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SUPPORTING DEAF KIDS TO UNDERSTAND AND MANAGE THEIR EMOTIONS

BLUE PRINT | Deaf Children Australia

Deaf children often need some extra guidance to learn to manage their emotions. Learn why, plus 5 ways you can help your child build vital emotional skills.

Emotions: We all have lots of them every day. Learning to control your emotional state is an important part of childhood development.

To have good emotional wellbeing, children need language and skills to understand and communicate about feelings – both their own and those of others. Deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children may not have the same level of access to words about emotions. This can make it harder for them to develop the vocabulary to name (or label) their emotions.

DHH kids often need support and guidance to learn to identify, label and manage their emotions. Parents and caregivers can help their DHH child to build the skills they need for healthy emotional control.

Signs a child may be struggling to manage their emotions

Experts call the ability to respond to and manage your emotions effectively 'emotional regulation'. Signs that your child may be having difficulty regulating their emotions include:

- talking louder or shouting
- uncontrolled crying
- temper tantrums
- aggressive behaviours
- a racing heart
- redness in the face
- clenched jaw or fists
- irritability or mood swings.

It can be difficult for children to manage unpleasant emotions such as anger, anxiety, frustration, embarrassment or sadness.

Here are 5 ways you can help your DHH child develop the skills they need to manage their emotions.

Talk about emotions

The first step is talking to your child about feelings and emotions. Let them know they are a normal part of life for everyone. Feelings can be good or bad. Some can be harder to cope with than others.

Tell them they can always talk to you or someone else they trust about their feelings, especially if they are finding it difficult to deal with them. For example, they might want to tell someone if they feel scared, sad, upset, or anxious. Explain that talking about your feelings can help you feel better.

Common emotions to talk about

Here are some common emotions you could talk about with your child. You might like to learn the Auslan signs for each one.

HAPPY	CONFIDENT
EXCITED	SURPRISED
SAD	ANGRY
WORRIED	CONFUSED
ANNOYED	SILLY
LONELY	SCARED
SICK	PROUD
CROSS	TIRED
NERVOUS	LOVING
SHY	CALM
BRAVE	ANXIOUS

Understand and name emotions

It's important to understand what emotions are, why we have them, and how to deal with them. You can help your child to build these skills using the following technique.

Label the emotion – help them to identify and give a name to what they are feeling.

Explain the emotion – encourage them to think about what they are feeling and why.

Accept the emotion – let them know it's normal and okay to experience emotions.

Manage the emotion – explore what they can do to deal their feelings.

Use emotion words in everyday life

Try to use emotion words and signs as you communicate each day. You can model this throughout the day by naming your feelings in different situations and showing your child how you respond to them.

You could also help your kids learn to recognise and name their feelings – and those of others – by:

mimicking the emotions of a character in a book or movie

guessing how a person is feeling by looking at their facial expression or body language

recalling times when you felt a certain way and talking about it.

Explain how self-talk can impact your feelings

Children need to learn that feelings can come from inside of them as well as what happens to them. You can teach your child to consider how their patterns of thought may be affecting how they feel. These thought patterns are known as self-talk.

Learning to build more positive self-talk can help kids to control their emotions. They can do this by:

learning to recognise unhelpful self-talk – for example, 'I'm hopeless at this sport'.

challenging that thought – for example, 'Am I really hopeless at this sport? Maybe I didn't do so well because it was noisy, and I couldn't hear the coach'.

replacing it with a more helpful one – for example, 'Next time, the coach could tap me on the shoulder to get my attention so I can hear all the instructions'.

With practice, children can learn to replace unhelpful thoughts with more helpful ones.

Help them build relaxation and self-reflection skills

When kids are in a heightened emotional state, it can be hard to get them to calm down. It can be easier if they have already learned how to settle their minds. For example, they could:

learn to practise slow, deep breathing

practise mindfulness or meditation

learn muscle relaxation techniques.

You can also teach your kids how to reflect on their thoughts and behaviours in a non-judgmental way. For example, after an outburst you could ask them:

What do you think went wrong?

Why do you think you felt this way?

What could you do differently next time?

By taking the time to slow down and reflect, children can become more self-aware and thoughtful. As a parent or caregiver, you can also model these behaviours.



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DID YOU KNOW?

Learning to regulate their emotions helps kids to succeed in social and educational settings.

Blueprint isn't just for sports clubs. If you offer activities or programs for children or young people, we'd love to have you on our side!

For further information about Deaf Children Australia.
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Deaf Children Australia.

Deaf Children Australia uses the term 'deaf' to refer to all degrees and types of hearing loss.
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