

# BOUNCE to Emotional Health

In recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, this month's BOUNCE newsletter focuses on the importance of helping children and teens understand and manage their emotions.

## WHAT ARE EMOTIONS AND THEIR KEY COMPONENTS?



Emotions have a strong influence in our daily lives, affecting what we do and our relationships with others. Emotions consist of 3 components:

**Subjective:** Emotional intensity varies from person to person.

**Physiological:** The body changes when we experience an emotion, such as an increased heart rate when fearful.

**Behavioral:** The way we express emotions differs, partly based on sociocultural norms.

Source: Verywell Mind

## WHAT IS EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT?



According to Dr. Julie Dunsmore, a professor in the University of Houston's Human Development and Family Sciences Program, emotional development involves children learning how to identify their own emotions, understand others' emotions, and communicate and manage emotions in a socially appropriate way. Babies cry when needing care, a toddler may have a temper tantrum when not getting candy, and a school-age child may be able to manage feeling sad or scared on their own when they're feeling well but need help managing their feelings when they're tired or hungry. Parents and teachers help children learn how to manage their emotions by sympathizing with their feelings and modeling appropriate ways to express them.

Research by Dr. Carlos Valiente, a professor at Oklahoma State University, and Dr. Nancy Eisenberg, a professor at Arizona State University, shows that managing or regulating emotions can happen before a feeling starts as well as after. Parents can help children learn to plan ahead to avoid a stressful situation. An example is putting a child's favorite toy in a safe place before a younger cousin visits.

Sources: Valiente, C., & Eisenberg, N. (2006). Parenting and Children's Adjustment: The Role of Children's Emotion Regulation. In D. K. Snyder, J. Simpson, & J. N. Hughes (Eds.), *Emotion regulation in couples and families: Pathways to dysfunction and health* (pp. 123-142). American Psychological Association.

### Why Does Emotional Development Matter?

Promoting healthy emotional development is important for youth's mental health.

Allows children to experience, regulate, and express emotions in a socially appropriate way.

Encourages children to get along with other children, teens, and adults.

Increases empathy.

Helps develop a positive self-concept.

Sources: Research Gate, SRCID, and NCSL

## TIPS FOR PROMOTING HEALTHY EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



**Start encouraging healthy expression of emotions early.** It is important to take time to understand what a child is feeling. If your child experiences a negative feeling like fear, anger, or sadness, take a step back. Let them experience the emotion first.



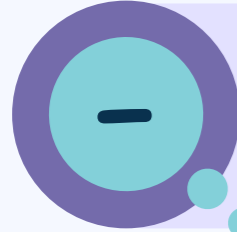
**Talk about emotions.** Encourage children to recognize, name, and talk about their feelings; provide a safe and non-judgmental space to do so.



**Teach emotional regulation.** Help children develop strategies to manage their emotions, such as deep breathing, counting, or taking a break.



**Model healthy emotional regulation.** As a parent, if you are about to lose your patience, take a minute to calm down to avoid an impulsive reaction, and then address the issue.



**Plan options and practice.** Talk to your child about ways to handle negative emotions and practice doing so.



**Be clear and consistent when disciplining your child.** Explain the behavior that you expect from your child. Whenever you tell them no, explain why and follow up with what they need to be doing instead.



**Build a loving and nurturing relationship.** Children need to feel loved, valued, and supported to develop healthy emotional skills. Spend quality time with your child, express affection, and show interest in their thoughts and feelings.

Sources: Research Gate, CDC, Zero To Three, and APA

## EMOTIONAL EATING



When food is used for soothing or controlling children and teens' emotions, they could learn to associate food with the management of their emotions, which may lead to unhealthy habits.

### Tips to Reduce Emotional Eating in Children



Healthier ways to manage emotions without using food include enjoying music, art, dance, writing, or talking to a friend to soothe oneself.



Teach your children to eat slowly and savor their food and pay attention to when they feel full. This can prevent overeating, promoting a healthy relationship with food.



Keep your children active as this will help manage mood and emotions.

Sources: Kid's Health, and Healthline

## MENTAL HEALTH AND ACTIVE PLAY



Keeping our body moving will significantly enhance our mood and overall emotional well-being. Here are some ways to nurture children and teen's emotional health through active play:



**Games and movement.** Introducing games that require children to try out new movements or to solve a problem will help them practice motor skills.

**Games creation.** Activities that allow children to choose how they move and play will build their motivation to master new skills.



**Stop and go games.** Playing stop and go games can help children develop self-regulation as they have to follow norms and pay attention.

**Play time.** Activities that allow children to play with others will help them develop empathy and identify social cues.



**Family time.** Spending quality time together, such as riding a bike, or dancing will create strong emotional bonds and support healthy communication.

**Note:** As a parent, you need to develop a strong support system that includes pediatrician, family, friends, and teachers to support healthy emotional development.

Sources: NCBI, Eastern Connecticut State University, and Harvard

## WISHING YOU A WONDERFUL MOTHER'S DAY FROM ALL OF US AT BOUNCE!

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