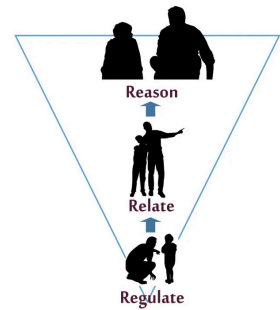


Big Emotions, Calm Choices: Building Emotional Strength

Building emotional strength in children is about teaching them to navigate those feelings until they can make a **calm choice**. To do this, parents can use a simple three-step process called the "**Regulate, Relate, Reason**" framework. This method works because it follows how the brain actually functions during a meltdown. When a child is screaming or crying, their "thinking brain" shuts down, and their "survival brain" takes charge. And during survival mode, giving lectures or punishment becomes ineffective, hence moving through these steps will help them grow stronger.



1. **Regulate (The "Cool Down" Phase):** Instead of trying to talk them out of their feelings, focus on physical signals of safety. Take slow, deep breaths together, offer a firm hug, or simply sit quietly nearby. By staying calm yourself, you act as an "emotional anchor" that helps their nervous system settle down.
2. **Relate (The "I Hear You" Phase):** Once the physical shaking or loud crying stops, validate their feelings. Using simple words helps them feel understood and when a child feels heard, the "big emotion" starts to feel smaller and less scary.
3. **Reason (The "Problem-Solving" Phase):** Once the child is calm and feels connected to you, you can talk about what happened and how to handle it next time. This is the moment for problem-solving or setting boundaries.

Here's how you can practice it -

When a child comes home crying because their friends left them out during recess, instead of asking "what happened?" immediately, first, **Regulate** by staying calm yourself, sit quietly with them or offer a glass of water to help their nervous system settle.



Once they are no longer sobbing, **Relate** by validating their hurt—saying something like, *"I can see why you feel upset. It's okay to feel sad when you're left out,"* which makes the big emotion feel less scary. Finally, once they are calm and feel understood, you can **Reason** together by discussing how to handle it tomorrow, perhaps by finding another group to play with or speaking to a teacher. This approach teaches children that emotional strength isn't about hiding their hurt, but about having the tools to bounce back from it.

Conclusion:

This approach helps children realize that while they cannot always control or "fix" the difficult situations they face, they can control how they respond to them. By building emotional strength, we ensure that even when a situation feels too big to handle, their emotions don't have to be. They learn to navigate their feelings with balance, giving them the power to deal with any challenge and bounce back stronger than before.

With best wishes,

Health & Wellness Department

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