

HANDOUT 2B**Behavior Plan Sample for Older Children**

Goal behavior: Clean room Week of: _____ March 5, 2025 _____

Responsibilities	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs
1. Put clean clothes in dresser					
2. Put dirty clothes in hamper					
3. Make bed					
4. Put toys/games in bin					
5. Put books on bookshelf					
Total Daily Checks					

I, Talia, will check off each of my responsibilities listed on the chart after it is done each day. At the end of the week, if I have 5 checks on 4 out of 5 days, I will receive an incentive from the list below.

Child's signature

I, Mom, will check each day at 9:00 p.m. to note whether Talia has completed the responsibilities listed in the plan above. At the end of the week, if there are 5 checks on 4 out of 5 days, I will provide an incentive from the list below.

Parent's signature

Incentive List

1. 30 minutes of video games one night
2. Having a friend over during the weekend
3. Choice of dinner
4. Playing a game with me or dad
5. Other: _____

SESSION 3

Emotion Coaching

OVERVIEW

Identifying and understanding emotions are skills that children learn over time. Over the course of development, children learn that having emotions is part of life and that emotions should not be ignored, avoided, or suppressed. Parents can help their children learn emotion regulation and effective coping skills by practicing emotion coaching. Emotion coaching helps children understand and label the different emotions they experience, understand why they are having these emotions, and successfully manage their emotions.

All children experience both pleasant and unpleasant emotions, ranging from happiness and excitement, to sadness, jealousy, and anger. Emotion coaching helps children learn how to regulate and cope with unpleasant feelings so they can respond in a constructive way, while also strengthening their social and problem-solving skills. A child's capacity to manage their emotions in constructive ways is linked to many positive outcomes later in life, including self-regulation, improved relationships, behaviors, functioning in school and at work, and general well-being.

SESSION GOALS

- Understand rationale for emotion coaching
- Understand emotion coaching steps
- Know the Dos and Don'ts of emotion coaching
- Practice emotion coaching
- Explore barriers to using emotion coaching

TEACH

Rationale

Emotion coaching has many benefits for families. Some of these are listed next.

Benefits for Children

- Promotes self-awareness of their emotions
- Improves emotion regulation
- Reduces behavioral problems
- Improves problem solving, decision making, and conflict-resolution skills
- Increases resiliency
- Improves relationships with parents as well as peers and others
- Long-term benefits, such as happier relationships and increased job satisfaction

Benefits for Parents

- Increases effective parent–child communication
- Increases efficacy for managing stressful situations
- Improves parent–child relationships

Emotion Coaching Steps

There are five steps to emotion coaching.

The *first step* is to recognize when your child is experiencing an intense emotion. Pay attention to changes in body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. When children experience intense emotions, it is a great opportunity to connect with the child and strengthen the parent–child relationship. However, parents might dismiss the emotion by not paying attention or saying something like “It is no big deal. There is no reason to be upset.” Although parents might say this because they want to make their child feel better, children can experience such a statement as dismissive and suggesting that their feelings do not matter.

The *second step* in emotion coaching is for parents to recognize the child’s expression of emotion as an opportunity for connection with their child. Open communication along with close and caring relationships with parents will help children tolerate and manage difficult feelings. When a parent is attuned to their child’s emotions, it conveys to the child that all emotions are okay and encourages children to talk about their emotions. In response, the parent listens to their child and acknowledges their emotions.

The *third step* in emotion coaching is listening to and validating your child’s emotion. When listening, just listen and do not try to fix the problem or make the child feel better by dismissing their emotions. The goal is to create a safe space that will encourage children to share without concern about being judged for how they are feeling. For example, the parent can say, “I understand why you are upset about losing the game. You have been practicing

really hard and this game was important to you.” Parents can invite children to talk about their emotions and listen actively to what they say.

The *fourth step* is to help children label or name the feeling: “It sounds like you might be feeling angry. Is that right?” Labeling an emotion can help a child feel heard and understood by their parent and help them to manage and process their emotion. Children may not have the words that they need to talk about their emotions. Helping children put words to their emotions helps them to identify their emotions, which is an important step in helping children manage and process their feelings.

The *fifth and final step* in emotion coaching involves the parent working together with the child to explore good solutions to the problem that led to the child’s unpleasant feeling. Managing emotions takes some practice. While feelings are never wrong, children sometimes express emotions in ways that are not constructive. Parents and children can problem solve alternative and more adaptive ways to express their emotions.

Emotion Coaching Don’ts

- *Don’t judge or criticize.* Directly or indirectly conveying to a child that they are wrong for having the emotions they are having, or telling them how they should feel, can lead to children experiencing shame for their feelings, or for having feelings more generally. For example, phrases such as “Quit whining, you’re fine” are judgmental and critical and may result in a child feeling ashamed for their emotions.
- *Don’t minimize.* Downplaying a child’s feeling with phrases such as “it’s not that bad; it’ll be fine” does the opposite of validating children for their feelings. It can make them feel frustrated and misunderstood and lead them to not trust themselves and their feelings, creating problems for them in relationships with others.
- *Don’t force sharing.* It is important that parents create a safe, nonjudgmental space for children and make themselves available to hear what their child wants to say. When children do share, it offers parents the opportunity to listen. However, even when a parent creates a safe, nonjudgmental space, a child may not want to talk about their feelings or why they are having them. Respecting a child’s boundaries in these situations is a critical component of emotion coaching. Parents may take it personally if their child does not want to share in the moment. Parents should try to be aware if this is happening and, if so, remind themselves that their child may not feel ready to share. Deciding when and what to share can help the child feel in control and more confident in their capacity to manage their own emotions.
- *Don’t force problem solving.* When children are overcome with emotion, their ability to reason may be impacted. They may be reactive and unable to calm down, which will get in the way of the parent helping them

explore constructive ways to manage their emotions and resolve the problem that led to their emotions. In these situations, the parent will be most effective as an emotion coach if they give their child the space they need to calm down and return to the problem solving at a later time.

Parent Reflection

- Which step will be easiest for you, and why? What are your strengths in the area of managing your own emotions?
- When you think about practicing each of the emotion coaching steps, what are some challenges you anticipate? What might help you overcome these challenges?

MODEL

In this section, we first demonstrate a parent using emotion coaching the wrong way for a particular scenario. Then, we demonstrate a parent using emotion coaching the right way for the same scenario. Modeling the wrong way as well as the right way to use a skill can be an effective tool in highlighting how to do a skill.

Scenario

A parent picks up their 12-year-old child at middle school. The parent sees that their child is upset from their facial expression and body language. The child gets in car, slams car door, and says “I want to go home now.”

Wrong Way Role Play: Emotion Coaching

Parent: What is wrong? Why are you slamming the door?

Child: Forget it—I don’t want to talk about it!

Parent: Why not? I think it is clear you are mad; tell me what happened.
(Not respecting child’s boundaries.)

Child: I said I don’t want to talk about it.

Parent: You should try to calm down at school; there is no reason to get so upset. I am sure everything will be fine. (Criticizing, judging, minimizing.)

Child: You don’t even know what happened!

Parent: Let’s talk about ways you can manage your temper and what to do next. (Problem solving too soon.)