

Emotional Regulation – Helping children understand and manage big feelings

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting the wellbeing and safety of all students, this week's safeguarding focus is on emotional regulation - a vital skill for children of all ages. Whether a child is in Early Years learning to name their feelings for the first time or an older student navigating friendship challenges, academic pressures, or teenage emotions, understanding how to recognise and manage big feelings is an essential part of staying safe, healthy, and connected.

Why emotional regulation matters

Children who can identify and express their emotions appropriately are more likely to:

- Build positive friendships
- Resolve conflicts calmly
- Seek help when they need it
- Develop resilience during stressful moments
- Make safer decisions, both online and offline

Poor emotional regulation, on the other hand, can lead to impulsive behaviour, withdrawal, anxiety, anger, or saying and doing things that increase vulnerability.

What we are seeing in schools

Across primary and secondary settings, schools worldwide are noticing an increase in children struggling with overwhelming emotions - often linked to screen use, rapid communication, busier schedules, or the pressures of social dynamics.

At ICS, we continue to prioritise teaching students how to recognise and safely manage these feelings. Our staff model calm responses, talk openly about emotions, and teach strategies such as breathing techniques, grounding exercises, and positive communication.

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How parents can support emotional regulation at home

Parents play a crucial role in helping children manage big emotions. A supportive adult response can transform a difficult moment into a valuable learning opportunity. Here are some simple ways to help:

1. Name the feeling

‘You sound frustrated, or ‘It looks like you’re feeling disappointed.’ Labelling emotions helps children make sense of their inner experiences.

2. Stay calm and regulate together

Children borrow the calm of adults. A quiet voice, slow breathing, or a gentle presence helps them settle.

3. Create a ‘Calm Time’ plan

Agree ahead of time what children can do when they feel overwhelmed - deep breaths, a quiet corner, a short walk, or listening to calming music.

4. Encourage healthy expression

Let children know it’s okay to feel sad, angry, or worried. What matters is what they do with those feelings.

5. Monitor screen time and digital triggers

Online interactions often amplify emotions. Encourage breaks from devices and talk openly about digital wellbeing.

6. Model your own regulation

Let children see you take a breath, pause before reacting, or express your feelings respectfully. Adults set the tone.

Supporting older students

Teenagers often experience stronger emotions due to hormonal changes, identity development, and social pressures. They may need:

- Reassurance that their feelings are valid

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- Space to talk openly without judgement
- Encouragement to problem-solve rather than avoid
- Guidance on seeking trusted adults when things feel too big

Reminding them that asking for help is a sign of strength is especially powerful.

When to seek additional support

If a child is regularly overwhelmed, shutting down, or showing signs of prolonged sadness or distress, please reach out to us. Our safeguarding team is here to help, and early support can make a significant difference.

Final thought

Emotional regulation is not something children simply ‘grow into’—it is a skill they learn through the guidance of trusted adults at home and at school. By working together, we can help every child develop the tools they need to stay safe, express themselves confidently, and thrive both academically and emotionally.

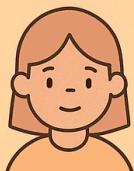
Age-Appropriate Techniques for Different Developmental Stages

Toddlers
(1-3 years old)



Need support in identifying emotions and self-soothing

Preschoolers
(3-4 years old)



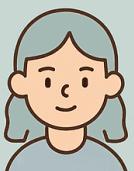
Learn to label basic emotions

Elementary
(5-9 years old)



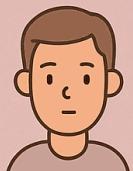
Identify more complex emotions, practice coping skills

Tweens
(10-13 years)



Name emotions, use simple coping skills

Teens
(14-17 years)



Validate emotions, teach coping strategies