



# Children's Feelings

We all feel joy and sorrow, but children can be especially vocal about their feelings. Parents often get upset when their children explode in anger, sadness, or fear. Children's feelings may seem like too much to handle at the end of a long working day.

However, studies show that parents can help children learn to understand their feelings. Parents can teach children that emotions are a part of life, but should be expressed in acceptable ways. Research shows that children who learn to manage their emotions get along better with other children. They can also calm themselves and bounce back from conflict and disappointment. They even have better health and more success in school.

You can help your child manage feelings when you

**Tune in.** Pay attention to how your child looks and behaves when he or she feels angry, sad, or happy. You're better able to respond to your child when you know how he or she feels.

**Accept emotions.** We all have negative and positive emotions. Let your child know that all of these emotions are normal.

**Label emotions.** As your children show their feelings, tell them what you hear and see. Giving a name to emotions helps children recognize what they are feeling. When children can talk to others about feelings, they learn that everyone has emotions.

**Guide.** Help your children learn what to do when they are upset. Look for the early signs of

an outburst, when it is easier for children to control their emotions. Then help your children identify why they are upset. Talk about acceptable ways to express anger, frustration, or sadness, such as using words or punching a pillow to let off steam.

**Set limits.** Be clear about what behaviors you can accept when your child is upset. It's all right to be angry, but behaviors such as hitting or kicking are not OK.

**Help problem solve.** Talk about how to handle feelings. Ask your child to suggest better ways to express emotion. Support children as they work it out for themselves.

You may wonder if you can show such patience when you're tired from a day at work. But children's feelings demand our attention no matter how we respond. With your help, your children can understand their emotions and learn limits for their behavior. As they learn to manage their feelings, they'll have new skills to grow on.

---

**Authors**—Susan Traver, Extension Educator, University of Idaho Extension, Bonner County, and Harriet Shaklee, Family Development Specialist, UI Extension