

COPING WITH EMOTIONS:
MINDFULNESS

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TEACHING CHILDREN COPING STRATEGIES AS PARENTS

2

- *Let's start with the barriers!*
 - *My kids don't listen to me*
 - *I lack expertise in this area*
 - *My attention is divided and I don't have time*
 - *I have tried and it doesn't work*
 - *I feel like we are so far gone already*

A SIMPLE START

- Remember! No one has it all figured out!
- To start you need a **philosophy** to guide you, and a **strategy** to use
 - Today, we will explore some sample philosophies or values (remember it is personal to you and your family) and a simple strategy to try.
 - **Mindfulness!!!**

A PHILOSOPHY YOU SAY??

- For example:
 - At Riker Hill, we have developed the Family Values which guides our interactions with each other.
 - This is a **philosophy** we utilize to shape our behaviors and coping in school.
 - Provides a shared language.
 - Develops a **community** (we all utilize these values)
- In your house, what are your values for behavior and coping?
 - This is honestly the most important first step. Families often try so many different approaches and they fail because they don't have an overarching value system to guide them.

MY PHILOSOPHY

5

- I view coping (with emotions) as a skill, which means I need to teach it and model it, and I believe it will improve with practice!
- Practice means I let my son feel his emotions and I help him cope with them.
 - Note: We often invalidate emotions (you should not feel sad, that is silly)... I do this all the time.
- I can't teach coping if I don't model it myself. That means self care and allowing yourself the space to walk away.
- My role as a parent is the bridge, not the solution.
 - This is honestly the hardest value to implement, that and modeling calm. We learn through experience, if you are the solution every time, then that is the learning experience you are creating.

WHAT IS THE BRIDGE? ESPECIALLY IF WE ARE OVER TROUBLED WATERS

- Model Coping
- Develop a space for coping, both physically and emotionally. Give them strategies to use in this space.
- Practice strategies when calm, make them part of your routine.
- Offer solutions, through self-reflection (when both you and your children are calm)
 - Do not try and engage in meaningful dialogue with a child who is not able to do so. It is OK to walk away!
- Solutions are usually two-fold
 - How we manage our response
 - How we manage or change our environment
- Remember who is the boss of your home!

MINDFULNESS - A SIMPLE STRATEGY

- Mindfulness invites us to check in with ourselves regularly and ask:
 - How do I feel?
 - What do I need?

8

WHY IS MINDFULNESS IMPORTANT?

BECAUSE... FEELING BIG EMOTIONS ARE REALLY HARD AND THEY IMPACT HOW WE ACT AND FEEL!

Sometimes...

We don't know what to do with our big feelings so we engage in angry outbursts and throw tantrums.

Sometimes...

We don't know what to do with our big feelings so we withdraw and avoid interacting with others.

Sometimes...

We don't know what to do with our big feelings so we take out our pain on others and we feel guilty and regretful afterward.

WHEN WE ARE CALM AND PRESENT (MINDFUL), THEN WE THEN ARE ABLE TO:

- *Self Awareness: Being able to...*
 - *Identify our feelings and label our emotions*
 - *Not believe every thought that comes into our heads; being able to identify when our thoughts are unrealistic and/or unhelpful*
 - *Remind ourselves that it is OKAY to make mistakes because that means we are learning and growing*
 - *Motivate ourselves to persevere even when a task is challenging or boring*
 - *Self-soothe when our minds or bodies are telling us we're activated*

WHEN WE ARE CALM AND PRESENT, WE ARE ABLE TO:

11

- *Social Awareness: Being able to...*
 - *Show empathy to others; to treat others as we want to be treated*
 - *Take into account how our behaviors would make others feel before acting; filtering out thoughts and behaviors that might hurt others*
 - *Be open-minded to differences in opinion; practicing a flexible mindset and not feeling that we have to be "right"*
 - *Choose kindness and cooperation over getting our way*

HOW DO WE TEACH
MINDFULNESS TO
CHILDREN?



EMOTION

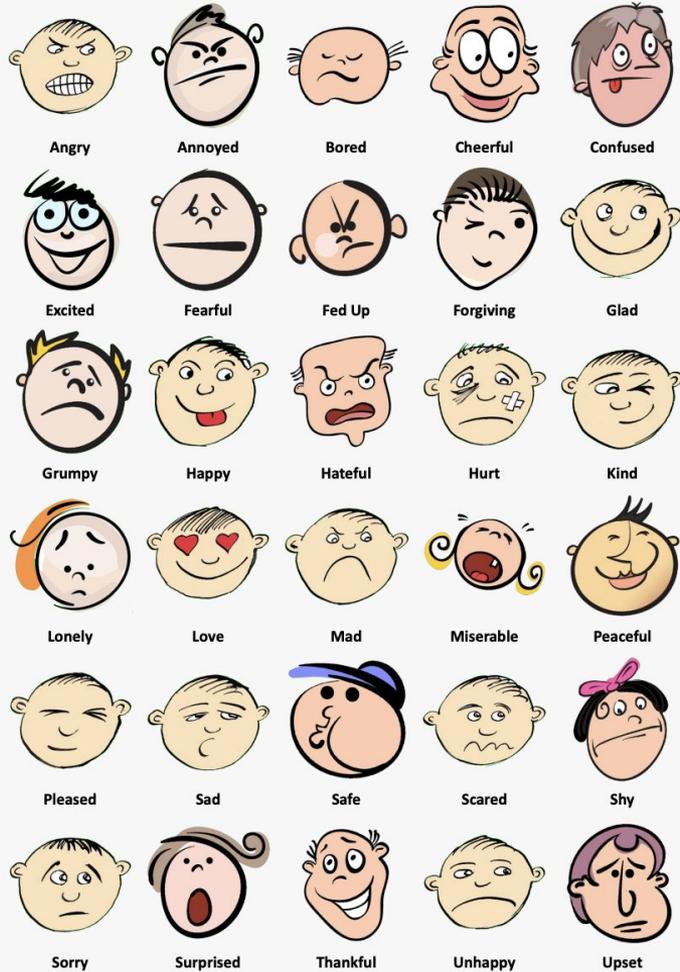
IDENTIFICATION

Demystifying how we feel through words

EMOTIONS CHART

Emotions Chart

Chart #1: Emotion words for children up to age 8.



BREATHING, GROUNDING & CALMING OURSELVES

Coming into contact with the present moment so we're not stuck in our thoughts. Mindfulness allows us to think more clearly and make better choices!

HOT COCO BREATH

1. Hold your hands out in front of you, as if you were holding a mug of hot chocolate.
2. Breathe in slowly. Imagine you are inhaling that warm coco smell through your nose
3. Gently exhale through your mouth. Purse your lips like you were trying to cool down the hot chocolate before you take a sip
4. Imagine what ingredients might be in your hot chocolate - marshmallows, whip cream, etc.
5. Continue until you feel calmer. Notice if your hands begin to feel warmer





FIVE FINGER BREATHING

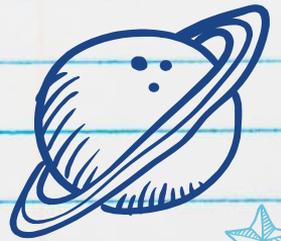


1. Place the index finger of one hand on the outer edges of the pinky finger. on your other hand. As you breathe in, trace up to the tip of your pinky, and as you breathe out, trace down the inside of your pinky.
2. On you next deep inhale, trace the outer edge of your ring finger, and on the exhale, trace down the inside of your ring finger.
3. Continue finger by finger until you've traced your entire hand.
4. Reverse the process and trace from your thumb back to your pinky.



GROUNDING 5-4-3-2-1

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell (or 1 smell, 1 taste)
- 1 personal strength you can identify



HAPPY PLACE

1. Close your eyes and take a few nice deep breaths
2. Create and imagine a place that makes you feel warm and safe inside; it might be a scene at the beach, a cozy armchair by the fire, a lake, a forest... it doesn't matter where it is, it just has to be safe and calming to you
3. Picture as many details as possible, describe this place in your mind. What do you see, hear, smell? What can you touch? Can draw it out as well.
4. When you are finished, slowly open your eyes and return to the room. You can come back to your happy place any time you need.

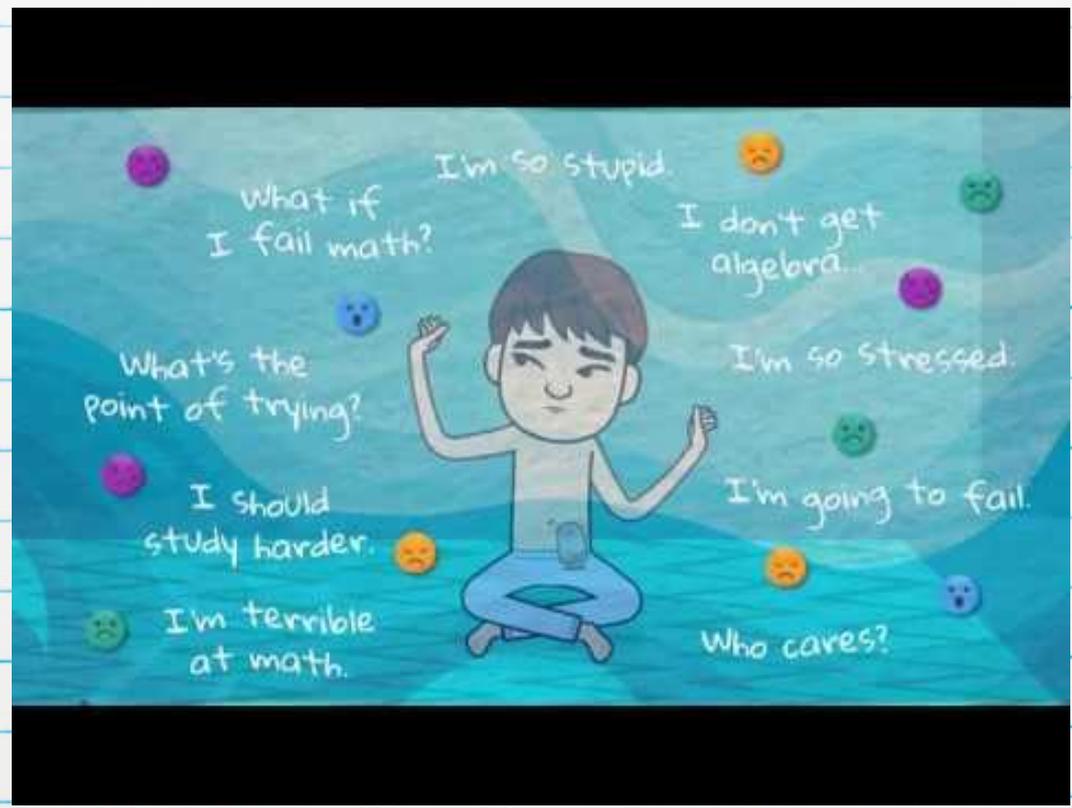


NOT EVERY THOUGHT IS TRUE

20

- Identifying our thoughts with compassion.
- Using language to separate ourselves from our thoughts; acknowledging our thoughts are temporary, not always helpful, and may be very unrealistic, especially when we become upset.
- Thoughts \neq Facts

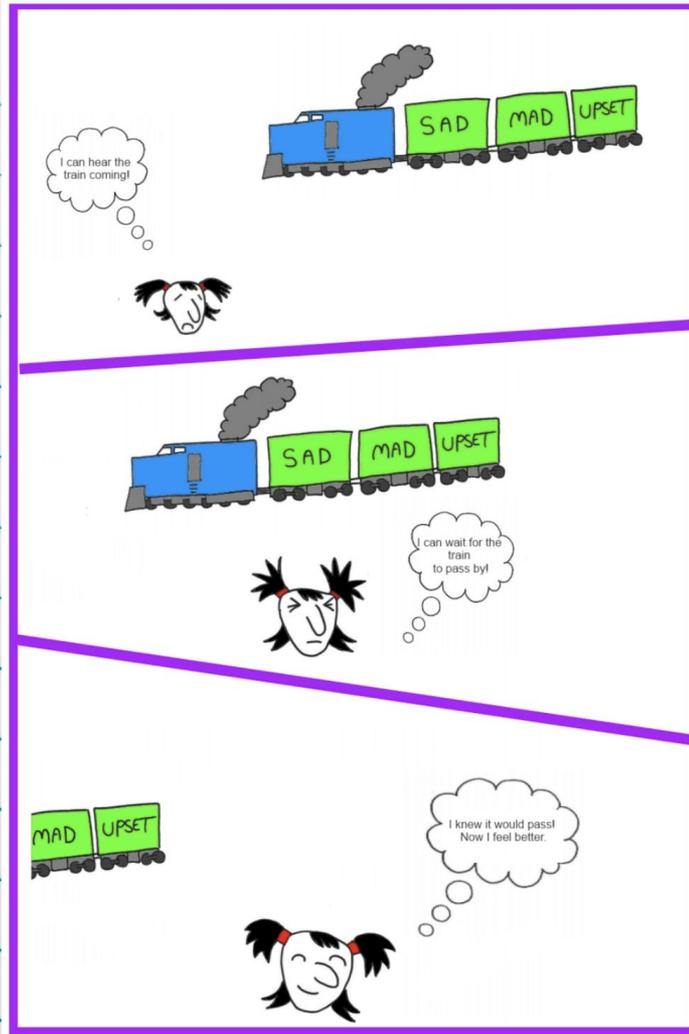
OUR THOUGHTS ARE NOT US



Helpful Train Metaphor (Wassner & Fleming, 2016)

22

- Imagine that your feelings are attached to a train. When your worries are coming towards you, you can hear the rumbling of the train, the noise of the engine and the horn.
- Some trains have many carriages and take a long time to go past, while some only have a couple of carriages and whiz past in seconds.
- When the train is passing us by, it makes a lot of noise and can be scary sometimes. But if we know it will pass by eventually, we can allow it to go past. When the train has passed, we hear the noise of the train disappearing into the distance and appreciate the peace and quiet that remains.



SETTING ASIDE A TIME TO WORRY...

- This exercise may be helpful for students with excessive anxiety that impedes their ability to focus and learn in class.
- It involves allowing the student to designate a set window of time each day to worry.
- Rather than giving their worries authority to consume their attention all day, lead the student to save their worries for this set period of time in which they will give their worries their full attention.
- During this period, students can process their worries on paper and then analyze which worries are helpful vs unhelpful, and realistic vs unrealistic.
- Engage in a calming, soothing exercise before the designated worry time so students will be able to analyze worries with a clear and flexible mind.



UNLESS THE MOMENT IS UNPLEASANT,
IN WHICH CASE I WILL EAT A COOKIE

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