠 A quiet, cozy space with soft toys, books, or sensory items can help children calm down.
- ☀️ Encourage self-soothing techniques like cuddling a stuffed toy or squeezing a stress ball.

4. Teach Self-Regulation Techniques

- ✓ Deep breathing: "Smell the flower, blow out the candle."
- ✓ Body movement: Jumping, stretching, or a big tight hug.
- ✓ Counting: Encourage counting to 10 before responding.

5. Set Clear, Kind Boundaries

- 🚫 Children need limits to feel safe. Use simple, firm, but kind language:
 - ✗ "It's okay to feel angry, but it's not okay to hit."
 - ✓ "You can stomp your feet or squeeze your hands instead."

6. Reduce Big Feelings with Predictable Routines

- 🕒 Predictability helps children feel secure. Try:
 - ✓ Visual schedules with pictures for daily routines.
 - ✓ Warnings before transitions: "Five more minutes, then tidy-up time."
 - ✓ Keeping bedtime, mealtimes, and playtimes consistent.

7. Encourage Positive Behaviour

- 🎉 Praise effort, not just results: "You worked so hard on that puzzle!"
- 🗨️ Give choices to empower them: "Red socks or blue socks?"
- 🧠 Model calm problem-solving: "Let's figure out what we can do instead."