

## Soothing to Support Emotional Regulation

A Supplement to Emotion Coaching, what to do when the 'lid has flipped'

**Emotion Coaching is a way we can respond to our children in the moment to support their ability to manage their emotions. This leaflet follows on from Emotion Coaching and gives a strategy to support when our child is more distressed and as a result, when it is not the right time to use Emotion Coaching. We can call this soothing with up-regulation.**

### Flipping our Lid

In Emotion Coaching we learned that sometimes we can become so upset or distressed that the thinking part of our brain (upstairs brain) is no longer in charge and being reasoned with doesn't help. We're not processing language very well at this point. We call this 'flipping our lid'. At these times the reptilian or old part of our brain is in charge and it wants to either flock, fight, flee or freeze! That can explain some of the behaviours we might see at this time, for example, shouting, kicking, running, hiding or even withdrawn and staring blankly. So, if talking won't help, what will?



### Soothing

At this time we turn to soothing or helping regulate emotions from the bottom up – connecting to that instinctive part of our brain that has gone into survival mode!

An easy way to imagine this is to think about what we do to soothe a baby when they are distressed and crying?

Chances are you thought about rocking, patting, pacing, gently repeating 'sh sh sh'. By providing rhythmic, repetitive and touch experience we are tapping in to the downstairs brain in a way that helps it calm. Importantly, we are also using our own calm; in our voice, our face, our body, to help soothe too.

When our child is upset it can trigger us to be upset too and instead of responding to our child's upset we react to their behaviour. We then find it difficult to be calm enough to help soothe.

When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it's our job to share our calm, not join their chaos.' L.R.Knost

## So, how do we Soothe?

### 1. Get Yourself Ready

First, take a deep breath

Second, ask yourself 'am I ready to soothe?' (name how you are feeling and be kind to yourself)

If not ask yourself 'what can I do to be ready?'

This might mean more breaths, walking away for a few moments, or handing over to someone else.

(See [getselfhelp.co.uk](http://getselfhelp.co.uk) for other great ideas to help calm)

1. Get yourself ready

3. Support up-regulating activity

2. Reassure

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In a few words, let your child know they are safe and secure 'I'm here for you'.

If or when you think they can hear it, use your first steps of emotion coaching, naming and validating 'I can see how upset you are, that's understandable'

3. Support an Up-regulating activity

Finally, when you think your child might hear, suggest an activity they (or both of you) can do, 'how about we go and...'

You might need to try this a few times giving a break in between.

Most importantly, the activity must be familiar to the child, ideally practiced when they are feeling calmer.

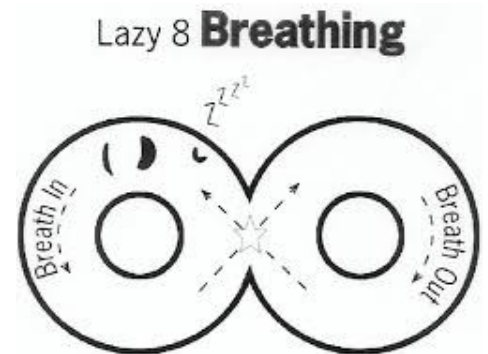
Turn over for ideas!

## Up-Regulating Activities

It's important for lots of practice and to choose activities our children choose themselves. You might notice they already do versions of these behaviours that will give you clues about what might work.

As well as practising the activities, 'dosing' can help keep the lid on things throughout the day. This is where we do regulating activities a little and often as a preventative measure—for ourselves too!

The ideas below are just a taste of what you might do, and you will have lots of ideas of your own. If you get stuck there are a wealth of activities online, most of which don't need special tools or equipment. Just look up self regulating activities –even Pinterest! There are also plenty of mindfulness apps that you might like.



Breathing/Mindful Activities	Movement	Body/Sensory
Star /Triangle/Lazy 8/Belly Breathing (tracing your finger around the shape while breathing in up one side/holding at the top and out on the way back down)	Running	Pushing (arms or body against a wall)
54321 (see below)	Jumping (including trampoline)	A close hug/hugging soft toy
Counting Breaths	Pacing/Marching	Being patted, rocked or rubbed soothingly
Counting time/things	Throwing (soft toys/beanbags etc)	Wrapping self in blanket
Listening to music/nature sounds etc	Rocking	Deep pressure included sitting/lying with weighted blanket/toys etc
	Swinging	Balancing
	Tapping	

**This leaflet is designed to complement online training to support parents to help their children to develop emotional regulation. This can be found at [XXXXXXXXXX](#)**

**This leaflet and the emotion coaching information leaflet can also be found at [http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_115557.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_115557.html)**

### 54321 Strategy

- 5: Notice FIVE things you see around you. It could be a pen, a spot on the ceiling, anything in your surroundings.
- 4: Notice FOUR things you can touch around you. ...
- 3: Notice THREE things you hear. ...
- 2: Notice TWO things you can smell. ...
- 1: Notice ONE thing you can taste.



Families that live in the Moray area are very welcome to contact the service if they would like the opportunity to talk about any aspect of supporting emotional regulation

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