

WELCOME TO OUR

Early Childhood Mental Health Minute

Let's Talk About Emotions



As we settle into this new school year with all its new routines, faces, and friends, let's take a minute to focus on making sure your child is feeling safe, secure and ready to learn. Let's help them to identify, discuss, and regulate what they are feeling. By being able to do those things, it will allow them to not be overwhelmed as they do more challenging things.

How to Prepare

You play a crucial role in helping your child learn to identify and regulate their emotions. Your child will look to you as an example of how to handle big feelings.

- Understand that learning to navigate emotions can be hard.
- Pre-K students are navigating a lot right now. They are developing more independence and greater social awareness – all while trying to understand big emotions.

What to Expect

For young children, feelings can often be overwhelming because they do not have the words yet to describe them. You may notice that occasionally your child has a big reaction to what you feel is a small problem. This could just be their way of showing you that they are overwhelmed.

- Increased independence – they may resist help as try and figure things out on their own.
- Mood swings – Moodiness and tantrums can be common as they learn to manage their emotions.
- Emerging empathy – They should begin to show empathy towards others as well as begin to share and take turns.
- Engaging in more cooperative play and becoming more creative in their make-believe play
- Play is an essential part of working through emotions! Both with make believe play as well as social play with friends and siblings.

How to Help

Be patient. Navigating all the new and big emotions can be hard! By helping your child identify what emotions they are feeling is the first step in helping them to regulate them. Provide your child with a calm space they can go to that will help them settle. You may want to have some items on hand to help them such as a pinwheel to blow, calming bottles or a stuffed animal.

- Talk with your child about what they are feeling by creating a ‘feelings vocabulary’. Talk about the feelings you noticed – “It seems like you are sad that your friend wasn’t at school today” or “You looked so proud of that picture you drew!”
- Also share and label your feelings with them – “I was so frustrated that the car wouldn’t start.” or “I am so excited that your grandparents are coming this weekend!”
- Identify the emotions of the characters in the books you are reading. Ask them “What do you think he’s feeling here?” “Why do you think that?”
- Model kindness and how to be a good friend.
- Set up play-dates – arrange some short, supervised play-dates with a classmate/friend to give them the opportunity to practice these new skills.

Things to Try

Reading nightly with your child is a great way to wind down from the day, foster a love of reading and provide a special, quiet, one on one time with each other. Look through your favorite books to talk about the feelings and emotions seen.

Books to Read:

- The Way I Feel – by Janan Cain
- The Feelings Book – by Todd Parr
- How do Dinosaurs Say I’m Mad? – by Mark Teague
- The Grumpy Monkey – By Suzanne Lang

Activities to Do:

- Create your calm corner together. Place soft blankets and pillows in the area along with items your child finds soothing.
- Look through family pictures and describe the emotions you see.