



Dealing with feeling

Introduction This activity explores the different ways children and parents can react emotionally

You'll need A child

Two sets of small cards or slips of paper each with one of the following phrases written on:

When I'm sad it helps if I...

When someone else is sad it's best for me to...

What makes me most sad is...

When I'm angry it helps if I...

When someone else is angry it's best for me to...

What makes me most angry is...

When I'm frightened it helps if I...

When someone else is frightened it's best for me to...

What makes me most frightened is...

When I do something I wish I hadn't done it helps if I...

When someone else does something they wish they hadn't done it's best for me to...

Activity

Have one set of cards yourself and give one set to your child. Shuffle them up and put them face down in front of you. Take it in turns to pick a card up, read it and then complete the sentence. For example, 'When I'm angry it helps if I...jump up and down', or whatever comes to mind. Where it's appropriate, you can then ask 'What else could you do?' before the next turn.

Take every opportunity to talk about the feelings and the responses. This way, you can explore different ways of reacting to emotional situations, as well as finding out more about what makes you and your child react emotionally in the ways that you do.

The explanation

This activity focuses on what some psychologists call 'emotional intelligence.'

Part of growing up is getting better at thinking about how we react emotionally to different sorts of things. This can (sometimes!) help us to be more thoughtful about how we respond, as well as helping us to understand others. Although it can be good to be 'spontaneous' with warm feelings, it's much less likely to be good for us and others if we just lash out the moment we feel angry, upset or offended by what someone else does.

Being emotionally intelligent isn't the same as having a high IQ. You don't need to be clever to be sympathetic and thoughtful towards others. Research is suggesting that our social abilities develop throughout childhood, and can continue through adulthood. One of the things that can help children develop their emotional intelligence is to spend time with other children with whom they form ongoing relationships, particularly their brothers and sisters.

In the heat of the moment, it can be difficult to talk about feelings, but this activity offers an opportunity to do so when the heat is off.

As well as encouraging your children to share their thinking with you about how and why they respond as they do, this activity will probably also help them to understand you better too.