



Helping Your Child Understand and Manage Emotions

Building Emotional Foundations for a Lifetime

As parents, one of our greatest roles is helping our children understand their feelings. Learning to identify, express, and manage emotions — a skill called self-regulation — doesn't come naturally. It develops over time, with our love, patience, and guidance.

What is Self-Regulation?

Self-regulation is a child's ability to calm down when upset, take turns, follow directions, and recover after a disappointment. It's what helps children handle big emotions in healthy ways — and it begins forming in the first years of life.

Babies rely completely on caregivers to soothe them. Over time, through consistent care, they learn that feelings come and go, and that adults can help them feel safe and calm. By preschool age, children begin to use words and coping tools (like taking deep breaths) to manage emotions themselves.



Why It Matters

Children who learn to manage their emotions:

- Build stronger relationships with others
- Learn better in school
- Feel more confident and secure
- Are less likely to act out or shut down when frustrated.

When we help children practice self-regulation, we're giving them tools for lifelong mental health and success.



How Parents Can Teach Emotional Skills

Here are a few simple ways parents can help:

- Model Calm Behavior

Children watch how we handle our own emotions. When you take a deep breath, count to ten, or talk through your feelings, you're teaching by example.

- Name the Feelings

Help your child put words to emotions: "You're feeling mad because we have to leave the park," or "You're sad because your block tower fell."

This helps children understand that all feelings are okay – it's what we do with them that matters.

- Create a Calm-Down Routine

A cozy corner, a favorite stuffed animal, or a few deep breaths can help children reset when emotions run high.



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- **Praise Efforts to Regulate**

Notice and celebrate moments when your child manages frustration or calms down on their own: “I saw you take a deep breath when you were upset – great job calming your body!”

- **Stay Connected**

Loving, consistent care is the foundation for emotional growth. Hugs, gentle voices, and patient support remind children that they’re safe, even when their feelings feel big.

Final Thoughts

Self-regulation isn’t about stopping emotions — it’s about understanding them. By guiding your child with empathy and patience, you’re helping them build resilience and confidence that will serve them for life.

Remember: you don’t have to do it alone. The Healthy Families program is here to support you as you nurture your child’s emotional and developmental growth every step of the way.

Raising Grateful Hearts

Helping children learn the joy of thankfulness

Thanksgiving reminds us to pause and give thanks — but gratitude isn’t just for the holidays! When we teach our children to notice and appreciate the good things around them, we help them build happiness, empathy, and resilience.

Even little ones can learn about thankfulness through daily moments. Babies feel gratitude when their needs are met with love and comfort. Toddlers begin to understand kindness when they see it in action — a hug, a smile, or sharing a toy.

Ways to Nurture Gratitude

- **Model it.** Let your child hear you say “thank you” often — to them, to others, and even for small things (“I’m thankful for this warm cup of tea!”).
- **Make it part of your routine.** At mealtimes or bedtime, share one thing you’re thankful for. Encourage your child to share, too, even if it’s something simple like their favorite toy or snack.
- **Create a family tradition.** Start a “thankful jar” where everyone adds notes about things that made them smile. Read them together on Thanksgiving Day.



Gratitude grows best in a loving home where appreciation is shown and shared. This Thanksgiving, take a moment to notice those little moments of joy — they’re what family is all about.

From Our Family to Yours

All of us at Healthy Families are grateful for the opportunity to support you and your little ones as you grow together. We wish you and your family a warm, joyful, and peaceful Thanksgiving filled with love, laughter, and connection.



StartSmart is designed to share practical tips and advice each month to help you nurture your baby's growth and development. From encouraging milestones to promoting healthy habits, **StartSmart** is here to support you every step of the way on your parenting journey!

Reading Your Baby's Cues

Learning when your baby is ready to connect — and when they need a break

Babies are amazing communicators — even before they can talk! They show us what they need through engagement and disengagement cues. Learning to notice these signs helps you respond in ways that build trust and strengthen your bond.

Engagement Cues

These signs mean your baby is ready to interact, play, or learn:

- Making eye contact
- Smiling or cooing
- Reaching toward you or kicking excitedly
- Turning their head or body toward your voice

When you see these cues, it's a great time to talk, sing, or play peek-a-boo! These moments of connection help your baby's brain grow and teach them that relationships are fun and safe.



Disengagement Cues

These signs mean your baby needs a little break:

- Looking away or turning their head
- Fussing, yawning, or arching their back
- Pushing away or closing their eyes



When you notice these signals, try to pause, lower stimulation, or offer comfort. A quiet cuddle or soft voice can help your baby feel safe and ready to re-engage when they're ready.

Remember:

Every baby has their own rhythm. By tuning in to your baby's cues — and responding with love and patience — you're building the foundation for strong communication and lifelong emotional health.

Important dates this month:

November 4	Election Day
November 11	Veteran's Day
November 27	Thanksgiving