



How to Help Your Child Recognize & Understand Frustration

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Frustration is a common emotion in young children and typically occurs as a child begins to discover the many things he would like to do, but simply cannot do yet. Frustration is a natural and healthy emotion and can provide a positive learning experience for a child. The feelings of frustration that occur when your child has difficulty communicating his needs or tying his shoes are his cue that he needs to try to do something in a different way or that what he is doing is not working. You can teach your child how to deal with frustration in a way that is useful for him. Most important, you must respond to frustration when it first arises before it changes into anger or becomes the dreaded temper tantrum. Two skills children must learn in order to deal with frustration are: 1) how to ask for help, and 2) know when to take a break!



Backpack Connection Series

About this Series

The Backpack Connection Series was created by TACSEI to provide a way for teachers and parents/caregivers to work together to help young children develop social emotional skills and reduce challenging behavior. Teachers may choose to send a handout home in each child's backpack when a new strategy or skill is introduced to the class. Each Backpack Connection handout provides information that helps parents stay informed about what their child is learning at school and specific ideas on how to use the strategy or skill at home.

The Pyramid Model



The Pyramid Model is a framework that provides programs with guidance on how to promote social emotional competence in all children and design effective interventions that support young children who might have persistent challenging behavior. It also provides practices to ensure that children with social emotional delays receive intentional teaching. Programs that implement the Pyramid Model are eager to work together with families to meet every child's individualized learning and support needs. To learn more about the Pyramid Model, please visit ChallengingBehavior.org.

More Information

More information and resources on this and other topics are available on our website, ChallengingBehavior.org.

Try This at Home

- Notice and label when you, your child or others are frustrated. Explain that everyone, including adults, feel frustration. You might say:
 - » About yourself: "I am frustrated. I have tried three times to fix the vacuum and it is just not working! I am going to take a break. I will come back and try when I am feeling calmer."
 - » About your child: "You are so frustrated! I see that you have been trying to build that tower and it keeps falling down! Let's have a snack and then try again together."
 - » About others: "That little boy looks frustrated. He can't climb up the ladder on his own. I wonder if he needs some help?"
- Teach your child appropriate ways to respond to frustration. You might say to your child, "You can ask Daddy. Say, 'Help please!'"
- Knowing when to take a break is a skill that can be taught to your child. You can say, "I see you are frustrated. Let's take a break. First, let's do five jumping jacks and get some water. Then we can come back and try again!"
- Puppets and toys are great tools for role playing situations that your child may be struggling with, such as trying to accomplish a task. "Wow, this train can't get up the hill. He has tried four times and keeps rolling back down. He looks like he wants to cry. I wonder what he can do?"

Practice at School

School is an opportunity for children to explore new concepts and try new skills. As a child attempts to become more independent, she often feels frustrated when she is not able to complete a task by herself. A teacher can help a child identify when she is feeling frustrated and prompt her to ask for help, try a new solution or take a break. "You have been working so hard to fit that piece in the puzzle. You sound frustrated. Would you like some help?" As the child learns new skills to manage frustrating feelings, she will become more confident in her abilities and eager to attempt new activities.

The Bottom Line

Childhood is full of frustrating moments. As young children explore their world they are faced with many challenges. There are numerous things they simply can't reach, can't buckle, and can't climb on their own. From the child's point of view, parents and other adults are always saying "No" to the activities and objects he wants. It is important to help your child learn how to deal with this common experience. As a parent, you have the opportunity to help your child learn how to recognize, understand and find solutions to his frustrations. Each time your child is able to work through a frustration, he is adding a very important skill he needs to be happy and successful in the world. Children who learn these skills are less likely to exhibit challenging behavior and are better able to navigate life's ups and downs with confidence.



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