



Understanding Emotions and
Supporting Behaviour at St Pauls
Nursery School & Children's Centre

A guide to Emotion Coaching



Behaviour is Communication

At St Pauls Nursery School & Children's Centre we understand that children's behaviour is a communicator of their feelings, unmet needs and experiences. Young children often do not have the language or the ability to articulate their feelings and needs with words so they often behave their emotions.



Co-Regulation

Young children are not yet able to regulate their own emotions and behaviours by themselves. They are reliant on adults to tune in to them and co-regulate them.

Co-regulation relies on the adult having a calm nervous system themselves. The adult 'lends' the child their calm.

Children who are effectively co-regulated by adults who are emotionally in tune with them will be more able to self-regulate over time.



BE A 'STAR' FOR YOUR CHILD

- S** **STOP** - Don't react straight away. Notice how *you* are feeling.
- T** **THINK** - What feeling might lie beneath the child's behaviour?
- A** **ATTUNE** yourself with the feeling by putting yourself in the child's shoes.
- R** **REFLECT** - What would be an equivalent situation for you, as an adult, to feel that way?

4 steps of Emotion Coaching

Step 1

Recognising the child's feelings and empathising with them

Step 2

Validating the feelings and labelling them

Step 3

Setting expectations on behaviour (if needed)

Step 4

Problem-solve with the child

The behaviour we see is often the tip of the iceberg. We need to be curious about what is happening beneath the surface. Did our child have enough sleep? Are they hungry? Is there a change at home or at school that could be making them feel anxious?

Emotion Coaching

At St Pauls, adults offer a high empathy, high guidance approach called Emotion Coaching.

This approach supports children's emotional wellbeing by noticing, validating and labelling their emotions for them and helping them to find solutions and solve problems.

Feeling understood is key to being happy, resilient and well adjusted.

Using an Emotion Coaching approach can help you and your child to feel more connected to one another.



Recognise children's emotions as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching

Be aware of your child's emotions

Set limits on behaviour and help to solve problems



Setting expectations and helping children to solve problems is an opportunity to remind children about what is acceptable behaviour and what they could do differently next time a similar situation arises.

Focus on the behaviour and boundaries the child needs to understand. Using kind and respectful language helps maintain a child's dignity and acknowledges that young children are still learning what is and isn't ok. Using the language of safety helps communicate you care about the child. For example "It isn't safe to throw things inside, I won't let you throw things because I need to keep you safe"



If you would like to learn more about Emotion Coaching please talk to Amber, Hayley, or your child's key person.



Listen with empathy and validate your child's feelings

Young children cannot always tell you what they are feeling. They need you to help them do this. By giving children the words to describe their feelings you are showing them you have understood them and you care.

Be aware of your tone and body language. Use phrases like: "I wonder if you're feeling cross because I said bath time is finishes. You had so much fun playing in the water didn't you"

Help your child learn to label their emotions with words

To learn more about Emotion Coaching, please look at Lucy's video on our website!

