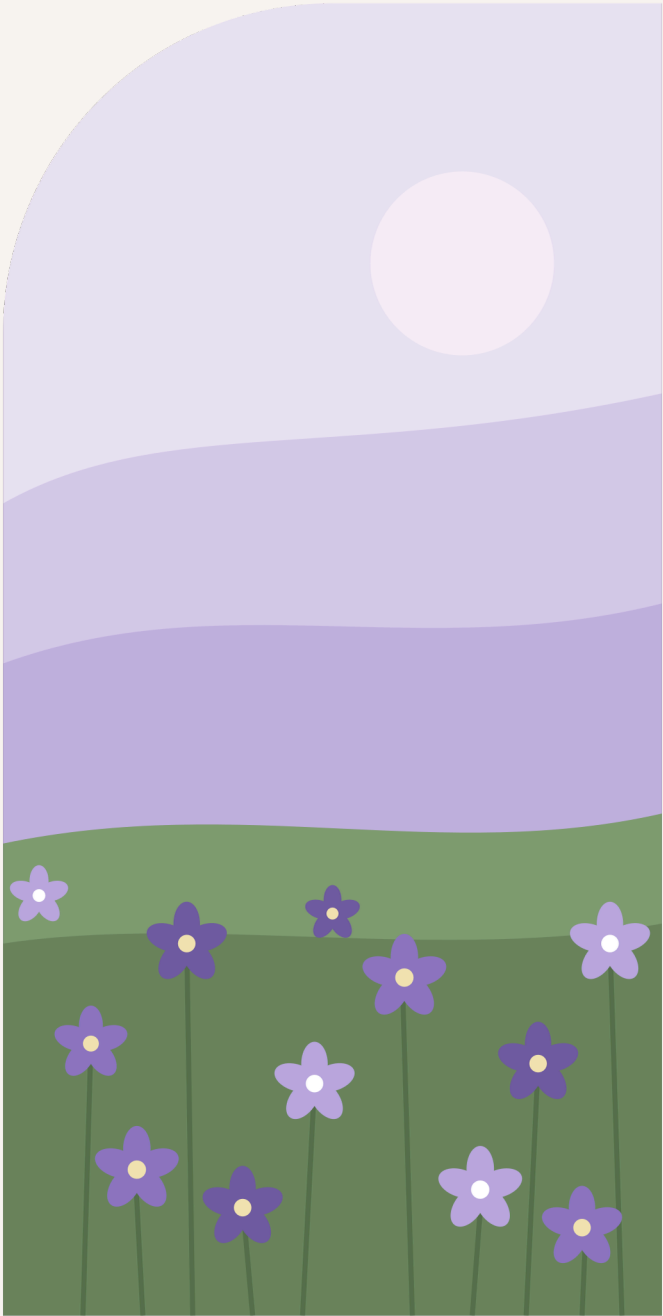
A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS

Emotion Coaching

Helping your child understand big feelings, and learn they can move through them.



Carole Bakhos

Because sometimes it takes 2villages:
one for the child, and one for the caregiver.

Children don't learn to calm down by being told to calm down. They learn it by being understood. What is **emotion coaching?**

Anapproach defined byDr.John Gottman.You help your child:

- Recognize their emotions
- Name them
- Understand what caused them
- Know that all feelings are okay
- Learn healthy ways to respond

Feelings are always okay. Behaviors still have limits.

Coaching vs. **dismissing**

DISMISSING

Fix the feeling

"Stop crying."
"You're fine."
"It's not a big deal."
"Calm down."

COACHING

Help process the feeling

"You're really disappointed."
"That felt scary."
"It feels like a big deal to you."
"I'm here with you."

Through the **neurodivergence lens**

Big feelings don't always look like feelings. Ask: what might their nervous system be communicating?

Sensory overload | Communication frustration | Executive functioning demands | Transitions | Uncertainty | Physical discomfort

The **five steps**

The first two happen inside you. The last three happen with your child.

1. **Notice the emotion.** Look for the feeling underneath the behavior. Frustrated? Overwhelmed? Embarrassed? Worried? Lonely?
2. **See it as an opportunity.** Not "they're giving me a hard time," but "they're *having* a hard time."
3. **Validate.** Validation is not agreement. *"I can see why you're upset." "Waiting is really hard."*
4. **Help name the emotion.** Children can't manage what they can't identify. *"It looks like you're disappointed."*
5. **Problem-solve, only after calm.** *"What could we try next?" "What might help your body right now?"*

Words for the hardest moments

"I'm here."

"You don't have to do this alone."

"I believe you."

"I won't let you hurt yourself or others."

"We'll figure it out together."

"Your feelings are okay."

"I can see this is hard."

The goal isn't a child who never gets upset. It's a child who knows emotions are safe, that someone understands them, that they can recover, and that they have tools.

TRY THIS WEEK

The next time your child is upset, say one validating sentence before you try to fix anything. Then pause, and notice what happens.