Nurture your son's emotional strength

HELP YOUR SON TO BECOME AN EMOTIONAL DETECTIVE

Discuss what feelings and emotions are. In life we all experience emotions and feelings, sometimes feelings can be difficult and sometimes they can give us a boost. There is a wide range of emotions and in our lives, we'll experience lots of different ones.

Together name as many different emotions as you can: e.g. Joy, Happiness, Hope, Calm, Contentment, Boredom, Frustration, 'Overwhelment', Disappointment, Doubt, Anxiousness, Jealousy, Unworthiness, Fear, Sadness. (NB: Anger and Vulnerability are discussed in detail in separate notes below).

Discuss how some of these emotions feel in your body and the sorts of thoughts they make you have. For example, sadness can bring us low energy, it can bring tears to our eyes, it can bring pain to our insides (our hearts?) it might make us think negative 'I can't' thoughts. Happiness however often gives us an energy boost; it makes us smile and jump or run around. It can make us think hopeful and exciting 'I can' thoughts about the present and the future.

Talk about how there are no good or bad emotions. Sometimes, when things happen, we experience emotions that feel good and sometimes, when things happen in life, we experience emotions that are more difficult. We can't escape either type of emotion because experiencing emotions is part of being human. If you can be brave enough to face all types of human feelings including the difficult ones, you will become a stronger person, better equipped to look after yourself.

Explain how to face a challenging emotion and gain emotional strength: You can face a challenging emotion by naming it and then trying to think about what has happened that has made you feel that way. What can you do now to put things right and make yourself feel better? Are there any lessons you can learn from this situation? If something similar happens in the future, what might you do next time? (NB: Focus on the future rather than blaming or passing judgement on how situations were dealt with before or could have been done differently.[1])

Finish by discussing why being able work with our feelings might be a useful life skill to learn… Add that it can take time however and everybody makes mistakes along the way. Encourage your son to come and talk with you if they need help addressing a particular feeling or issue that seems difficult.

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[1] Jessica Taylor and Jaimi Shrive, *The Primary School and Home School Guide – Ethical sex and relationships education for young children*, VictimFocus Publications, 2020, p.14

TALK ABOUT ANGER

Discuss what anger is and what can cause it. We get angry when we have lost our power or we feel we have no power.[2]

Talk about how if we don't face our anger, it can lead us to do dangerous things that could cause harm to ourselves or others. Talk about the sorts of things people do when they are angry. Are any of these things dangerous? Can they ever effect friendships or relationships? Can any of these angry actions put the person who is doing them at risk of harm? Can any angry actions put those close to them at risk of harm? How?

Talk about what you can do when you feel angry. Like any emotion in life, we can't avoid or escape anger but there are some things you can do to face it and get your power back such as:

- Stepping away from situations that make you feel angry
- Counting to ten before reacting and/ or if you can calm yourself enough, taking a moment to consult your inner wisdom on what to do next. (For guidance on what inner is wisdom see Talk to your child about their intuition and inner wisdom.)
- Getting outside and 'walking out' your frustration
- Going to a trusted friend or safe adult to 'talk out' your feelings. (Safe adults are described in the notes for Talk to your child about their intuition and inner wisdom .)
- Writing out your frustrations in a diary or letter to help you get them out and then decide what to do next

Finish by talking through these questions:

Can you ever control what other people do and should you even try?

What can you control? (Yourself and your reactions).

[2] Perry, p.75

TALK ABOUT VULNERABILITY

Discuss what feeling vulnerable means: Worried or scared because we think we might have our feelings hurt if we do something and fail at it.

Talk about what sorts of situations might make you feel vulnerable.

Discuss whether failure is final. Share an example of a time when you came back after a mistake and talk about some male family and friends who have also proved failure is not final. An example of someone in the public eye is Gareth Southgate who missed a penalty in the semi-finals of the Euro 1996 football tournament which knocked England out of the competition but went on to become one of the most successful England managers of all time earning him a Knighthood for services to football and England.

Talk about what your son can do in the future if he feels vulnerable. Refer back to the advice given in Help Your Son Become An Emotional Detective:

- Identify what has happened that has made you feel vulnerable.
- What can you do to the make the situation feel better?
- Are there any lessons you can learn from this situation?
- If something similar happens in the future, what might you do next time? (NB: Focus on the future rather than blaming or passing judgement on how situations were dealt with before or could have been done differently.[3])

Encourage him to come to you to talk about it if he needs to.

Finish by explaining that learning how to work with your emotions and feelings is one of the things that your son can do in order to successfully look after themselves when they are older.

[3] Jessica Taylor and Jaimi Shrive, *The Primary School and Home School Guide – Ethical sex and relationships education for young children*, VictimFocus Publications, 2020, p.14