

FACT SHEET • PRIMARY

Helping Your Child Manage Their Feelings

Big feelings are part of growing up. A primary-aged child feels things strongly long before the thinking part of their brain can steady them, which is why a small disappointment can look like the end of the world. We don't want to prevent feelings, but to help children to cope with them and, little by little, to do it for themselves. These five tips are the ones to reach for first.



TIP 1

Name the feeling out loud

Say what you see: "That looks like disappointment." Naming a feeling makes it smaller and gives your child the words to use next time.

TIP 2

Calm first, teach second

Nothing goes in while a child is upset. Stay close, stay quiet, and save the conversation about what happened until they are settled.

TIP 3

Give the feeling somewhere to go

Movement helps: a walk, a run round the garden, a cushion to squeeze, a picture to draw. The feeling needs an exit before it needs an explanation.

TIP 4

Notice the build-up

Most meltdowns have a run-up: hunger, tiredness, too long on a screen, a hard day at school. Spotting the pattern is how you head the next one off.

TIP 5

Go back to it afterwards

Later, when everyone is calm, ask what would help next time. Children remember what they worked out themselves far better than what they were told.

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Understanding Your Child's Brain

A primary-aged child's brain is still under construction, especially the part that manages impulses, weighs consequences and calms strong feelings. That part develops slowly, well into the teenage years, so a seven-year-old genuinely cannot reason the way an adult can, however capable they seem at other things. Understanding what their brain can and can't yet do changes how you respond to it.



TIP 1

Expect big feelings, not logic

In the heat of the moment, a calm explanation won't land. Wait until your child is settled again before talking through what happened or what to do differently.

TIP 2

Remember, brain development still has a long way to go

The part that controls impulses and plans ahead keeps developing into someone's twenties. A young child forgetting something for the third time isn't being careless on purpose.

TIP 3

Lend them your calm

A child's nervous system settles by borrowing from an adult's. If you stay steady when they're overwhelmed, their own system learns, over time, to steady itself the same way.

TIP 4

Explain, don't excuse

Knowing why your child struggles with something doesn't mean letting it go. Keep the same expectations and boundaries, just with more patience about how long it takes to meet them.

TIP 5

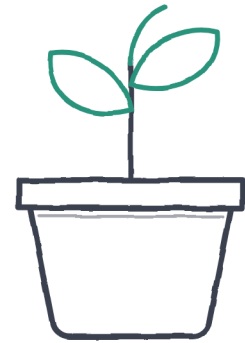
Talk about the brain itself

Simple language helps: "your thinking brain" for the calm, sensible part and "your feelings brain" for the part that reacts. Naming the two gives your child a way to describe what's happening inside them.

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Helping Your Child Build Confidence

Confidence doesn't come from being told "you're brilliant". It comes from doing something challenging and making progress at it. A primary-aged child builds a real sense of their own ability slowly, through genuine attempts, setbacks and small wins along the way. These five habits build the real thing.

**TIP 1****Let them struggle a bit**

Resist stepping in the moment something gets hard. A few minutes of your child wrestling with a shoelace or a maths problem teaches more than a quick rescue ever will.

TIP 2**Praise the effort, not the result**

Instead of "you're so clever", try "you kept going even when it was tricky". It points your child back to what they actually did, which they can do again.

TIP 3**Let them choose sometimes**

Small real choices, such as which top to wear or what order to do homework in, give your child practice at deciding things and living with the result, which builds trust in their own judgement.

TIP 4**Notice out loud what improved**

Point out a specific change: "you managed that whole page without asking for help" is worth more than a general "well done" because your child can see the progress for themselves.

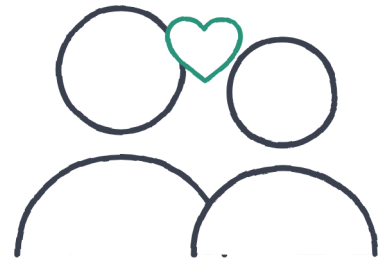
TIP 5**Let failure be ordinary**

How you react to a wobbly bike ride or a low mark matters as much as the result itself. Stay matter-of-fact and your child learns that getting things wrong is normal, not a disaster.

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Helping Your Child Make Good Friends

Friendships at primary age are a child's first proper practice at getting on with people outside the family: sharing, taking turns, sorting out an argument and staying friends afterwards. None of that comes naturally; it is learned slowly, through actually doing it, getting it wrong sometimes and trying again the next day at school. These five ideas help it along.



TIP 1

Talk through what happened

After a falling-out, ask what happened rather than who started it. Working through the sequence together helps your child see their own part in it, without feeling accused.

TIP 2

Practise the words in advance

Rehearse simple lines at home: "can I join in?" or "I don't like that, stop". Having the words ready makes them easier to use in the moment at school.

TIP 3

One good friend is enough

Not every child needs a big group. If your child has even one friend they trust, that is a solid foundation. Don't measure their social life by how many names they mention.

TIP 4

Widen the circle beyond school

Clubs, cousins and neighbours give your child practice with different personalities and a friendship that isn't tangled up with the same classroom politics every day.

TIP 5

Stay out of small disputes

A minor fallout on Tuesday is often forgotten by Wednesday. Ask if your child wants help before wading in, and let ordinary friendship squabbles sort themselves out where they can.

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Helping Your Child Manage Worries

Worry is a normal part of growing up, and a primary-aged child can pick up on far more than adults realise: a change at school, something overheard, an exam looming. Left unspoken, a small worry can grow simply because it has nowhere to go. Here is how to help it come out into the open, one small step at a time.



TIP 1

Ask open questions, not closed ones

"What's on your mind?" gets further than "are you okay?", which is easy to answer with a quick "fine". Ask in the car or at bedtime, when eye contact isn't required.

TIP 2

Take the worry seriously

Don't rush to say "there's nothing to worry about". To your child it's real, and being believed matters more, at first, than being reassured or talked out of it.

TIP 3

Try writing worries down

For some children, writing their worries down and putting them somewhere safe gives a worry somewhere to live outside your child's head, which can be enough to make it feel smaller.

TIP 4

Separate the worry from the facts

Gently ask what your child thinks will happen, then compare it with what's likely. Most worries turn out bigger in the imagining than in the event itself.

TIP 5

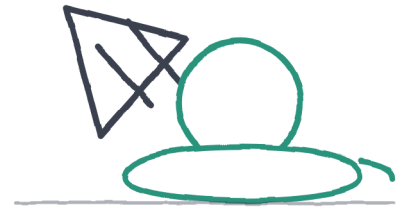
Know when to ask for help

A worry that lingers for weeks, stops sleep or eating, or shrinks your child's world is worth mentioning to their school or GP. Most settle, but some need more support.

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Helping Your Child Cope When Things Go Wrong

Something will always go wrong: a lost match, a cancelled plan, a friend who lets them down at the last minute. What matters isn't stopping the disappointment but how your child learns to come back from it, and that skill is built in the small setbacks of ordinary weeks, not saved up for the big ones later on. These five habits help build it.

**TIP 1****Let them feel it first**

Before "never mind, there's always next time", let your child be disappointed for a while. Rushing to cheer them up can teach them to hide feelings rather than move through them.

TIP 2**Model coping out loud**

Let your child see you handle your own setback calmly, such as a bad day at work or a missed train. Say what you're doing to feel better, so they see the process, not just the result.

TIP 3**Keep routines steady**

When something upsetting happens, hold on to the ordinary things: dinner, bath, bedtime story. A familiar routine tells your child that the rest of the world is still standing.

TIP 4**Ask what they can control**

Once the first upset has passed, if the child is old enough, ask what part of the situation your child can actually do something about. It shifts them from feeling stuck to feeling useful.

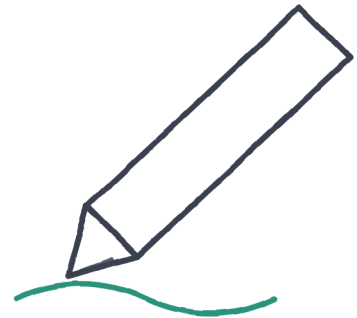
TIP 5**Point to a past setback**

At a good time, remind your child of a time they got through something hard before, such as a fall, a difficult test or a friendship bump. It proves to them that this feeling passes too.

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Helping Your Child Learn From Mistakes

How a mistake is handled matters more than the mistake itself. A primary-aged child who is shouted at for spilling, breaking or forgetting learns to hide things rather than own up to them, while one who is walked through it learns that mistakes are simply part of trying. Here's how to make that the pattern at home, so honesty feels safer than hiding.

**TIP 1****React calmly, every time**

A big reaction to a small mistake teaches your child to hide the next one. Keep your response steady, whether it's a spilt drink or a forgotten homework book.

TIP 2**Separate the child from the act**

"You forgot your kit" lands very differently from "you're so forgetful". Talk about what happened, not what it says about them, so the mistake stays a one-off rather than a label.

TIP 3**Ask what they'd do differently**

Instead of dwelling on what went wrong, ask what they'd try next time. It moves the conversation from blame to a plan they came up with themselves.

TIP 4**Own up to your own mistakes**

Let your child hear you say "I got that wrong" and see what you do next. It shows them that admitting a mistake doesn't mean anything terrible follows.

TIP 5**Praise the telling, not the mistake**

When your child owns up to something before you find out, notice that first, even if the thing itself needs sorting out. It keeps honesty worth choosing.

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Helping Your Child Get a Good Night's Sleep

A tired primary-aged child doesn't always look sleepy. More often they look wound up, tearful or unable to sit still, which is easy to mistake for something else entirely. Sleep at this age still needs protecting on purpose; it rarely just happens on its own once school, screens and clubs fill the evening. These five habits help protect it, night after night.

**TIP 1****Keep the time steady**

The same bedtime and wake time, even at weekends, matters more than the number of hours slept on any one night. A settled rhythm is what actually rests the body.

TIP 2**Wind down before bed**

Build in twenty quiet minutes before lights out: a bath, a story, low light. A racing brain doesn't switch off the moment the light goes out.

TIP 3**Screens off an hour before**

The light from a screen and the excitement of a game or video both delay sleep. Swap the last hour for something calmer, even if it means a fight at first.

TIP 4**Keep the room right**

Dark, cool and quiet helps far more than an expensive mattress or a special pillow.

TIP 5**Notice the tired signs**

Rubbing eyes, clumsiness and sudden tears in the evening usually mean overtired. Bring bedtime forward on those days rather than holding the line on the usual time.

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Helping Your Child Get On With Their Siblings

Brothers and sisters spend more hours together than almost anyone else, which is exactly why they argue. A sibling is the person a child practises on: sharing, taking turns, standing their ground and making up afterwards. Some friction is how this learning happens. Here are five tips to keep things at a reasonable level.



TIP 1

Resist being the judge

Working out who started it rarely settles anything. Ask what each of them needs and let them have a go at solving it, stepping in only when someone is being hurt.

TIP 2

Give each child something of their own

A space, a possession or a bit of time that does not have to be shared takes a surprising amount of heat out of the day. Children share better when not everything is up for grabs.

TIP 3

Avoid comparing them

Even a kind comparison sets them against each other. Talk to each child about their own progress, not about how it measures up to their brother or sister.

TIP 4

Name what went well

Notice the moments they were kind, waited, or let something go. Children repeat what gets noticed, and squabbles usually get far more attention than the good bits.

TIP 5

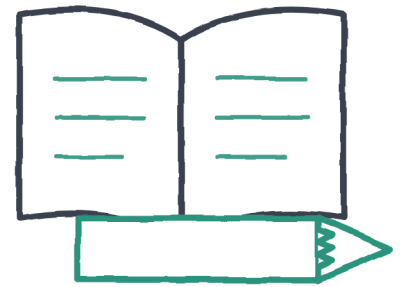
Protect time one to one

Ten minutes alone with each child, doing something ordinary, does more for how they treat each other than any rule about sharing.

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Helping Your Child Get Ready to Learn

A child who arrives at school hungry, rushed or unsettled is not in the right state to learn, however capable they are. The brain needs to feel safe and steady before it can take anything in. Getting ready to learn starts well before the school gates, in the shape of the morning and the night before. Here's what helps most.

**TIP 1****Protect the morning routine**

A calm, unhurried morning sets the tone for the whole school day. Lay out clothes and pack bags the night before so the morning has fewer decisions to make.

TIP 2**Never skip breakfast**

A hungry brain can't concentrate, however good the intentions. Even something small and quick, such as toast, a banana or a yoghurt, makes a real difference to how the morning goes.

TIP 3**Talk about the day ahead**

A quick mention of what's coming up, such as a test, a new topic or PE kit needed, helps your child feel prepared rather than caught out once they get there.

TIP 4**Say goodbye warmly and briefly**

A long, anxious goodbye at the gate can unsettle a child who was otherwise fine. Keep it short, warm and the same each day, then leave with confidence.

TIP 5**Sort worries the night before**

A lost letter, forgotten reading book or unfinished homework found at eight in the morning creates panic that has nothing to do with learning. A five-minute check the evening before heads it off.