

Emotional Regulation: Thinking about Your Thoughts

Thoughts arise in our mind and feelings are the emotions we attach to a thought. The emotional response to a feeling can be positive, negative or neutral. Everyone has emotions, but we need practice to understand these emotions and how we experience them in our daily lives. Thoughts and emotions can't be stopped, but below are four ways to live with them and stay in control. The more you talk about emotions, the easier it will be to deal with the difficult situations when they occur.

Four Skills to Keep Emotions Under Control



1) Name Them: Learn how to put a word to the feeling in a neutral and curious way. The Feelings Chart on the next page is a great tool to practice!

2) Notice Them: After we put a label or name on the emotion, we can then notice and describe how it feels physically. Think back to a time when a child has been through a difficult situation. Have them talk about the emotions they were feeling and how their body felt. Name those emotions and reactions.

3) Express them appropriately: Give children positive feedback when they're using words to describe emotions and validate the experience. Inquire often, praise and validate when they share, and encourage the pause for strong emotions that can get out of control. Set an example by sharing your emotions.

4) Teach kids how to handle difficult or extreme emotions: When emotions seem out of control or extreme, practice these skills to help regain control.

If a Child Says Something Concerning?

Talking to kids about mental health can be hard. If you have a concern, choose a time to talk when things are calm, and emotions aren't high. Remember to remind them that you care about them, and you will support them, **NO MATTER WHAT**.

Share what you've noticed and ask open-ended questions. Listen and try not to interrupt. Avoid being judgmental and allow them to finish what they're saying. Sometimes the things that bother kids most can seem trivial to an adult but overwhelming to a child. Validate their emotions and try to find out what about the experience or why it bothers them.

Remind yourself the goal is to understand your child better. Try not to focus on the past but learn how to best support them moving forward.

