

# Managing Emotional Outbursts!

## What are Emotional Outbursts?

Emotional Outbursts are when a child or young person has an outburst of emotion that is out of proportion to the situation or to their age. It is basically when everything gets too much and usually there is one thing that is just all too much, often referred to as the 'last straw'! This then results in an emotional outburst which could be uncontrollable tears, angry explosion and even self-harm.



If our emotions build up, they have to go somewhere. A way of thinking about this is to think of it in terms of an overflowing bucket, sometimes referred to as our 'stress bucket'. We all have a bucket which fills up with things we experience, e.g. not getting enough sleep, not getting on with a sibling. If we do not deal with the different experiences and do things to manage them, the bucket overflows. During this particular period everyone's buckets will be filling up quickly.

## How do I deal with Dysregulation? How do I deal with my child/young person when they are having an Emotional Outburst?

**Step 1: Recognise the Child's Feeling:** The first most important thing is to 'pause' and take some deep breaths so that you are in a calm place in order to deal with the situation. At this point it is really vital to look beyond the behaviour that they may be exhibiting (this won't be ignored and you can come back to this at a later stage) and identify how your child or young person may be feeling.

**Step 2: Validate the Feelings and Label them:** Before saying anything else, identify with your child or young person how they are feeling by naming the emotion. E.g. 'I can see you are frustrated because you can't go out', 'I can see that your brother has annoyed you', 'I can see that you are worried about your Grandad' etc. Show your child or young person that you understand ('get it') and that things are tough. E.g. 'Things are really difficult for you at the moment', 'It is really difficult'. At this stage you will need to give lots of reassurance.



**Step 3: Setting Limits on Behaviour:** Once you have shown your child or young person that you 'get it' then, if necessary, it is important at this stage to make clear any behaviour that is not acceptable. E.g. 'I understand that you are annoyed but it is not OK to hit your brother', 'I get you are frustrated but it is not OK to throw things'.



**Stage 4: Containment & Regulating:** It is very important to support your child to calm down through lots of reassurance. (This is easier said than done, but it is important at this stage not to continue to focus on the behaviour and not to discuss consequences). For a lot of children and young people this will involve you remaining with them. This may require, for example, giving them a hug, putting a hand on their shoulder, rubbing their back etc. or completing a calming activity together such as drawing and colouring or doing a job. For some children they may need to be given some space and perhaps have time on their own in their bedroom or garden. However, it is important that they know someone is nearby and that someone check-ins with them regularly.



## How do I follow up on Behaviour?

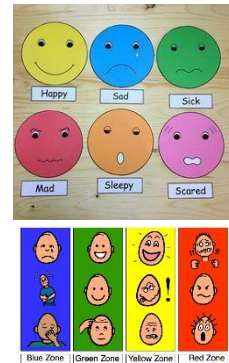
It is important that when a child/young person has an emotional outburst, any unacceptable behaviour is not ignored and that it is discussed with the child/young person and amends are made. The crucial part is to ensure that a conversation takes place when everyone is calm. It is important that the child/young person has the opportunity to say what happened and what they were thinking. It is important that the child/young person is told that it is OK to feel like they did but how they responded, e.g. kicking someone, breaking furniture, using unkind words, was not acceptable. A discussion then needs to follow about how they are going to make amends (this is where a consequence may come in) in the instant and what they could do next time they are feeling like this. The following table gives examples.

Question	Response
What happen? What were you thinking?	<p>It is OK to feel ..... because ....., but it is not OK to .....</p> <p><i>It is OK to get frustrated because you could not do your work but it was not OK to throw Lego Bricks which hit your brother.</i></p> <p><i>It is OK to be annoyed because I have taken your phone off you but it was not OK to shout and swear at me.</i></p>
What needs to happen now to put things right?	<p>If appropriate go with the child's/young person's suggestion to make amends. Also at this point discuss any appropriate consequence.</p> <p><i>I think for the rest of the week the Lego bricks move into your brothers' room for him to play with.</i></p> <p><i>I need to see that you are completing your school work during the day and your phone is a distraction. For the rest of the week I will look after it during the day and if your work is completed then you can have it in the evenings. We will review this next week.</i></p>
What could you do next time you are feeling like this?	<p>The child or young person may be able to come up with some suggestions but you may also need to suggest some.</p> <p><i>Next time you are feeling frustrated, go and run around the garden.</i></p> <p><i>Next time you are feeling annoyed with me, walk away and go to your room. When you are calm then can then talk about it.</i></p>

**How do I support my Child or Young Person to ensure their bucket does not overflow? How do I support my Child or Young Person so they don't have an Emotional Outburst?**

It is important to speak regularly throughout the day with your child or young person about how they are feeling. This is often referred to as a 'Check-In', where everyone checks in with how they are feeling. It is powerful for children to hear adults express how they are feeling. Check-In's can be done in a number of different ways, both formally and informally.

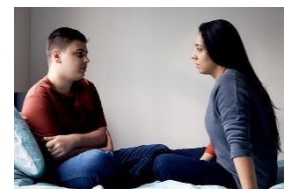
**Check-In Board:** Have a display of different feelings in the house, e.g. on the fridge or a door. Everyone has a name card and at the beginning of each day puts their name on the picture of how they are feeling. Throughout the day people can move their names to indicate their feelings as appropriate. **Emotion faces are included with the fact sheet but you could get your child or young person to draw a picture to represent the different emotions and put these up.**



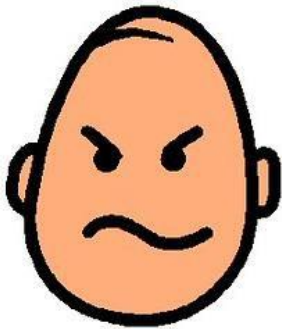
For some children and young people, they might find it difficult to identify the emotion, so you could use a colour. Zones of Regulation (by Leah M Kuypers) is a resource where children identify which zone they are in by a colour, with the aim to try and reach green. **A 'Zones of Regulation' board is included which you could put on a table and each person has a figure, e.g. Lego person, which represents them and they place it on the board to indicate how they are feeling. It can then be moved around.**

**Check-In Time:** You can set specific times to complete Check-In's where everyone sits down and has a chance to say how they are feeling. This could link with a Check-In board where everyone says how they are feeling, and each day someone has the responsibility to put the names on the board. However, it equally does not need to be this formal. During meal times you could ask everyone how they are feeling. It is just important that everyone has opportunities to say how they are feeling and why, which then allows things to be sorted straight away.

**Informal Check-In:** Older children may not appreciate the more formal Check-ins! However, it is important that you check-in regularly with them and ask how they are feeling. This could be when they come out of their room and pop down into the kitchen for a drink or specifically making time to pop into them. A lot of young people need to be asked before they will say. Remember if you get 'fine', ask again, 'Are you sure?'



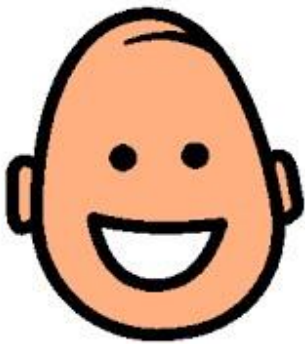
Resource 1 – Emotion Faces to make a Check-In Board



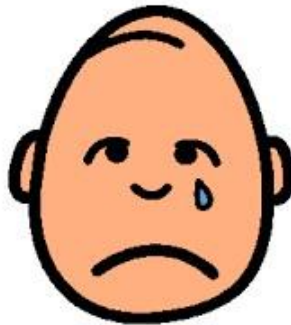
Angry



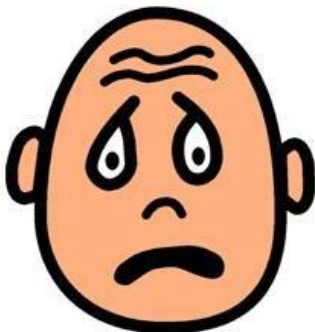
Excited



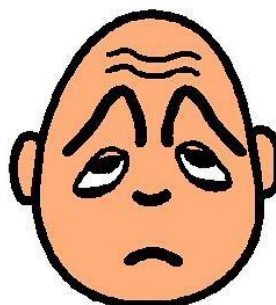
Happy



Sad



Worried



Tired



Name:



Name:



Name:



Name:



Name:



Name: