

Emotion Coaching and The Three Rs

"Helping children and young people to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur and how to handle them." (Gottman, 1996)

What is Emotion Coaching?

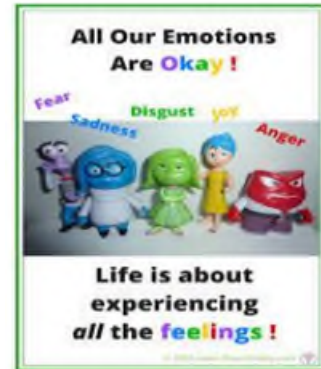
Emotion Coaching enables children and young people to manage their own behaviour through helping them to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur, and how to handle them.

It enables us to potentially diffuse and de-escalate situations by activating changes in the child's neurological system and allowing the child to calm down, physiologically and psychologically.

How does Emotion Coaching work?

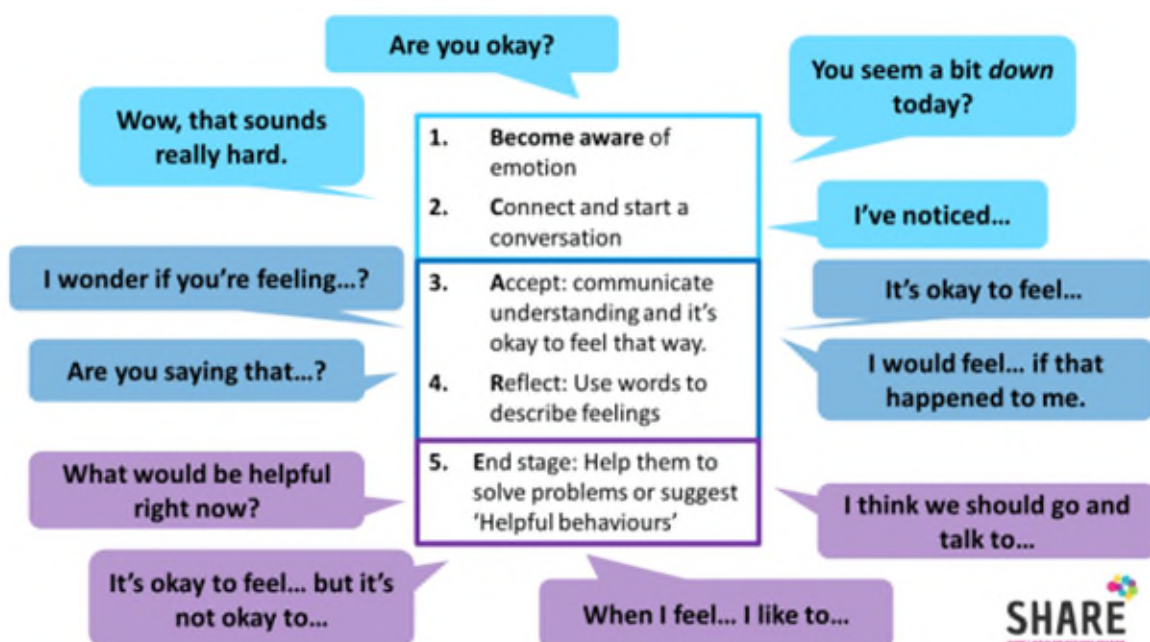
Emotion Coaching provides a five-step approach:

1. **Become aware of emotion.** Especially if it is low intensity (such as disappointment or frustration).
2. **Connect.** View their emotions as opportunities for connection and teaching.
3. **Accept.** Listen and accept their emotions: avoid judgement.
4. **Reflect.** Help them use words to describe what they feel.
5. **End stage.** If appropriate, help them to problem solve. You may also communicate that all wishes and feelings are acceptable, but some behaviours are not.



These steps can be implemented through a help script.

"I can see that you get ... when that happens, I would feel the same if that happened to me. It's normal to feel like that but it's not ok to ..., it's not safe to do so. Perhaps when you feel like this you could ..."



Through repetitive, consistent and empathetic Emotion Coaching, the ability of a child to regulate their emotions is promoted.

Benefits of Emotion Coaching:

- Improve mental and physical health
- Supports individuals to enjoy health relationships
- Enables individuals to better control their impulses
- Equips individuals to self-sooth when upset
- Enables individuals to have improved focus and attention

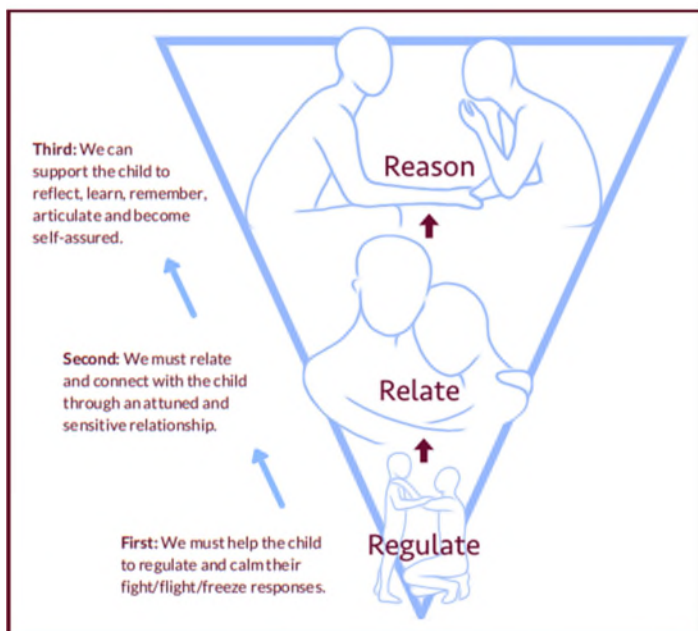


In summary Emotion Coaching is...

- A universal, relational approach that supports emotional regulation through empathetic coregulation
- About supporting children to recognise, label, manage and understand emotions in themselves and others
- Not dismissing or disapproving of emotions

The Three Rs: Reaching The Learning Brain

Dr Bruce Perry, a pioneering neuroscientist in the field of trauma, has shown us that to help a vulnerable child to learn, think and reflect, we need to intervene in a simple sequence.



Reason: How?

Teach them the language of emotions, strategies for regulating them, use story to explore emotions and remind them of their safe places and safe people

Relate: How?

Develop a calm, sensitive dialogue, acknowledging how they feel and how that is hard for them. "Wow, you must have felt really angry then. That must have been hard for you..."

Regulate: How?

Soothing but limited language, a safe space to go, stepping back and allowing them time to process. Don't add to the feelings by shouting or 'adding fuel to the fire'.

Advice and Recommendations

Strategies for Self-Regulation

- Provide a safe & comfortable space.
- Remain calm yourself.
- Use limited yet soothing language
- If possible, provide a source of physical comfort (blanket, toy, stress toy).
- Talk through regulating breathing e.g., rectangle breathing (breath in on the short side, breath out on the long side), or trace your finger of one hand up & down the fingers of the other hand tracing the outline of the hand breathing in as you go up and breathing out as you go down.
- Identify things you can see, smell, hear, feel, taste.



Once the child has become calm move to step 2...

Strategies for Relating

- Identify how they are feeling, 'You look/seem angry/frustrated/sad...' mirroring the emotion with your tone of voice.
- Acknowledge that this is unpleasant, 'That must be really tough/difficult...'
- Reassure them that you are there to help or can get someone to help, 'I am here to help you when you are ready' or 'Who would you like me to get for you to help you?'
- Accept that even though they may appear calmer now, they are still processing & are still in a place of slightly heightened arousal. This is not the time to teach them anything.
- Share your own experiences to let them know it is normal to feel these emotions, 'I get really frustrated when I find something difficult too...' or 'I feel angry when I am not listened to as well...'



Once the child has moved back to a normal state move to step 3...

Strategies for Reasoning

- Teach the language of emotions by naming them with the child when they experience them.
- Teach strategies for self-regulation (breathing techniques, going for a walk, moving away from the situation, finding help from a trusted adult or friend, talking, counting to 20, read through an appropriate story together (listed in the back of the PSHCE policy), therapeutic sand tray play, self-talk...)
- Identifying things that we can control, things we could control with help, and things that are beyond our control.



- Delivery of PSHCE curriculum & Five Ways to Wellbeing with whole class.

Useful Links:

A 25-minute [Introduction to Emotion Coaching webinar](#) by Dr. Louise Gilbert one of the co-founders of Emotion Coaching UK. In this brief webinar about Emotion Coaching, a style of communicating and interacting with others experiencing difficult emotions, Dr. Gilbert describes, why we need Emotion Coaching, what it is (and what it is not) and how to do it.

Leicestershire Educational Psychology Service Helpline

You can call the helpline if you want to speak to an Educational Psychologist.

Telephone 0116 305 5100 or email psychology@leics.gov.uk

Monday to Friday between 9am and 11.30am including school holidays.



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