



Stop, Wait, Go

FACTSHEET

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THE BASICS OF EMOTIONAL COACHING

J Gottman Heart of Parenting 1997

Children can have extreme emotional outbursts to quite minor triggers as they learn the difficult task of managing their own emotions. They will make lots of mistakes and it is our job to find the teaching moments that help them to solve this problem.

1. Recognize the emotion

Learn to recognize what your child's emotional reactions to certain triggers are. Help your child to find the words to describe how he/she is feeling. "Are you feeling sad now"? Rather than "I can see that you are feeling angry". Use a calm, quiet tone of voice. Your children learn about managing their emotions from watching you.

2. Build connections

Listen to the child and name the emotion. It is important that you connect in good times as well as bad. It is a teaching moment not a punishment moment.

3. Listen empathetically

Don't tell the child what they are feeling. Reflect back what you hear the child saying. "It sounds like you might have been embarrassed" "Do you feel scared right now?" Don't judge or criticize. This is real to them, if not to you. Try not to tell the child how they should feel

4. Label the emotion

Children have a limited vocabulary of feeling words. Find the best word together. This helps to acknowledge that feeling.

5. Set limits to problem solve.

Once we are clear on the emotion we can set the limits on how to manage them. It is not okay to throw a tantrum because Mum said no. It is not okay to bite your brother because he took the toy.

Along with the triggers look for other influences that could be impacting on the child:

Tired, hungry, in need of water, sick, in pain, feeling left out, sensing unstable emotions in the atmosphere. These stressors increase the possibility of a meltdown. Ask how can I manage the environment better and use preventative strategies to help my child cope.

