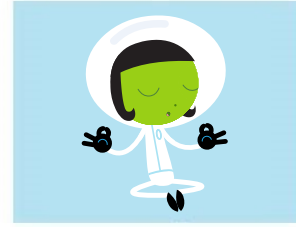


## Beach Ball Story Toss

### Materials:

- Beach ball
- Sharpie



1. Draw different kinds of emotions and faces on each panel of the ball.
2. Toss the ball back and forth, whenever you catch the ball, look at where your right thumb lands
3. Call out the emotion i.e. angry and share a time when you felt that emotion drawn on the ball. How did you handle it? If you didn't handle it well, share how you could've handled it better i.e. a time when I felt angry was when you didn't pick up the toys when I asked. Instead of yelling, I should have asked you kindly and offered to help.
4. Self-regulation is a different skill to practice, modeling for your children how you self-regulate (or sometimes struggle to) is a great way to build trust, communication, and empathy.

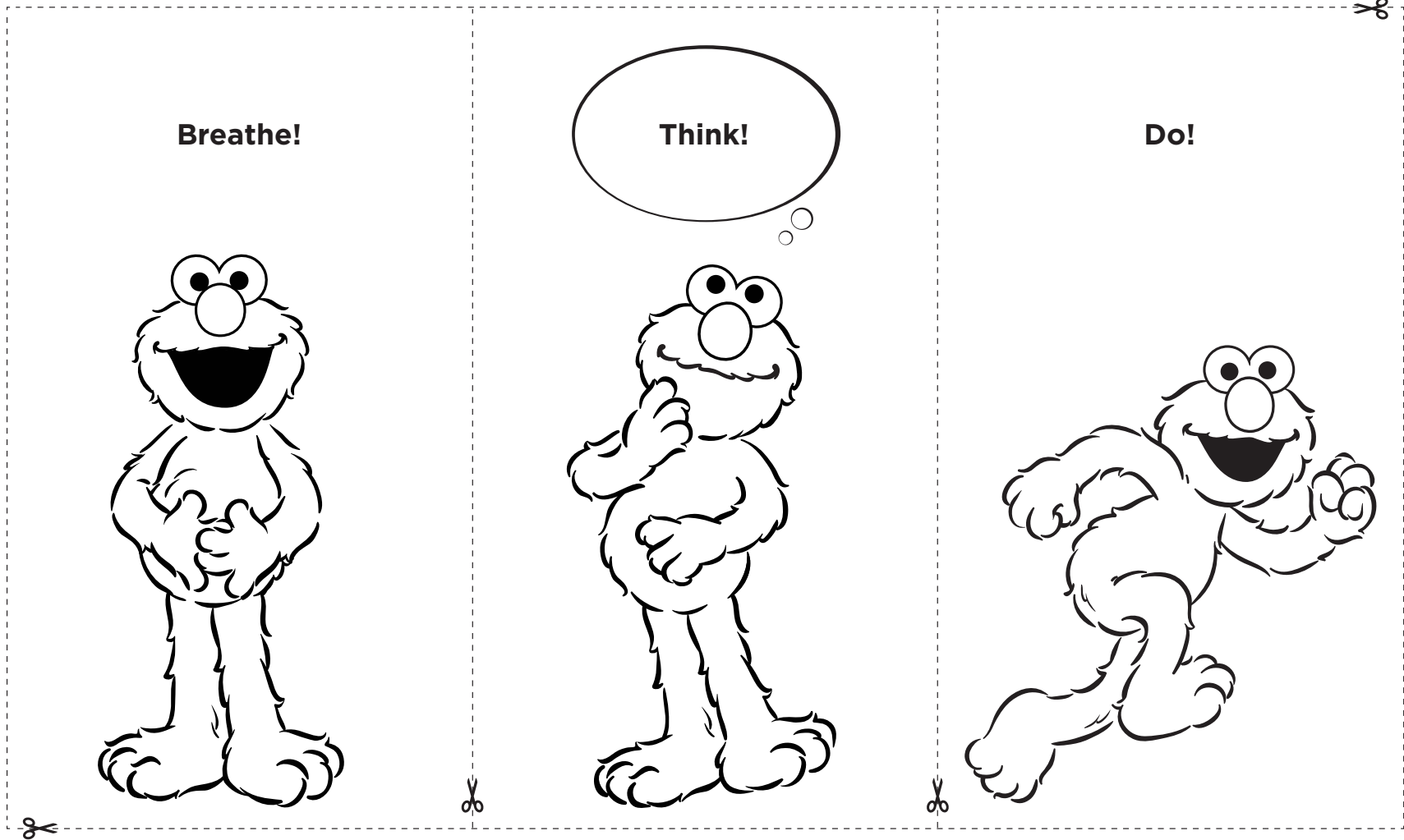
### Take Home Activity

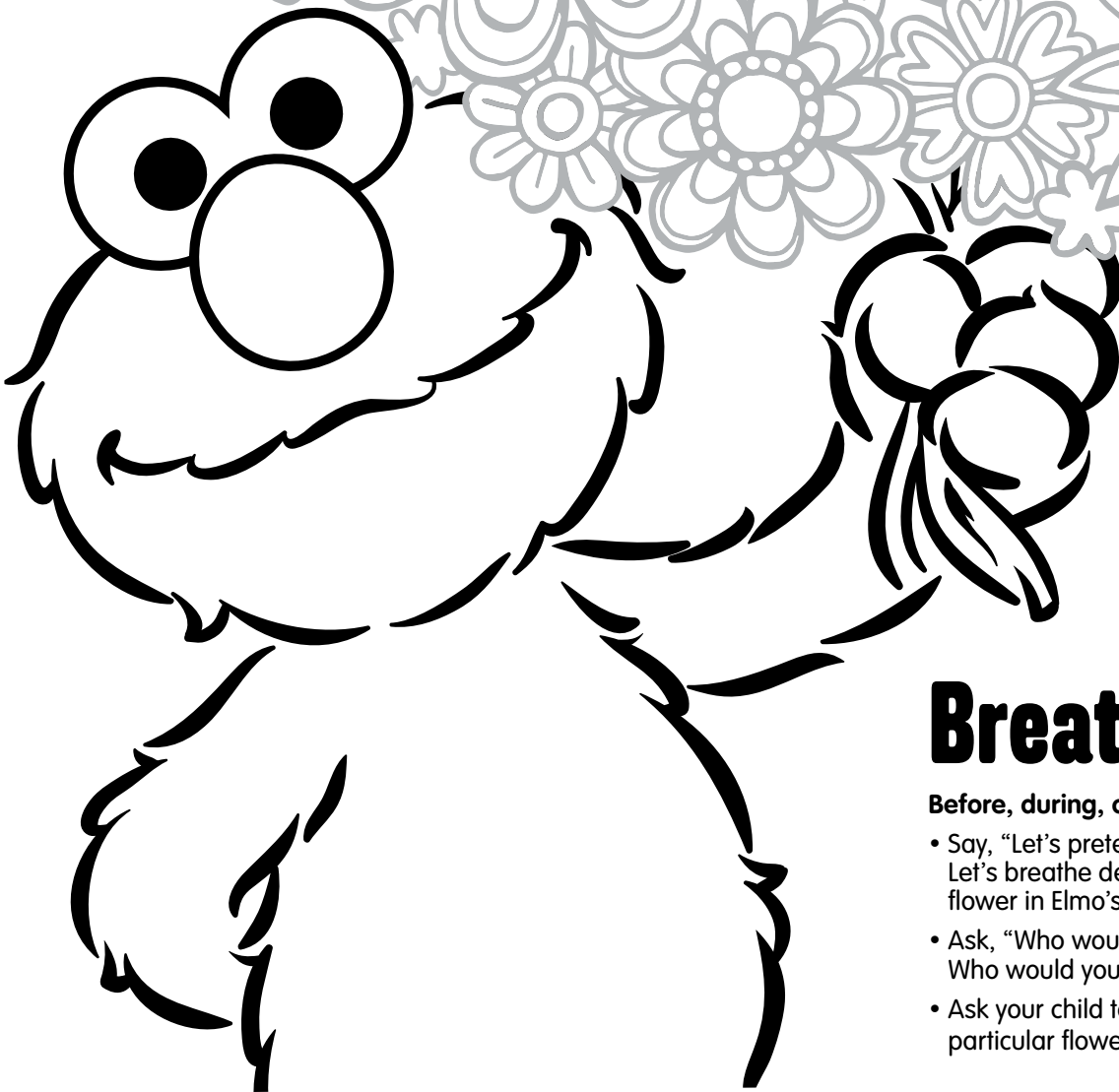
### Breathe, Think, Do

- Breathe, Think, Do cards
  - Coloring tools
1. Invite kids to color the Breathe, Think, Do cards.
  2. Share an example of a problem kids might face, such as another child playing with the same toy they want to play with.
  3. Hold up each card and explain: "When you have a problem, first stop and breathe. Put your hands on your belly and take three slow, deep breaths—in through your nose and out through your mouth. Then think about a plan to solve your problem."
  4. Ask kids to share some ideas about what they could do to solve the problem you explained. Then say, "Now do it! Try out your plan." Kids can act out their idea. Let kids know that even if their first plan doesn't work, they can always try again with a new plan.

## Breathe, Think, Do Cards

Cut out one set of the Breathe, Think, Do Cards for each child and use them to help remember the steps to problem solving!





## Breathe Deep

Before, during, or after coloring, try these ideas:

- Say, “Let’s pretend we’re smelling the flowers. Let’s breathe deeply in and out, once for each flower in Elmo’s bouquet.”
- Ask, “Who would you like to give flowers to? Who would you like to get flowers from?”
- Ask your child to help you pick a color for a particular flower.

# Mindful Moment: Nature Poses

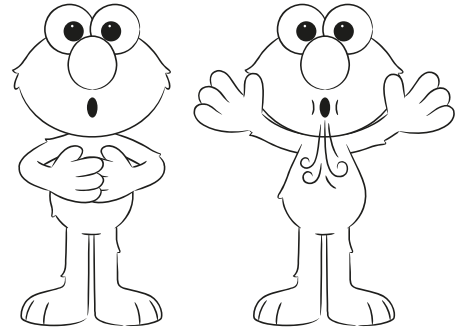
Noticing our bodies and our breathing are great ways to stay healthy and strong. Use these nature-inspired poses and strategies together throughout the day, or whenever children need to calm, focus, or refuel.

---

## Volcano Breath

Sometimes big feelings feel like a volcano inside us... help the lava flow to the ground!

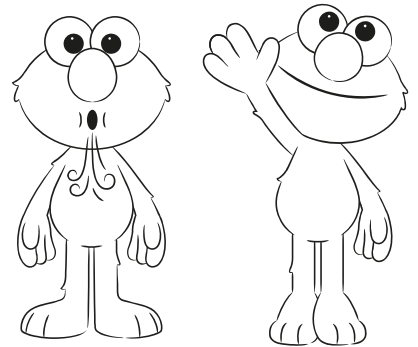
Start with your hands together in front of your chest. Breathe slowly in through your nose and raise your arms straight up. Hot lava is rising up and out! Breathe slowly out through your mouth as you move your arms down.



## Reach for the Stars

Stretching can give our bodies energy and help us notice our feelings.

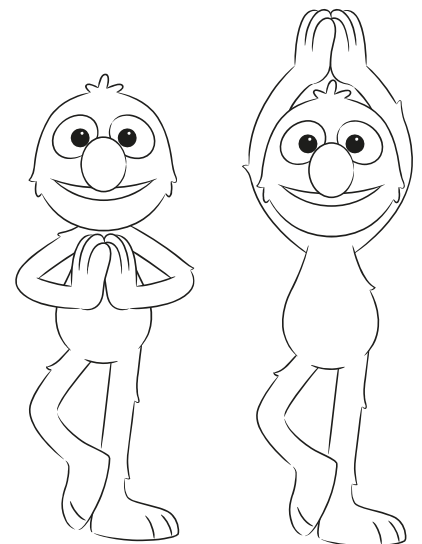
Stand straight and tall, arms by your sides. Take a slow deep breath in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Stand on your tiptoes and reach high with one hand, then the other hand.



## Tree Pose

Balancing and grounding gives us a moment to notice the feelings in our bodies and feel our strength.

Stand tall, feet together. Lift one foot a tiny bit and rest it above your other ankle. You can try moving your foot farther up (above your ankle). Stretch and sway your arms like a tree's branches. Breathe slowly in through your nose, and slowly out through your mouth.





DANIEL TIGER'S NEIGHBORHOOD

## Simple Strategies to Help Your Child Manage Anxiety

By Meghan Grana  
Aug 17, 2022

As parents, we all want to raise happy, confident children. However, it is natural for all children to experience anxious thoughts at some point and it's important to teach kids how to deal with these difficult emotions, especially as levels of anxiety continue to increase across the country. At times, anxiety can help children stay safe by providing a warning signal for dangerous situations, but for some children, common activities, such as visiting a friend's home, experiencing changes at school, or going to the doctor, can cause excessive worrying.

The good news? Parents and grownups can use simple strategies to support kids when anxious thoughts arise.

- **Talk to your child about what might occur at upcoming events.** In an episode of "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood," Daniel is nervous about his first visit to the hospital. His parents discuss in detail what Daniel will need to wear at the hospital (a gown and a mask) and show him pictures of each. They also make sure Daniel is familiar with what will happen during the operation. By talking openly about and sharing visual examples of something your child isn't familiar with, you can

support your child in being comfortable. For example, you can use books to make ideas more concrete for young minds.

- **Act it out.** Practice what might happen so that your child knows what they might say or do in new situations. Daniel uses a pretend doctor's kit to care for his stuffed animals in preparation for his hospital visit. If your child is going to a playdate, practice asking for turns with toys or saying thank you after receiving a snack.
- **Explain the why.** Often, kids feel anxious about new situations because they hold little control over them. When Daniel learns that his operation will help him get better, he feels better. Sharing the reason behind these situations will empower your child. Make sure to use language your child will understand, "You need to start at a new school because you are ready for kindergarten and learning to read and write is important" or "We are visiting the doctor's office to keep you strong and healthy."
- **Allow your child to bring a favorite item.** Daniel's grandfather gives him a special music box to bring to the hospital, which soothes Daniel and helps him adjust to the new environment. Bringing a beloved stuffed animal, book, or blanket when going somewhere new can bring a sense of security and ease anxiety. Inviting your child to choose what to bring builds confidence and trust.

**If your child continues to worry, try these simple strategies in the moment.** It's important to practice these strategies *before* times of stress to prepare children to use them.

- **Validate their feelings.** Teach your child that feelings are big and real! Say something like, "I know this feels very hard right now, but I will help you through it." Avoid talking about how frightening his worries are or coming up with ways to avoid the situation. Recognizing and affirming your child's emotions while facing them head on will empower your child and strengthen the parent-child bond!
- **Breathe!** Deep breaths reset the mind and body for calmness. Have your child name their breathing routine. Lifting arms up to the sky like a superhero might be called "superhero breathing" or pretending to blow off the seeds of a dandelion might be called "dandelion breath." Have your child practice deep breathing before they feel anxious so they're ready to put them into action when anxiety arises.
- **Get the worries out.** Play a song three times or set a timer to allow your child to think about what's worrying them, knowing that there will be an "end" to it. Explain that when the time's up, they can move on to activities that bring them joy, like playing a favorite game or completing an art project.
- **Write or draw anxious thoughts.** Helping your child express themselves using words and pictures teaches them healthy coping strategies to deal with negative feelings. It also allows them a chance to practice naming their feelings.

If your child struggles with anxiety to the degree that it negatively impacts everyday activities, it might be time to speak with a professional. Talk to your pediatrician about seeking help for you and your child.

---

## Sign up for the "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood" newsletter!

Every day is full of possibilities and so is your child! Get "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood" inspired articles, activities, and recipes emailed to you every month. **Sign up here!**

\*\*\*\*\*

*Meghan Grana has a master's degree in speech, language and hearing sciences and has served children and families across the country for more than two decades. She currently works as a Pupil Personnel Worker at one of the largest school districts in the country, supporting families with access to mental health and community resources, school attendance and engagement, behavior and crisis support. Grana is the author of "Call Me Penny Pickleberry, A Story to Help Kids Manage Worries." To read more, follow her @meghangrana or check out [www.meghangrana.com](http://www.meghangrana.com)*

Copyright © 2023 Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), all rights reserved.

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/simple-strategies-to-help-your-child-manage-anxiety>





# 11 Simple Self-Care Habits for Kids

By Kayla Craig

Apr 25, 2023

Self-care isn't selfish — it's a basic need of being human! By teaching your child simple acts of self-care and including nurturing routines into your family life, you can show that taking care of ourselves, and each other, is important.

Caring for yourself isn't simply taking a bubble bath (though it can be!), but building in sustainable routines of taking breaks, naming feelings, and caring for your body. Self-care deliberately sets aside time to recenter and calm ourselves, fostering healthy habits for our minds and feelings just as we do for our bodies. Creating these healthy habits of rest at a young age empowers kids to continue to be resilient in all that life brings. What a gift to give your kids!

## Self-care for kids

As a parent, it's easy to get so caught up in my grown-up problems that I forget my kids have struggles of their own. It can also be easy to forget that children absorb grown-up tensions, too. Think back to the pandemic — my family of six had been balancing remote learning along with the disappointments of not being able to gather with friends and family as we used to, and it wasn't easy on any of us. I'm sure you can relate to a similar experience.



Our kids may not have known all the ins and outs of why these changes were happening, but you can bet they felt the same feelings of isolation, stress, and disappointment that we were facing. All of us, from kids to grown-ups, need to have the right habits in place that allow us to take a break and decompress. By setting up these strategies from an early age, kids become better equipped to deal with all the things life is going to throw their way.

Thankfully, establishing healthy self-care activities for kids doesn't have to be complicated — and it can be a lot of fun!

## Self-care tips for kids

You might have already thought about how to establish self-care for kids in your home, or you might not have anything in place. Whatever the case, **here are 11 easy strategies to help kids practice self-care:**

- 1 Take belly breaths.** Don't underestimate the power of a deep breath to reset. When you sense that your child needs a break, pretend that you're holding a bowl of soup. Ask them to breathe in through their nose like they're smelling a yummy soup, and then ask them to blow through their mouth to cool the soup off. Sometimes, my kids pretend that they're breathing in the smell of a delicious cake and then blowing out birthday candles. This self-regulation strategy is something they can do on their own, wherever they are!
- 2 Get silly.** When a child is having a tough time or cycling through big emotions, I ask silly questions to help them reset. Asking a concrete question they know the answer to helps re-route their thinking. Ask questions like: *What color is the sky? What did you have for breakfast? Where is your shoe?* Even if they answer incorrectly, you're helping their brain and body calm down and get back into the zone. Encourage your child that when they have big feelings, they can pay attention to the room around them and name five things they see as a way to "reset" their brains.
- 3 Drink more water.** When our houseplants get a little droopy, we water them, right? People need water, too! Empowering kids to stay hydrated is a simple way to teach them a self-care habit to last a lifetime. If they're tall enough, encourage them to refill their own water bottles — this gives them a sense of independence, too. Self-care for kids is about helping them find quiet moments to take a break and reset after stressful situations or big emotions. Refilling and then drinking some water in a special spot for a moment encourages kids to take that time out and recenter.
- 4 Be proactive.** When I start to see signs that one of my kids might be stressed, or I know there is a big change coming, or if they've had a particularly challenging day, I give them a special mission to complete. Perhaps it's cleaning up the blocks for a younger child, or asking an older child to carry books into another room. This helps them see that it's okay to take a break — and in fact, getting their bodies moving is a form of self-care. Slightly older kids may find a good reset in helping feed a pet or get the mail.
- 5 Incorporate rest.** Even the most extroverted child needs time to rest on their own. Think creatively about your child's unique personality, age, and interest to brainstorm small pockets of

rest in their daily routine. Perhaps it's a time with books in their bedroom, or a ten-minute coloring break at the kitchen table. If siblings share a room, consider creating a special time in the day when one can play quietly alone. Though I'm an on-the-go kind of parent, I'm working on ways to normalize rest in my life, too, to model it for my kids.

**6 Get the wiggles out.** Sometimes we just need to move our bodies. Not only does it get our blood pumping, but it can be a great mood balancer, too. Try a one-minute dance break or challenge your child to 15 jumping jacks. I love these these ideas for releasing kids' energy while staying indoors. Doing something physical and involving like this is great self-care for kids because it also brings them back into their bodies and the present moment. This act of getting back into the present is known as mindfulness, and by setting up physical movement as a strategy your kids can use, you're helping them to be mindful without even knowing it.

**7 Write (or color) it out.** One of my sons loves processing life through hand-drawn comics. His brother loves drawing and watercolor painting. I'm a writer, so I gravitate toward words to help me process my life and take care of myself. Consider giving older kids a journal to write in — or provide a drawing pad to younger children. Dedicating time (*We're going to spend 10 minutes taking a break to draw or write!*) and space — like the kitchen table — shows kids that getting our thoughts and feelings out matters. I find that providing prompts (*When your brother knocked down your tower, how did that make you feel? What was the happiest part of your day?*) helps them stay focused. Freewriting and drawing without any constraints is a wonderful self-care activity for kids and grown-ups alike.

**8 Take a break.** Simply asking, *Do you need to take a break?* Or saying, *Let's take a break!*, when I notice a child having a hard time has done wonders. (I'm always trying to channel Mom Tiger.) I make sure not to shame and we try to normalize taking breaks as a way to keep ourselves healthy. Having a designated break spot to go to is helpful. And as they get older, the goal is that they'll be able to name when they need to take a break. Consider making this mindfulness jar and timer for your child to use. It's a great tool for kids to give themselves a calming break when they need it, and having a physical object tied to this self-care activity for kids can also help to remind your child that this is an option they have when things are getting overwhelming.

**9 Have a healthy snack.** I find myself a bit on edge when I'm hungry — so why do I often forget my kids are the same way? Nourishing our bodies and making sure we have the fuel we need to get through the day is a vital part of self-care for kids. If your child is feeling a little "hangry," encourage them to recognize and name this sensation, and then suggest a nutritious nibble. In my house, we try to opt for grab-and-go snacks that have protein (cheese sticks, nuts, greek yogurt, hard-boiled eggs, or crackers with peanut butter). Help your child think about how emotions look and feel with this activity that doubles as a healthy snack!

**10 Get clean.** It's amazing how an impromptu bath can provide rest for young and old alike. Depending on their age, they may like extra bubbles, a bath bomb, bath crayons or paints, or extra toys. My youngest loves playing with cups and bubbles in the tub, while my older elementary-age kids love to reset with a hot shower. Caring for your body is important! (This DIY creature made out of a sponge makes a fun bath buddy!)

**11 Try affirmations.** Breathe in and breathe out a positive phrase or empowering mantra. When your child breathes in, have them repeat something like: *I am creative and kind*. On their exhale, they can say, *I can make good decisions*. Have them repeat this a few times. If a child is feeling anxious about going to school, create an easy phrase they can silently recite as they breathe in and out, like *Learning is fun; my parents will pick me up soon*. Older children can brainstorm their own self-care affirmations to memorize — or perhaps write on a sticky note and place somewhere where they can take a break to read it, like on a bathroom mirror or bedroom door.

## **Set your child up for success with self-care for kids**

We all want to see our kids thrive — to give them the tools they need to grow and develop and reach their full potential. Just as important as giving them the steps to succeed is giving them the coping strategies and self-care habits they will need to help them to regulate their own well-being throughout their lives.

Equipping kids with self-care strategies is empowering them to be mindful of their emotional, mental, and physical health. Hopefully, you can incorporate some of these self-care tips for kids into your own daily routine while giving your children the tools they need to thrive. Looking for more healthy habits? Try these activities, recipes, and games.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Kayla Craig is a writer, podcaster, and author of *To Light Their Way: A Collection of Prayers & Liturgies for Parents*. She's also a mom to four curious and messy young kids. She loves deep mugs of coffee, deeper belly laughs, and even deeper questions. She spends too much time on Instagram.*

Copyright © 2023 Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), all rights reserved.

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/simple-self-care-habits-for-kids>



## "Use Your Words": Moving Beyond Tantrums to Express Challenging Emotions

By Shauna Tominey

Nov 12, 2019

We were in the grocery store parking lot, and my two-year-old was in the middle of a tantrum. I let my daughter know that I was going to carry her to the car to keep her safe. Once the car door closed, I tried one of the strategies I learned as an early childhood teacher. I said out loud, "Let's take deep breaths together to calm your body down." Unfortunately, taking deep breaths was the last thing on my daughter's mind — she let me know through gasping sobs, "I DON'T WANT TO TAKE DEEP BREATHS! I DON'T WANT TO CALM DOWN!"

I knew my daughter couldn't think clearly in that moment, so we just sat in the car and waited through the tantrum. When my daughter had exhausted her tears, she turned to me for a hug. I hugged her back, letting her know that it was okay to have these feelings, but that I didn't like it when she tantrumed. Even though I kept calm, I couldn't help feeling a little helpless. I wondered what else I could be doing to help her express her emotions in other ways.

Teaching children how to express emotions effectively is a challenge that unites all caregivers. At birth, children only have a few ways to express their needs and these needs often come out in the form of emotions. For infants, emotions — like anger, sadness, fear or happiness — are expressed through impulses and instincts, such as crying, smiling or using their bodies. As children get older, we still want them to let us know when they need something, but we want them to do this by expressing their emotions in other ways, such as using signs or words to talk about their feelings.

For children, developing the skills necessary to choose how to express their feelings is the foundation of *emotion regulation* — the ability to respond to emotions in appropriate ways. Emotional regulation affects how your child manages the ups and downs of everyday life, including school readiness and the ability to form positive relationships.

Moving from hardwired impulses and instincts to talking about feelings is a monumental shift, however. This shift doesn't happen overnight — it takes language skills, brain development, positive role models, and *lots* of practice. Just because your child can say (or sign) how she's feeling, such as "I'm sad," "I'm angry," "I'm hungry," "I need a hug", doesn't mean she has the skills and self-control to express herself in this way all the time. This is especially true if she's tired, hungry, or worked up.

Just like learning to hold a pencil or singing the ABCs, expressing emotions takes skills that need to be practiced. When children hold a pencil upside down or scramble M-N-L-O-P, we smile. We might even take a picture or a video to share with family and friends. When children struggle to manage their emotions, our emotions get activated too. A tantrum can give rise to our own frustration, stress, or even embarrassment — especially if we are in a public place.

How can we help our children learn to express their emotions in new ways and keep calm during the process? There are many research-based strategies we can use to support our children in the moment. Try these strategies at home:

## **Talk about many different feelings.**

Let your child know that everyone has feelings and that all feelings are okay. Talk about what emotions feel like in your body and how your face looks when you have different feelings. Play guessing games where you take turns making faces or acting out different feelings and try to guess what they are.

## **Help children build strategies outside of emotionally-charged moments.**

When reading books or watching children's tv shows together, talk about the feelings that different characters are having: *How do you think they are feeling? How do you know they are feeling that way? What do you do when you have those feelings?* Use dolls, puppets or action figures to role-play different emotions and scenarios together. Talking about feelings outside of emotionally-charged

moments can help children practice the skills and language they need to manage their feelings during challenging moments.

## **Give your child options so they can choose how to act out their feelings.**

How do you want the people in your family to show or tell others when they feel angry, frustrated or sad? Is it okay in your family to stomp your feet or squeeze a pillow when upset? How about asking for a hug? Talking about your emotions and exploring different ways to express your feelings will give children (and adults!) ideas for what they can do when they have challenging feelings at home.

## **Model how you want your child to express different emotions.**

Children pick up on adults' emotions. Share your feelings with your child and explain what you are doing to manage your emotions (e.g., *"I'm feeling frustrated right now, so I need to have a little quiet time to calm down before I'm ready to talk about it."*)

## **Support your child's feelings in the moment.**

When children have challenging feelings, it's often hard for them to listen, pay attention, and learn. Give children the time and space they need to calm down. After your child has calmed down, talk about what happened and what they might do differently next time.

As parents and caregivers, it can be helpful to remind ourselves that learning to express our emotions in different ways takes practice. In fact, many of us are still practicing these skills as adults! Some need more practice and support than others and that's okay.

For my own daughter, I put these strategies into action. In recognizing how powerless I felt in the middle of a tantrum, I focused my energy on helping her practice talking about and expressing her feelings outside of emotionally-charged moments. I'll never forget the day, a few months later, when my daughter started feeling frustrated about something that she couldn't do on her own. Rather than falling apart, she turned to me and said, "Mom, I'm getting upset. Can I have a hug to calm my body down?" She crawled up in my lap and we held one another, rocked, and breathed. In that moment, I remember thinking to myself, "It's working!" With practice and support, my daughter was learning to manage her emotions — and so was I.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Shauna Tominey is an assistant professor of practice at Oregon State University and the principal investigator for the Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative, a statewide initiative to increase access to parenting education programs and resources. She is the recent author of "Creating Compassionate Kids: Essential Conversations to Have With Young Children." Follow Shauna on Facebook or Twitter and find additional resources on her website: [www.creatingcompassionatekids.org](http://www.creatingcompassionatekids.org).*

Copyright © 2023 Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), all rights reserved.

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/use-your-words-learning-to-express-emotions-without-tantrums>