

"HELP! My Child is REALLY Upset"

How to keep your cool (and really help) when your child's intense emotions and behavior set off the alarm bells in your nervous system.



Reframe

Get Calm

Connect

Be an Emotion Coach

Follow-Through

Follow-Up

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First Things First: **Reframe**

Remind yourself:

-  "My child is doing the best they can to communicate a real need."
-  "This desperate behavior is not intentional or manipulative."
-  "My child is "stuck" and needs my help to reset."
-  "It's great (and healthy) that my child feels safe enough to express their needs and feelings."


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Second: **Get Calm**


Stay in your rational brain:

-  Solve a math problem or think of your parent's phone number

Stay in your body:

-  Press both feet firmly into the floor and take 3 slow breaths

Stay positive:

-  Trust that you have the ability to soothe and support your child



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Thirdly: **Connect**

Get close and curious:

-  Make eye contact with soft facial features and body language
-  Ask questions and seek to understand your child's experience

Soothe with presence and touch:




-  Share your calm through co-regulation and compassion.
-  Offer to hold hands or rub their back (with consent)

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Fourth: Be an Emotion Coach 1

Listen to feelings:





-  Understand that feelings are neutral data which are expressed in words or actions that are often intense
-  Validate experience, ask questions to deepen understanding.
-  Listen again, focusing on offering unconditional support and acceptance that doesn't attempt to fix, rush, or change emotions

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Fifth: Be an Emotion Coach 2

Label feelings:




-  Recognize the shift as the child begins to return to calm and clearer thinking
-  Identify feelings and discuss experience
-  Offer coaching through coping skills
-  Provide warm affection and reaffirm commitment to the team effort of continued practice

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Sixth: Follow-Through

Set limits, as necessary:





-  Calmly hold boundaries on anything related to safety or other immediate needs
-  Continue to provide loving support for any feelings that erupt from your limits
-  Remind yourself that leadership delivered with regulation and respect boosts connection and teaches skills

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Seventh: Follow-Up

Teach skills

-  Revisit experiences and discuss feelings, options for future occurrences
-  Identify unmet needs and missing skills
-  Meet needs and practice skills
-  Be realistic about skill mastery! Your child's development and distress tolerance influence their access to skills