

Lesson 5.3

RESPONDING TO OUR FEELINGS BY
CHOOSING A HELPFUL TOOL

All emotions are okay. Where the “not okay” part can come in is in the ways we sometimes express them. Kennedy writes about this saying, “after all, we can only learn to regulate feelings and urges that we allow ourselves to have; parents often have the goal of getting rid of the urge..., but humanizing the urge and then shifting where we allow a child to discharge it allows the child to gain regulation and, over time, make better decisions” (2022, 161). An empowering way to help children work through big emotions is to channel their urges and reactions into a safer release. So instead of kicking someone when you’re mad (not okay), you might offer the replacement strategy of kicking or hitting a pillow in a safe space (okay). This honors the feeling and urges while also setting a clear boundary around safe responses.

What Are We Teaching and Why?

Today we’re going to learn ways we can respond to our feelings by choosing a helpful tool. This is important because all emotions are okay, but not all responses are. For example, it’s okay to feel mad. It’s not okay to hit someone. Today we’ll learn some safe ways to work through our emotions.



One Way We Might Teach It...

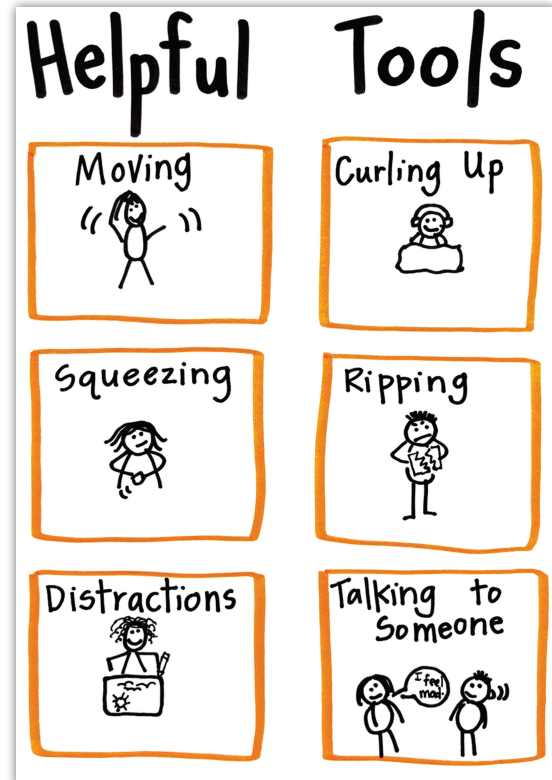
Explicit Instruction with Steps or Strategies

1. *Let’s think about the emotion, mad. What are some things you feel like you want to do when you’re mad? Have kids turn and talk and then share out. Repeat with other emotions. It’s okay to have those feelings and even those urges to want to throw things or rip up your paper. And, we know that often doing those things isn’t okay. So today I’m going to teach you some different strategies to use when you do have those big feelings and even those urges.*
2. *When you’re thinking about which strategies and tools you want to introduce, think about what you’re noticing your kids gravitating toward. If you see children ripping something when they’re frustrated, think about how you might integrate that into a strategy like ripping paper or using a mini paper shredder. If you notice students gravitate toward hiding under furniture when they’re overwhelmed, think about creative ways you might support them in this like hiding under a blanket at the break spot. When we’re having big feelings, here are a few strategies we might*

try: [Show or make a chart in front of class.]

- Moving our bodies (movement area, movement cards, walk)
- Curling up in a quiet space (headphones, blanket)
- Squeezing or ripping something
- Distractions that let us focus on something else (coloring, puzzle, etc.)
- Talking to someone

3. Model how you might utilize one of the strategies. *It's time to pick partners and I really wanted to be with my best friend, but she picked someone else. It's been a hard day already and I am feeling really sad. Hmm, let me see what I need?* [Point to chart] *To move my body? No, that doesn't feel like the right fit. Curling up in a quiet space? Yes! I think I just need a few minutes to myself to reset. I'm going to walk over to the regulation spot and take a few minutes to work through this feeling.*
4. Now we have some ideas for strategies and tools we can use when we're having a big feeling. Next time you're having a big feeling, think about what you need and try it out!



One Way We Might Practice It Together...

Role Play/Scenarios

Let's try out some of our new strategies for responding to our emotions. Read some of the below scenarios (or even better if you create ones from your own class) and have students turn and talk then share out what strategy they might use to work through the emotion.

- You didn't get to see your friend today and you're really missing them
- A friend said that you can't play with them today

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- You're trying to make a tower but it keeps falling over
- Soccer tryouts are this afternoon and you're feeling really nervous
- You lose the game you're playing during recess



One Way We Might Support Transfer...

Coaching

Keep your eyes peeled for big emotions today. Even better if you can get there before they reach a tipping point. Consider keeping a smaller version of the strategies chart with you today and when you notice a student's feelings starting to grow, prompt them to choose a strategy from the chart. It might sound like, *It looks like you're having a big feeling, did I get that right? What strategy do you want to choose to try?* If a child is already escalated, fewer words are often better. You might simply put the chart near them, reminding them of their tools in a nonconfrontational way and work on co-regulating.



REWIND

What to do when you realize teaching another skill first makes sense.



- Recognizing Emotions in Ourselves and Others (Lesson 5.1)
- Recognizing When a Feeling Is Becoming BIG
- Identifying What Different Feelings Feel Like in Our Bodies



FAST FORWARD

What to do when you want to add in more layers.



- Noticing When You're Ready to Come Back From a Break (This can be a great time to introduce timers!)
- Choosing Tools for Different Feelings