

Routines for Long-Term Results

TEACHING HOW TO HANDLE DISCOMFORT / COPE MATURELY

Most people (no matter their age) don't have great coping skills. We can teach our children to handle their discomfort / Yuck in a healthy way... but we also have to realize that it takes a LOT of time and practice.

STEPS

1. Support them with their emotions.

No matter how many tools you teach them, if YOU'RE not calm, they will react to your energy and won't be able to use their tools effectively.

2. Teach them to identify & name their feelings.

Have them identify what they are feeling... and give a name to the feeling.

3. Teach them to quantify their feelings.

Help them understand how strong their feeling is on a scale from 1-5.

4. Teach what to do to release Yuck as they travel the Yuck curve.

Tell them that they are in charge of their feelings, not vice versa. Give them strategies that they can use when they feel the feeling (and as they travel the Yuck Curve). These strategies should match their natural tendency. For example, a physical child would need physical strategies.

5. Practice, practice, practice

Learning to cope is learning a new language. As with any language, it takes repetition, time, and a lot of practice. Without enough practice, children default to old (unhealthy) strategies.

TIPS & PHRASES

TIP:

To stay calm when a child is upset, stop focusing on their behavior / emotions and focus on yours.

TIP: For younger kids, feelings can be "Frustrated Freddie's" or "Angry Alligators." For older kids, they can just name the feeling itself - disappointment, anger, fear, etc.

TIP: Ask them where in their body they feel the feeling. Then ask when the feelings seem stronger and less strong.

You can use examples to help them figure it out: "Where do you feel it when I ask you to get off of your device and you're not done playing? How strongly do you feel that?"

PHRASES FOR YOUNGER KIDS:

"You have control over the Angry Alligators. When you feel them coming, you can walk to the farthest wall and back. That movement makes them calm down."

PHRASES FOR OLDER KIDS:

"Just like you don't want me to control you, you don't want your emotions to either. Let's find ways for you to get control."

TIP:

With younger children, practice using role plays and games. With older children, have them "coach" you. It's best that everyone in the family practice these strategies together (instead of singling out one child).

[Here is a document suggests different ways to release Yuck \(and how to practice them.\)](#)



WHAT DO I DO IF...?

...My child does doesn't use the strategies in the moment, even when I remind them?

It's often ineffective to remind a child to use their strategies in the moment; by the time they're in Yuck, they won't listen to you. In the moment, it's more effective to model Yuck release strategies yourself. And *that's all that's in your control anyway!*

...My child won't practice these strategies?

If your child won't practice the strategies with you, ask them to coach you instead. (Tell them you're working on staying calm yourself and have you walk through the process of identifying feelings and practicing.)

If your child still won't do that, then practice yourself in front of them. Even seeing someone else practice can help them. And *that's all that's in your control anyway!*