

Explore emotions with

SASSY JESSY

Parent's Guide



Sassy Jessy: A parent's guide for emotional wellbeing. 2022.

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In cooperation with Familia ry.

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Table of contents

1. Letter from authors	2
2. What do we mean by Emotions and Emotional Health?	3
3. Thoughts, Behavior and Emotions	4
4. Supporting our children's Emotional Health?	5
5. Talking with Children	6
6. Encourage your child to think outside the box	10
7. Emotions overview	11
8. Happiness	13
9. Anger	15
10. Fear	18
11. Disgust	21
12. Sadness	24
13. Helpful tips and talking points	27
14. Self-care tips for adults	30
15. Further support	32
16. Sources used in creation	34

Dear Parents

As we continue to face and go through the global pandemic, our children more than ever need our support. Children have not been able to socialise freely over the last couple of years and have endured uncertain times and disruption to their daily routines.

We felt that now was a good time to create this guidebook for parents to help support their child's emotional wellbeing and development.

This guidebook has been created by us, final year DIAK students, to give you, the parents, tools and knowledge to support your child. The book aims to help you as parents to:

- *Understand your child's emotions and feelings*
- *Understand why children feel these emotions*
- *Think about why these emotions happen*
- *Find healthy ways to handle the emotions*

We feel that by supporting your child to understand their emotions and feelings, you will also be supporting their growth and development into happy and healthy adults. Additionally, we hope it helps create a loving connection and mutual understanding with your child.

As students and as parents, we have a deep understanding of children and their emotional needs; we also know how difficult some issues are to talk about.

Most importantly, we hope you and your child enjoy this Journey.

Thanks for reading

Sara Geay, Carey Jääskeläinen and Maija Leahy



What do we mean by Emotions and Emotional Health?

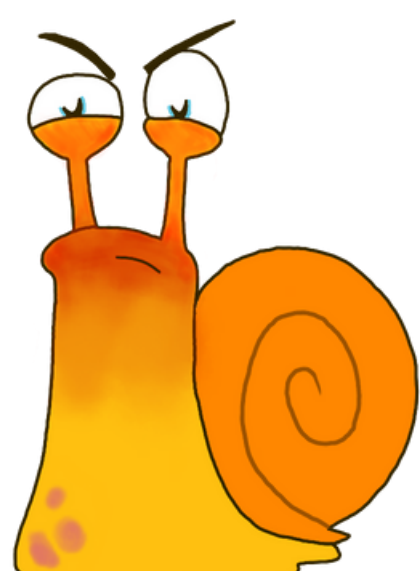
Emotions are needed in our everyday life. Adults and children alike experience the same emotions and have similar reactions. These include responses to situations, body reactions, and behavioural reactions when experiencing different emotions. When we start school, for example, or start a new job, adults and children can experience emotions like fear, excitement, happiness, and pride.

Children and adults also face changes in their bodies with different emotions. For example, when nervous both children and adults can experience being sweaty, tummy tingles and temperature changes. Adults also behave in the same way as children in response to emotions when sad; adults and children both may display sadness in their faces through their facial expressions.

Many professionals believe there are five primary forms of emotions humans have:



Happiness



Anger



Fear



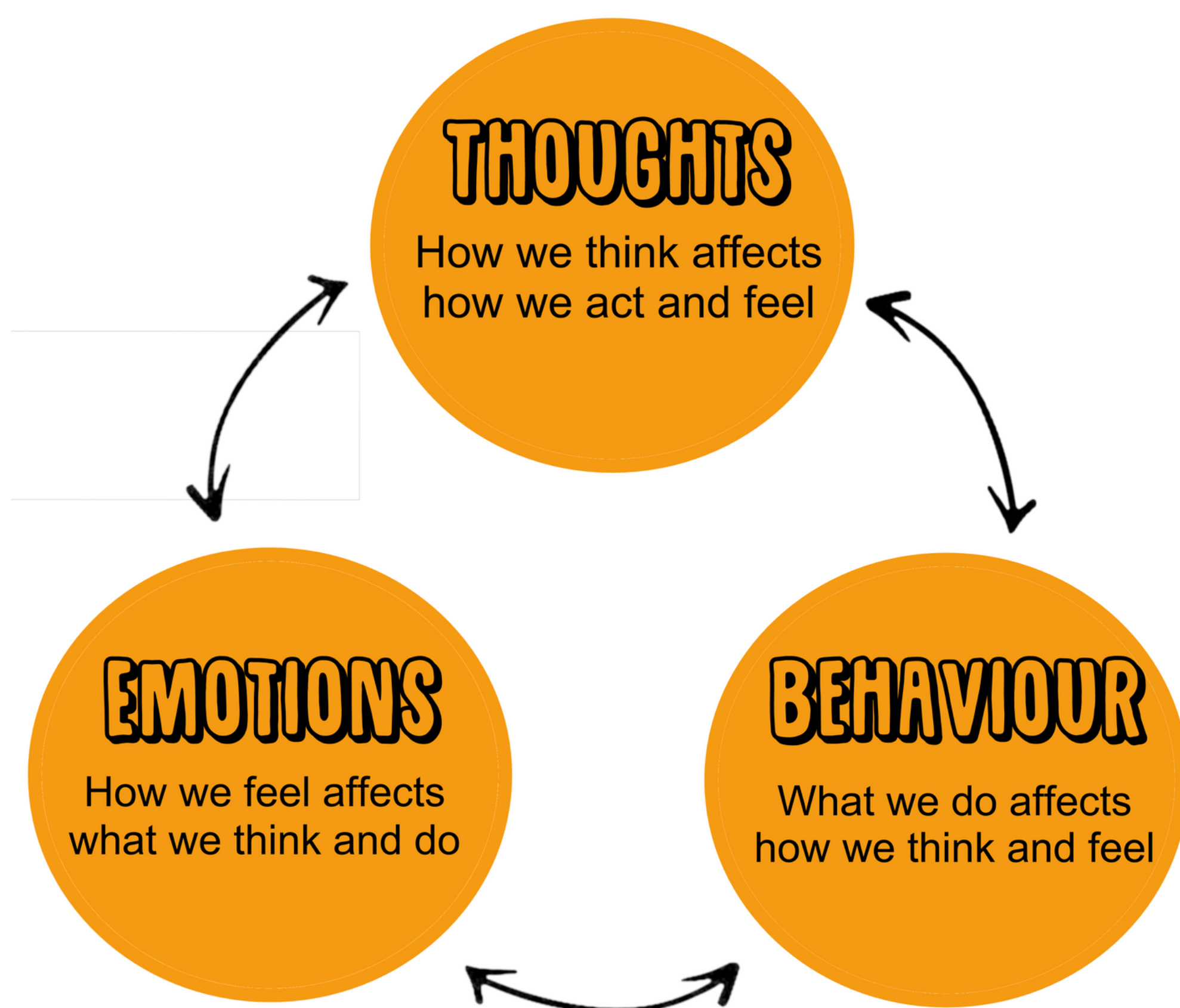
Disgust



Sadness

Thoughts, Behavior and Emotions

Our emotions are linked with our thoughts and behaviour. This is also true for children, and it is essential for children to learn that the way they feel is linked to their thoughts, emotions and behaviour.



When children are more aware of this three-way process, they are more able to control extreme behaviours, emotional reactions and intrusive thoughts.

What can we do to support our children's Emotional Health?

- It is important to listen and give your full attention to your children when they are talking to you.
- Understand ourselves as parents and how we handle our emotions; we are role models to our children. Therefore, our children learn a lot about managing their emotions and feelings through us.
- We as parents need to respect their feelings, thoughts and opinions.
- Learn about emotions and why and how children show those emotions
- Learn about how we as parents can support our children to process their thoughts and emotions to encourage them to regulate their feelings.



Talking with Children

In order to engage with our children effectively, as parents and guardians, we also need to think about how we communicate with our children.

Reflective listening and talking:

Reflective listening is a valuable way to help you listen effectively to your child. When a child feels like they are being heard, it supports and helps them develop the confidence to express themselves and talk about their emotions and feelings with you.

Sometimes when we talk to our children, we quickly reassure our child away from negative thoughts and feelings or go into “problem-solving” mode.

Here’s an example:

Child: “I was so bad at sports practice today”

Adult: “Don’t be silly, you did great. I saw you throwing the ball so well!”

Child: “No, I hate sports! I was so bad with the ball!”

Adult: “Oh come on, you don’t hate it; I know you love sports and last week you did great at practice.”

Child: “No, I hate it and I never want to play sports ever again”.

This is a typical and expected response, and as parents, we think we are doing the right thing by encouraging our children. However, what this approach can result in is:

- Making our children feel like their thoughts and feelings don't matter.
- That we as adults don't listen to our child's feelings or emotions.
- Teaching our child that admitting feelings and vulnerabilities is wrong.
- Making our children feel like the way they view their emotions and feelings is not important.

In order to properly support our children and show them that we are listening to them and that their thoughts and opinions are valid, we should encourage our children to express their feelings and emotions.

We do this by using the reflective listening approach and allowing them to REFLECT on what they are saying and feeling.



Instead, when talking with your child, try simply repeating what they say back to them, for example:

Child: "I was so bad at sports practice today!"

Adult: "Oh, you really think you were bad at practice?"

Child: "Yes, I was so bad today, and I couldn't catch the ball."

Adult: "So you found it hard to catch the ball?"

Child: "Yes, I was so bad; everyone was better than me."

Adult: "You feel like everyone was better than you? How does that make you feel?"

Child: "I was so mad when I couldn't catch the ball."

Adult: "I see, so you were angry when you didn't catch the ball. What else happened today at the practice?"

Child: Well, I did score a goal once. That was fun!"

Talking to our children like this shows them we are engaged and listening. It helps them to reflect and express how they are feeling. It also allows them to vocalise and rethink the situation and think about it. We as parents mustn't try to push our own opinions in such conversations, and we make sure we stay calm. By staying calm, we can show our children how to regulate a conversation and how to express themselves calmly and thoughtfully.

Talking begins with listening.

- Listen to your child when they are talking to you and always give them your full attention
- Try not to criticise and judge your child on what they say
- Repeat things back to your child, so they know you have heard them
- Try not to use words that make the child feel like they are overreacting
- Come back to topics at a later stage if the child needs more time to comprehend
- Small and frequent times listening to your child work great; revisiting topics is a perfect way for a child to process things.

Try to encourage your child to participate in open and honest conversations and discussions at home.

- This helps your child to feel like their voice is important
- It also helps the child gain confidence and resilience in expressing their thoughts and feelings.
- Being able to express yourself as an adult is a vital everyday tool needed in all areas of life.

Remember that the way your child is behaving at school or home and the emotions they express are part of your child's thoughts. It is important to try to understand what the child is thinking before we criticise their behaviour harshly.

Encourage your child to think outside the box.

Children, by nature, assume the worst and often exaggerate situations. This is ok, but as parents, we can support our children to look at things from a different perspective:

- Let your child express their strongest feelings and thoughts about things
- Then ask your child to think about what would be the best thing that could happen in that situation instead. (Let your child elaborate and exaggerate as much as they would like.)
- Finally, to show them what a realistic situation is like, ask your child to think about what is the most likely outcome in that situation.

Remember that all emotions, even the disappointing and scary ones are ok. We all need to experience every type of emotion to understand how our bodies and other people react to those emotions. It is essential to consider that we can not be happy and have everything going perfectly in our own or our children's lives. However, we can think about the healthiest ways our children and ourselves can handle those emotions and feelings and ways to calm those emotions.

This next section will look at the
following five emotions:

1. Happiness
2. Anger
3. Fear
4. Disgust
5. Sadness



HAPPINESS

As parents, we want our children to be happy, but what is happiness? Children may associate happiness with getting a toy they want, having candy or cake or playing a fun game. These are all short-term happiness moments. They make us feel happy for a while, but in an adult's life or a child's life, the most rewarding happiness is the long-term overriding feeling of being happy.

Lasting or long-term happiness in our lives comes from having good emotional and mental health. Experts believe that if a child has safety, survival, and basic comforts assured, then a child's happiness is not significantly impacted by external factors such as material goods, games, toys, and delicious foods. A child's happiness comes through practice and habitual learning of being happy. As parents, we can support our children to understand happiness, how to feel happy and teach our children that they are in control of their own happiness.

As caregivers for our children, it is important that we look after ourselves and set an example of how to be happy. Children will see our happiness and accept that being happy is how they should be in their lives. So as parents, if we take care of ourselves and make our own lives happy and fulfilling, we are also supporting our children to learn what long-term happiness is.

A child's level of happiness is also improved through having good close relationships with their caregivers. When a child has a good relationship with those who care for them, usually their parent or parents, it improves their self-esteem and shows them a precedent for relationships and friendships in their lives and life as an adult. Having good relationships with friends, work, colleagues, and the world around us is vital for long term happiness.

As parents, we can encourage and set an example of routine and habits which promote positive mental health and happiness:

- Creating a regular bed routine and time- Sleep is essential for emotional stability and happiness.
- Eating healthy, nutritious foods to feed our bodies and minds.
- Spend quality time regularly together with no distractions.

Create Healthy Habit habits and show that being active is an excellent addition to their lives. Short walks, playing in the park, Swimming or even just Kicking or throwing a ball around.

Sunlight and Happiness

Try to exercise regularly outdoors with your children, even if it's just 20 minutes a day outside in the sun. Of course, in winter in Finland, it is hard to be in the sun but try and keep active outdoors as much as possible.

- Sunlight helps us produce the happy hormone serotonin, which boosts our feelings of happiness.
- It also supports the sleep hormone Melatonin. So being outdoors in the sun can also boost and support your and your child's sleep routine.
- The sun is also a source of Vitamin D, which is essential for bone strength but also for our brains.

ANGER

The feeling of anger is a natural human reaction. Everyone will experience anger at times, and it is an important emotion as it can protect a person from harm and danger. If the person is not in control of their anger, however, it can easily turn into aggression. Out of control anger and aggression can be very harmful to the individual themselves and the people around them. Therefore, it is important to learn productive and safe ways to face one's feelings of anger early on.

At the same time expressing our anger quite freely is just as important. Anger can be an extremely uncomfortable feeling, but if not released the feeling can manifest into a bigger problem. It is necessary to be able to recognize the cause of the anger. Usually, problems begin to arise when we fail to recognize the cause and direct our anger towards something or someone else than the initiator.

Why it happens:

Often there is another strong emotion causing the feeling of anger. Regardless of age, we might first feel shame, fear or disappointment for example, but turn that initial emotion into anger. Anger can work as a defence mechanism when we feel vulnerable, but do not want others to see it. We might also think that our anger will work as a tool to scare someone away from us when in fact, we are scared of them.

With young children, anger often hides behind the feeling of wanting something. Children are learning to control their impulses and recognize the difference between wanting and needing something. The difference between the two can be difficult for them to spot and so regardless they often react to not immediately getting their way by getting angry.

How it manifests:

There are many names to describe anger. Those can be for example irritated, furious, annoyed, bitter, moody, cross, frustrated and so on. Many of the names might describe the seriousness of one's anger or even give a hint to the cause of it.

Anger makes adults and children react physically by often making heart rates faster, pupils wider and muscles stiff. We might bite our lip or clutch our fingers into a fist. We may need to do something physical to release all the pressure of feeling angry. Children often release it by screaming or crying, maybe both. Sometimes children might resort to more physical actions such as kicking, hitting or biting. This is something that we as adults have to support and teach them to stop. A lot of the time, after being angry the child might need closeness and reassurance. They want to be held. The overflow of physical reactions can also make the child very tired.

As mentioned before, experiencing and expressing anger is important. Working with ways of expressing anger can be a lifelong process, as the reasons for our anger and the way we react also evolve as we grow older. If we do not learn to share and analyze our feelings of anger or end up always suppressing it, there can be both physical and mental health-related consequences. Suppressing anger can lead to depression, anxiety, distortion of self-image and physical pain amongst others.

Healthy ways to handle anger:

When dealing with an angry child it is important that we as adults do not respond back with anger. Compassion and calm mannerism are the way to move forward. Children pay attention to what happens around them and they can easily pick up the traits of others when they are angry. It is good for adults living with children to be aware of this.

Being angry is allowed and this should be explained to the child. Anger is not something a child should be ashamed of. However, being angry does not give a free pass to do or say whatever they want. As adults, we should calmly explain to the child that there is something behind that anger that made them angry. Stick to the cause; Where does it come from? What could be done about it? Why does it anger the child? Talking about the cause, drawing it and writing about it can help.

Children might find it difficult to actually word their anger. In this case, adults should help the child by using reflective questions like: “It seems like you got angry because you did badly in sports?” or “Do you feel angry because you didn’t get what you wanted?” In addition to supporting the child in understanding the cause of their anger, it is the adult’s job to reassure the child that their feeling of anger is normal and it does not anger the adult or make them scared of the child.

It is good to agree to things that the child can do when they get angry. In the height of anger, likely, they will not be able to sit still and reflect. They might need a moment to let the steam out. You can for example agree on a word in which the child can indicate their growing anger. Maybe agree on a place inside or outside of the house where the child can go to cool down. You could also have some items available that the child can use to release some of the physical tension, like a ball to kick or throw around.

In case your child said or did things in the heat of the moment, it is good to explain and practice the importance of apologising and admitting their behaviour. It should not be encouraged for the child to do name-calling or use otherwise hurtful language, but if this happens the child should also learn to apologize for their actions from an early age.

If a child reacts to anger with increasing aggressiveness, you should always approach professionals. There are tips for whom to contact at the end of this booklet.

FEAR

Fear is an instinctual emotion that responds to physical, emotional, or psychological harm, whether real or imagined. Despite being viewed traditionally as a "negative" emotion, fear serves an important purpose in protecting us as it activates us to handle the potential danger and to survive. There are many different words we use to express a fearful emotion based on the intensity of the feeling, like anxiety, dread, panic or terror. In some cases, fear can occur immediately after being surprised, and it can correlate with anger.

Why it happens:

Threats of harm, regardless of whether they are real or imagined, trigger fear for all of us. When we sense danger or a threat of harm, our brain focuses our attention and heightens our senses to help us act fast and prevent whatever harm we perceive might happen to us. The fear reaction is faster than our conscious thinking so it can save our lives by making us act instantly without wasting a precious moment on thinking. Once the fear reaction is activated and our senses are heightened, we can safely assess and evaluate the perceived danger. Only then can we determine if the threat is real or not and our fear response can deactivate. If the threat is real, we can then start figuring out the best course of action to get out of the fearful situation.

While there are universal things that cause fear in most people, anything can make us feel afraid. Sometimes loud noise can startle us and cause a fear reaction even though there is no danger but as soon as we realise there is no real reason to be afraid, the fear response goes away.

How it manifests:

Fear and surprise emotions have somewhat similar facial expressions and can be confused with one another. Typically, we can recognise these emotions through a universal facial expression of raised eyebrows, eyes "wide with fear", stretched nostrils and tense lips usually pointing slightly downward. The body normally reacts to fear with increased heartbeat, trembling, sweating, fast breathing and tightening of muscles, especially in the arms and legs. When we are afraid, all of our senses are heightened to help us find the best way to respond to what made us scared. We can respond to fear in 4 different ways: FIGHT - when fear activates intense anger motivating us for a physical or verbal altercation; FLIGHT - when our brain determines we cannot fight off the threat, it will activate us to run away from danger; FREEZE - when the brain instructs the body to remain perfectly still until the danger passes; and FAWN - when fear forces us to try to please our aggressor and keep them as happy as possible to reduce the risk of harm.

Healthy ways to handle fear:

Fear is a healthy response that keeps us safe and out of danger. Some fears are normal during childhood, they are a natural response based on the child's vulnerability and inexperience. By gently and carefully teaching your child how to deal with their fears without their parent's involvement, you allow them to develop the confidence and independence they need to feel more in control, and less scared. Emotional awareness and regulation is the first step towards this goal. When we understand why we feel a certain way, it's easier to learn how to deal with the feeling when it occurs. You can help your child talk out what makes them afraid and why by using reflective listening and empathising with their emotions instead of trying to "fix" them or tell them they have nothing to be afraid about.

Once both you and your child know what is making them scared and why, you as an adult need to acknowledge their fear and help them move on by talking about ways you can get braver together. Make a plan on what to do next time when they encounter the thing that scared them. If it is a reoccurring fear (like fear of the dark or being alone), set some goals together on how they will overcome that fear and what amount of time it will take. Most importantly, be patient and consistent but also give praise for their hard work and effort.

Note: If you notice frequent and strong fear responses without actual danger present, this might point to anxiety and you should talk to a professional about it.

DISGUST

Although it might seem weird at the first glance, disgust is one of six core human emotions. It is a physical rejection of a thing we perceive to be “bad” in some way. Usually, food and digestion, bodily wastes and carriers of the disease are the causes that trigger this emotion in us to protect us from harm. It starts at infancy, even very young babies can show disgust to certain things but it matures into its final form between ages 4-8. Disgust as an emotion is tied to our sensory experience but also the idea or meaning of something can cause disgust.

Disgust used to be a crucial emotion for our survival, telling us to be mindful of foods that can harm us, animals that carry diseases and unhygienic conditions that can make us sick. As we evolve, so does this emotion. With the increased knowledge of what's safe and what isn't, the feeling of physical disgust evolved into moral disgust. Nowadays, disgust can also be triggered by things and actions we perceive to be morally or socially wrong.

Why it happens:

As we mentioned above, disgust is a biologically instinctive response to things that could cause harm to us or make us sick. It is important because it has a great protective value for the survival and continuation of our species due to its role in the avoidance of poisons, diseases, parasites and other contaminants. The development of our food preferences, as well as certain psychological disorders such as obsessive-compulsive disorder and phobias, are all connected to or influenced by the feeling of disgust.

Since disgust develops and evolves during one's growing up, it is tightly associated with morality as the person ages. Distaste is the first to emerge in the earliest years of our lives, followed by core disgust and the development of taste preferences. After that, in our teenage years, we develop interpersonal disgust and, finally, as adults, socio-moral disgust that influences the formation of cultural attitudes, policies, and laws.

How it manifests:

Physical disgust is a basic emotion with facial signals that can be very easily recognized by observers from an early age. Frowning, crinkled nose, eyes narrow or closed, mouth turned downward with raised upper lip, sometimes with tongue sticking out are all very distinct and universal facial signs someone is disgusted. It can also cause queasiness, nausea and vomiting depending on how sensitive a person is to this emotion.

Senses also play a great part in feeling disgust. Sight, smell, noise, taste or touch can be the trigger that makes us feel disgusted. Considering that people have different thresholds for different senses, it is important to know how sensitive each of our senses can be. Something that smells pleasant to one person, can cause disgust to another. Being aware of our most delicate senses can help us understand and avoid triggers that make us feel disgusted.

Healthy ways to handle disgust:

Although it is not an emotion that can cause harm if left unchecked, it is certainly not a pleasant feeling for children or adults to have and it can also be especially annoying for others around us. There are several things we can do to have greater control over this emotion.

Firstly, it may help to examine the sensitivity of our child's or our own senses. If we know that we react more to smells than touch, for example, we can work around that delicate sense to remove the thing that triggers this kind of response. It also makes it easier for us to determine where and how the feeling originated.

Secondly, we can re-examine what particular things trigger these responses in us. Knowing what specific things make your child feel disgusted can in turn help you to think about, and consider if the disgust they feel is justified. Sometimes, things that trigger disgust in us are not actually dangerous or harmful to our wellbeing.

Thirdly, at a point when disgust comes in the way of a person's basic functioning (such as with psychological disorders), the usual therapy psychologists apply is gradual exposure to the deterrent until the person is no longer disgusted by it.

SADNESS

Sadness is a powerful emotion. Like with many other emotions, people react to sadness individually. My sadness might look very different to yours. It is important not to confuse depression with sadness. Many people struggling with depression may experience sadness as a symptom of their depression, but not all sad people are depressed. If your feeling of sadness becomes prolonged and you feel like your other emotions are constantly being overshadowed by sadness, it would be recommended to consult a professional for their opinion and guidance.

Why it happens:

A lot of the time sadness is a consequence of a loss. We might have lost a friend, ended a relationship or someone close to us might have died. After the loss of someone, we might initially feel shocked. What we know has happened does not resonate with our brain or it just does not feel real. In shock, children and adults may act the complete opposite way than we would have imagined. Some people can stay very clear-headed and seem very indifferent, when others completely lose control of their emotions and even physical abilities.

After we have overcome our shock, sadness will follow. The length of the period of sadness and mourning differs with every child and adult. We may experience feelings of uncertainty about the future, abandonment and even guilt on top of many others. Sadness is a part of the healing process, and adults or children who experience this process successfully will know that the feeling will eventually end. They know that there is happiness at the end of the tunnel. If a person's healing process is unsuccessful, they might be unable to overcome their sadness. This may indicate depression.

How it manifests:

Children are often unable to put their sadness to words. They require a lot of support from adults in understanding their sadness and working through it. When a child loses someone important to them, they should be told about the event as honestly as possible, but also in a way that takes their capabilities of understanding and processing of the event in consideration. The details that are unknown to the child are usually filled by their imagination. Many times their imagination may be a lot scarier than the real event.

When sad, we can become apathetic, restless and agitated. Our moods might change often. Sadness can come with physical pain on top of other symptoms. Some of us may feel physically sick or have pain in our stomachs. Crying is common to occur when sad. Our mouths might feel dry, and it might feel like there is something stuck in our throats. There might be shortness of breath, chest pain and lightheadedness. These are just some of the physical symptoms that may arise. There are many more.

Sadness usually comes in waves. One day it can feel overwhelming to do anything, when on other days it may feel like we have finally overcome our sadness. As more time passes from the event that caused our sadness, the better we begin to feel. Relapses may still happen even after a long time of feeling happy. One day after weeks of not thinking about the event or feeling sad, children and adults alike may suddenly feel the need to cry about it again. In time these relapses will stop. If you feel that your healing period has prolonged and you still feel sad after a significant amount of time has passed, do contact a professional for further support.

Healthy ways to handle sadness:

With a child it is important to help them to word their sadness. An adult should be present, listen to the child, explain what has happened and create different ways in which the child can express their sadness, if words are of no use. These ways can be for example, listening to music, drawing (using colors that the child experiences as colors of sadness, drawing shapes of sadness, or just a mess of sadness), looking at photos of the person or item that was lost. You can talk about the happy memories that you have. You can remind yourselves of all the great things you still have in your life: Family, friends, school or kindergarten, pets etc. You should give time to heal and not try and rush it.

Sometimes the adult might also be so grief-stricken by the same event that it is difficult for them to support the child. There are professionals that can help children process their sadness if the adults closest to them feel that they are not up to the task to their best abilities. For further information about outside support please see suggestions at the end of the booklet.

HELPFUL TIPS AND TALKING POINTS:

If you experience difficulties in getting your child to begin working on the activities, try and peak their interest by talking about the story and encouraging them to reflect their behaviour against Jessy's.

Here are a few tips to help you begin:

HAPPINESS STORY:

Question to ask your child:

Why do you think Jessy was happy in the morning?

Possible Answers:

- Jessy had slept well and was not tired when waking up
- Jessy might have had some nice dreams
- The weather outside was very nice
- The breakfast was ready on the table, and it seemed that Jessy really liked porridge and orange juice
- Jessy was excited about the day ahead

1. What makes you happy?
2. Can people see by looking at you that you are happy?
3. Can people hear by talking to you that you are happy?
4. What does it feel like in your body when you are happy?
5. If happiness would be a colour or a picture, what would it be?

ANGER STORY:

Question to ask your child:

Why do you think Jessy got angry for Rene being added to their group?

Answers:

- They had already shared all tasks with Cleo
- Jessy wanted to use the magnifying glass
- Maybe Jessy finds it difficult when changes are made to plans at the last minute
- Maybe Jessy and Rene are not good friends

Question to ask your child:

What do you think about Jessy getting so angry?

Talking Points with Child:

1. What makes you angry?
2. Can people see by looking at you that you are angry?
3. Can people hear by talking to you that you are angry?
4. How does it feel like in your body when you are angry?
5. If anger would be a color or a picture, what would it be?

FEAR STORY:

Questions to ask your child:

Why was Jessy Afraid?

What are you afraid of?

How does fear make you act?

- Do you freeze like Jessy?
- Do you run away?
- Do you get angry or start crying?

What does it feel like in your body when you are afraid?

If fear would be a colour or a picture, what would it be?

What helps you to get over the feeling of fear?

- Closing your eyes?
- Covering your ears?
- Hiding somewhere?
- Telling someone you are afraid?
- To not be alone?

DISGUST STORY:

What do you think about Jessy's reaction to disgust?

Why do you think Cleo stopped eating?

What might you find disgusting?

- A smell
- A taste
- Something you touch
- Something you hear
 - Fart
 - Someone telling a nasty story
 - A high pitch sound
- Something you see
 - An insect
 - Blood
 - Someone getting ill

Can people see by looking at you that you are disgusted?

Can people hear by talking to you that you are disgusted?

What does it feel like in your body when you are disgusted?

If disgust would be a colour or a picture, what would it be?

SADNESS STORY:

Questions to ask your child:

- Why was Jessy Sad?

Do you have a stuffed animal or perhaps a blanket you like to sleep with?

What is it? Does it have a name? Why that item?

Do you have a favourite toy you like to play with? What is it?

Why is that your favourite over others?

How would you feel if your favourite toy suddenly went missing?

- Can people see by looking at you that you are sad?
- Can people hear by talking to you that you are sad?
- What does it feel like in your body when you are sad?
- If sadness would be a colour or a picture, what would it be?

SELF-CARE TIPS FOR ADULTS

Children are quick to pick up on their parent's mood. If we are stressed and unhappy children sense this. It is essential that parents take care of ourselves and our own mental well-being. Below are some self-help tips to take care of ourselves and promote mental health and wellbeing on a day to day basis.

Keep to Routine:

Waking up at the same time each morning, regular meal times and daily walks can all help to build a routine. Routines take the worry and stress away from making decisions on the spot. Planning a schedule for your week and getting your children involved in the planning can be a fun and practical activity.

Try to be Active:

Time to exercise and unwind on your own, is crucial for your body and mind. If you don't have time to be on your own, going out with your children and enjoying the outdoors together can be a fun activity. Being outside destresses us and helps clear our minds.

Do something you enjoy:

Put time aside for yourself to do something you love. Whether it is watching an episode from your favourite show, reading a book or doing a craft, doing something we enjoy and love can help increase self-esteem and promote happiness.

Sleep well to feel well:

Sleep is essential to our mood and wellbeing. If you are struggling to sleep, try to:

- Try to exercise daily, even if it is just 10 or 20 minutes a day.
- Avoid using your phone and other screens before bed. Experts recommend not to look at your screen for an hour or two before bed.
- Avoid consuming or drinking caffeine and sugary foods late in the afternoon and evenings.

Maintain and Build Relationships:

Try to keep in touch with family and friends, or concentrate on building new friendships. Sharing and vocalising our problems and experiences with other people can help to process thoughts and feelings. If you feel you don't have anyone to talk to, there are many peer groups for families and parents and activities you can join or try to find new connections.

Relaxation and Mindful Activities:

It's really good to take a moment to be present and focus on yourself and the world around you. There are many great tools and resources to practice mindfulness and relaxation online, and you can also find videos for a variety of exercises for free on youtube.

FURTHER SUPPORT

You can always consult the teachers and staff at your child's early education center or school regarding the child/student welfare professionals they have in your use.

You can also contact your local medical center for further information regarding local opportunities.

Here are a few further organizations to consider if needed in the Helsinki region:

FAMILIA RY

Supporting the wellbeing of intercultural families by offering peer support and volunteer activities, information, and advice.

www.familiary.fi/en



MIELI

MIELI Mental Health Finland is a mental health organisation whose mission is to promote mental health, provide crisis support and prevent mental health issues.

www.mieli.fi/en



CITY OF HELSINKI

Support, further reading and links related to health and wellbeing aimed for families with children.

www.hel.fi/sote/perheentuki-en



MANERHEIM LEAGUE FOR CHILD WELFARE

Promote the wellbeing of children and of families with children, increases respect for childhood and seeks to make it more visible, and sees that children's views are taken into account.

www.mll.fi/en



CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

Lastensuojelu.info offers information about child welfare in a number of languages. It is specifically written for immigrant parents and professionals working with them.

www.lastensuojelu.info/en



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