

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

Grounding techniques are simple things your child can do to refocus their attention whenever they're feeling anxious, stressed, or distracted. Grounding techniques can bring them back to the present and help them feel calmer and more focused.

MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Doing something physical is a great way for children to ground themselves and feel calmer. In addition to walking, they can try stretching, running, or doing a yoga pose. The key is for them to focus on the way their muscles and other body parts feel as they move.

THE 5-4-3-2-1 TECHNIQUE

With this technique, children tune in to their senses and focus on what is happening around them. Have your child list 5 things they can see, 4 they can touch, 3 they can hear, 2 they can smell, and 1 they can taste.

BELLY BREATHING

Have your child inhale and exhale slowly, and say or think the words *in* and *out* as they breathe.

STOMP-STOMP-BLOW

Have your child stomp one foot, then the other foot, and then exhale forcefully. As they do this, tell them to imagine that they are blowing away their bad feelings. They can repeat this pattern as often as needed.

There are a number of simple things you can do each day to help maintain and improve your child's overall mental health.

COMMUNICATE OPENLY

Regularly talking with your child is the best way to check in on their mental health.

HAVE CALMING ROUTINES

A warm bath, reading a book, or listening to calming music are some good ways to help your child wind down and relax.

EXERCISE

Physical activity improves both physical and mental health. Look for fun ways to integrate physical activity into your child's daily routine.

LEARN TO RECOGNIZE NONVERBAL CUES

Children can't always articulate what they need you to know. This is why it's important to pay attention to your child's body language, moods, eating and sleeping patterns, physical appearance, and school performance. These can be good indicators of how your child is doing.

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Your Child's Mental Health & Well-Being

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CALMING DOWN

INFORMATION FOR ELEMENTARY PARENTS



INFORMATION AND TIPS TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH STRONG EMOTIONS

CALMING DOWN

It's not unusual for children to have a difficult time coping with "big" feelings such as stress, anxiety, fear, and anger. Because children aren't able to cope with these feelings as well as adults, they often manifest themselves as outbursts, tantrums, and other extreme responses.

Calming and grounding techniques can help children re-center and relax—and deal with these tough emotions more effectively.

There are a number of age-appropriate calming and grounding techniques that can help children understand and regulate their emotions. Here are some tips for incorporating these techniques into your family's daily life.

VALIDATE YOUR CHILD'S EMOTIONS

The first step to helping your child manage their emotions is to acknowledge and validate them. Here's what you can do.

BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER

Pay full attention when your child is expressing their feelings. Make eye contact and use body language to show that you're engaged. Repeat back what you heard to ensure understanding.

BE ACCEPTING OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Some children believe that negative emotions are unacceptable, so they let these emotions build up inside until they erupt and are hard to control. Explain that it's normal to have a range of both happy and sad feelings, and encourage your child to notice and acknowledge them when they arise.

LABEL EMOTIONS

Encourage your child to label their emotions—both positive and negative. For example, "My friend is moving away and that makes me really sad," or "It makes me really angry when my sister takes my toys." When you notice that your child is struggling, ask them to describe what they are feeling in their own words.

DON'T MINIMIZE EMOTIONS

Show your child that you understand how they're feeling and that you want to help, even if whatever your child is upset about seems like a small thing to you.

CALMING TECHNIQUES

When emotions become hard for your child to control (and they will), try these calming techniques.

PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING

Taking deep breaths is the easiest way for your child to feel calmer. Show them how to breathe in, count to four, and then slowly exhale. Have your child place their hand on their stomach and feel how it expands and deflates with each breath.

USE SOOTHING ITEMS

Whether it's a favorite stuffed animal, a weighted blanket, or a smooth "worry stone," a comfort item can help calm and soothe your child when they're in distress.

PROVIDE A SAFE SPACE

Sometimes children just need to take a break in a place where they can safely cope with their emotions. Help your child identify a safe place in or around your home and stock it with a few favorite comfort items.

TUNE IN TO SURROUNDINGS

To help re-center your child during an outburst or meltdown, encourage them to use their senses to tune in to what's around them. Have them close their eyes and name what they can smell, touch, and hear.

If your child is stressed, calming down might be difficult. Watch this video to learn more.



VIDEO