



Emotion Coaching: A Simple Guide for Parents

Emotion Coaching is a parenting approach developed by John Gottman that helps children learn to understand and manage their emotions. Young children are still developing the brain skills needed for self-control and problem-solving, so they rely on caring adults to guide them through big feelings.

Emotion Coaching does **not** mean allowing negative behavior — it means accepting emotions while teaching appropriate responses.

Why It Matters

Children whose caregivers respond calmly and supportively tend to:

- ✓ Regulate emotions more easily
- ✓ Develop stronger social skills
- ✓ Build confidence
- ✓ Handle stress better

When children feel understood, they calm down faster and learn that expressing emotions is safe.



The Emotion Coaching Flow Chart

Child shows a big emotion →



1. Notice

Pause and observe what your child might be feeling.



2. Connect

Get down to their level, use a calm voice, and offer your presence.

"I see something is bothering you."



3. Validate

Let them know their feeling makes sense.

"That was really disappointing."

"I understand why you feel upset."



4. Name the Emotion

Help build emotional vocabulary.

"You seem frustrated."

"Are you feeling nervous?"



5. Set Limits + Problem-Solve

All feelings are okay — not all behaviors are.

"It's okay to be mad, but I can't let you hit. Let's find another way to show me."



✓ **Result: Child learns emotional skills for life**

What This Looks Like in Everyday Moments



Instead of: “Stop crying.”

👉 Try: *“I know that was hard. I’m right here.”*

Instead of: “You’re fine.”

👉 Try: *“That surprised you! Do you want a hug?”*

Instead of: “Calm down.”

👉 Try: *“Let’s help your body calm together.”*

A Helpful Reminder

You do not have to respond perfectly every time. What matters most is being **warm, consistent, and willing to reconnect** after hard moments.

👉 Progress — not perfection — supports emotional growth.

When to Seek Extra Support

Consider consulting a pediatrician or child development professional if your child:

- Has frequent, intense meltdowns
- Struggles to recover after becoming upset
- Shows sudden behavioral changes

Early support can make a meaningful difference.

The Goal

Over time, Emotion Coaching teaches children:

- ✓ “My feelings matter.”
- ✓ “I can handle challenges.”
- ✓ “Someone is here to help me.”

These beliefs form the foundation for lifelong emotional health.

References:

<https://www.gottman.com/parenting/>