



# Strategies for Expressing Emotions

1. **MAKE A FACE:** I am going to make a face. See if you can guess what I'm feeling. (Surprised face). Then create a sentence to match your expression. "I was SURPRISED when the big dog barked at me." Allow the child to take a turn and make a face. Both you and the child can attempt to guess what the feeling word is prior to the sentence if desired.

2. **STORYTIME:** Story time is a perfect time to discuss feelings and emotions. Most books include emotions and feelings of characters. While reading the book you may ask the child, "What do you think he is feeling? Look at her face? How can you tell?" The goal is to connect the body language to a feeling word.

3. **FEELINGS THERMOMETER:** The Feeling Thermometer serves as a tool to help children and youth express emotion. It provides a common language for families to identify and share feelings. The thermometer can have as many color zones as appropriate. This example has three zones: blue, yellow, and red. The blue zone stands for pleasant feelings such as happy, calm, or excited.

The yellow zone represents feelings that are less comfortable but not intense, such as sadness or worried. The red zone is used to describe more intense feelings like fear, anger, or depression. Children can use the thermometer to identify their feelings, and it can become a conversational tool for parents to find out why the child has such feelings and what can be done to deescalate back to the blue zone. Instead of word cards, parents may choose to use a picture of the child, which can be placed by the color zone which matches their emotion.



*Reference:* <https://www.focusproject.org/focus-on/the-feeling-thermometer>





# Strategies for Young Children

## **Draw the feeling**

Young children can be given the opportunity to express their feelings through drawing. This can be done at the conclusion of a story time book, or in conjunction with any emotions or feeling activity. For example, children can be given a piece of paper and markers and be asked to draw a picture of someone who is “happy” on one page, “sad” on another page, “scared” on another page etc. Parents can staple the pages to make a book and children can “read” the book and tell a story.

## **Act out the feeling**

Young children love to physically be in motion. Their natural desire to move is a wonderful opportunity to have them act out their feelings. One great way to do this is through music. For example, “Show Me What You Feel” is a song in which children are directed to show how they feel when they are “happy”, “shy” etc. Children put bodily movement to emotions, thus connecting the concept that body language is an important component of communication.

## **References:**

*Teaching Your Child to Identify and Express Emotions.* (n.d.). Vanderbilt University. The Center for the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. Retrieved from [http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/teaching\\_emotions.pdf](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/teaching_emotions.pdf)

“Show Me What You Feel” is from the CD Kids in Motion by Greg & Steve. Additional songs and activities for children can be located on the internet.





# Strategies for School Age Children

Homemade Stress Balls (w/playdough)

Worry Stones

Deep breathing

Blowing Bubbles

Engage the 5 Senses: List/think of two things for each of our senses. 2 things to see, 2 things to hear, 2 things to feel, 2 things you smell, and 2 things you taste

Triangle Breathing: start at the bottom left of the triangle. Breathe in for three counts as you trace the first side of the triangle. Hold your breath for three counts as you trace the second side of the triangle. Breathe out for three counts as you trace the final side of the triangle.

Finger Crochet:

Painting with Water Colors

Doodling

Reading

Reference: <https://www.thehelpfulcounselor.com/18-coping-skills-strategies-for-children-and-teens/>

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/blog/using-shapes-to-teach-deep-breathing>





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## Strategies for Teens

- Breathing deeply and visualizing a safe calm place
- Drawing or painting
- Listening to uplifting music
- Going to the library
- Holding an ice cube
- Organizing space
- Sitting in the sun and closing your eyes
- Sucking on a peppermint
- Sipping a cup of hot tea
- Complimenting someone
- Practicing exercise
- Reading
- Writing yourself a nice note and keeping it in your pocket
- Dancing to music
- Going for a brisk 10-minute walk
- Going outside and listening to nature
- Calling a friend
- Writing positive affirmations on cards and decorating them
- Planting a flower in a pot
- Knitting or sewing
- Doing yoga
- Watching a funny or inspirational movie
- Making a collage of your favorite things
- Journaling
- Writing a poem
- Swimming, running or biking
- Making a gratitude list
- Doing a good deed
- Counting backwards from 500
- Writing something positive about yourself for every letter of the alphabet

Reference: <https://blogs.psychcentral.com/blog/2018/01/30-healthy-coping-skills-for-teens/>



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## Coping:

# Reinforce Problem-Solving

**Can I fix this problem?**

**Three things to think about:**

- 1. What is the problem?**
- 2. What are all of the things I can do?**
- 3. Which option is best? Try it!**

Decision Option	Can I solve this safely?	Pros	Cons	Best choice to try





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## Additional Resources Coping Strategies

- The Military Child Education Coalition: [www.militarychild.org](http://www.militarychild.org)
- Center for Parent and Teen Communication: <https://parentandteen.com>
- Fostering Resilience: [www.fosteringresilience.com](http://www.fosteringresilience.com)
- School Liaison Officer: <https://branchta.org/role-school-liaison-officer-slo>
- School guidance counselors
- Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC):  
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/confidential-help/non-medical-counseling/military-and-family-life-counseling>
- Military One Source also offers counseling help: 800-342-9647 or live chat 24/7.
- Military Kids Connect: <https://militarykidsconnect.dcoe.mil/>
- FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress) teaches practical skills to help families overcome common challenges related to a military life: <https://www.focusproject.org/>

### Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4n2MiGgDUI>- 6 tips to help your children control their emotions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8vVq2-TGaY>- teenage coping skills

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jLU59JWAYk>- routines

### Podcast

The “For the Sake of the Child” podcast with Dr. Ken Ginsburg, Co-Founder and Director of the Center for Parent and Teen Communication and author of *Raising Kids to Thrive*, addresses what military parents can do to lay the foundation for open communication with their kids.

Listen here: <https://www.podbean.com/media/share/pb-rj8fh-a269a4>



For More Information: [Parents@MilitaryChild.org](mailto:Parents@MilitaryChild.org)