

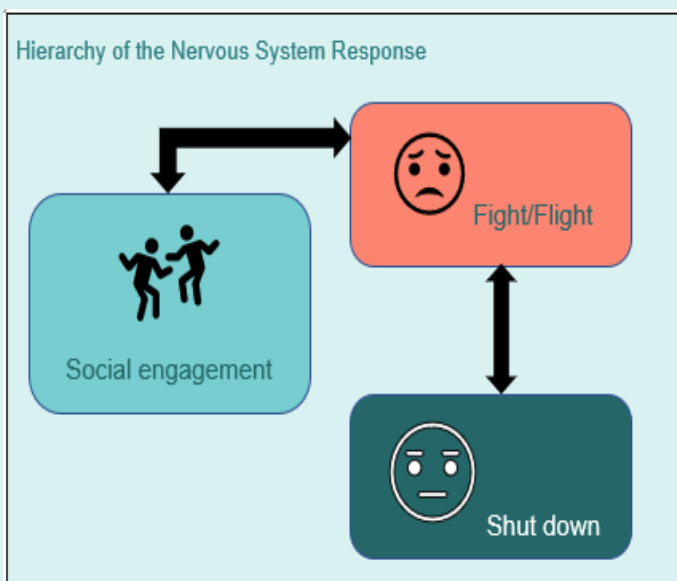
Emotion Coaching

Overview description

Emotion coaching is an approach which enables children to manage their behaviour by supporting them to understand their different emotions. It derives from the fact that behaviour is influenced by feelings and is a specific way of interacting with children which provides them with language for their emotions. The approach was developed by Gottman (1996), who explored different parenting styles and found that a parent's view on their child's emotions influences the way they parent. Children who have not had the opportunity to develop a secure bond with a primary caregiver, sometimes due to traumatic early experiences, are typically unable to regulate stress and require an adult who is able to co-regulate with them. Co-regulation is when an adult interacts with a child to provide a nurturing and safe relationship (which the child has often not already experienced) and models self-regulation skills.

Emotion coaching is a practical approach to dealing with behaviour in the moment. It involves:

- Recognising, empathising and validating feelings of a child and labelling these feelings
- Setting limits on their behaviour
- Problem solving with the child to identify more effective responses

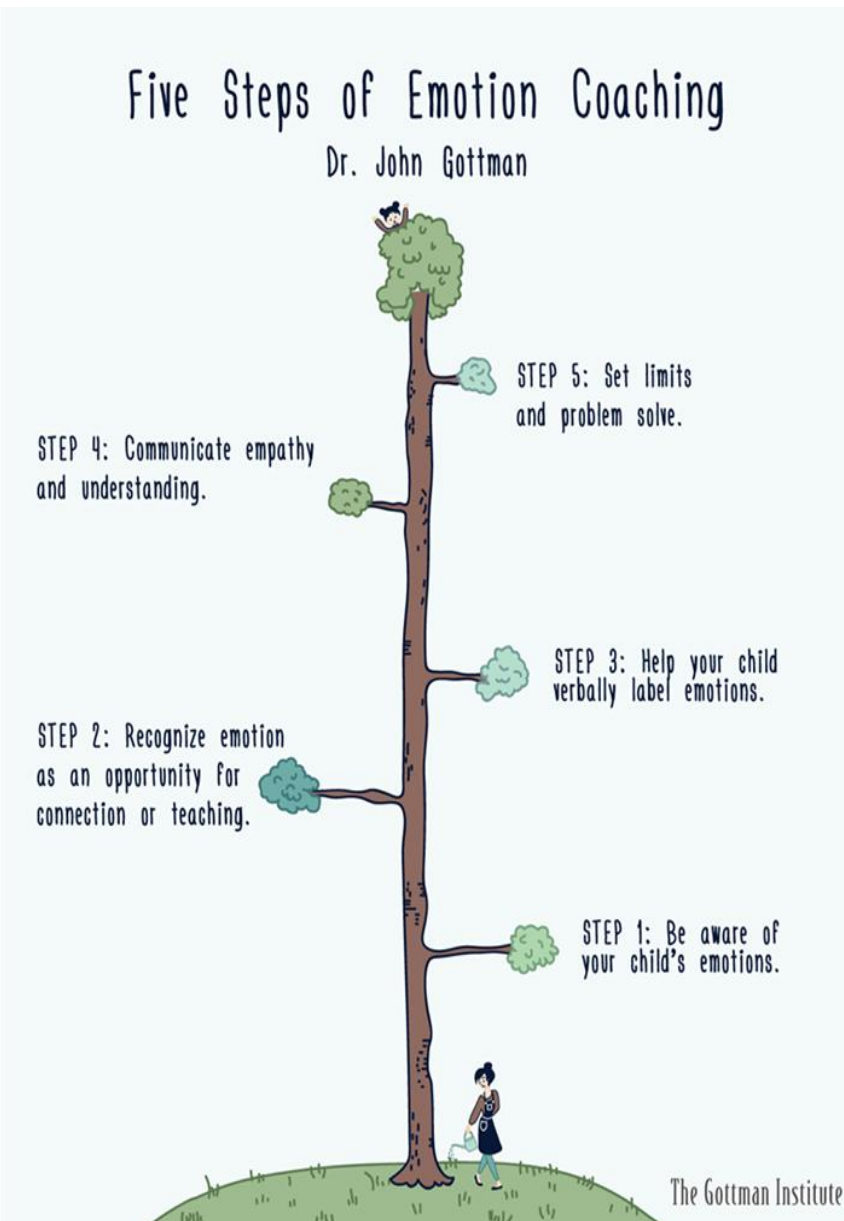


Emotion coaching recognises that the way an adult communicates with a child affects their brain development. There is a wealth of neuroscience that indicates that both trauma and attachment security impact on a child's brain development. Schore (2000) described the impact of stress or lack of regulation from a caregiver as having a significant effect on the early developing right hemisphere.

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Schore (2000) described the impact of stress or lack of regulation from a caregiver as having a significant effect on the early developing right hemisphere. Porges' **Polyvagal Theory** states that those who have experienced trauma often struggle to read and understand their environment, because of poor regulation of the vagus nerve which controls the body's stress response. They find it much harder to calm down and overcome uncomfortable feelings as toxic stress closes down key brain functions required for learning. Secure attachments are required for a child to learn to self-regulate.

Please refer to the chapter '[Attachment and trauma](#)' for more information on this.



Interaction and attunement between adult and child are integral to the Emotion Coaching approach. Providing a narrative (through social engagement) during an emotional experience can have a profound effect. Empathic listening and dialogue following heightened emotions is a positive way of empowering the child to manage strong feelings and self-regulation.

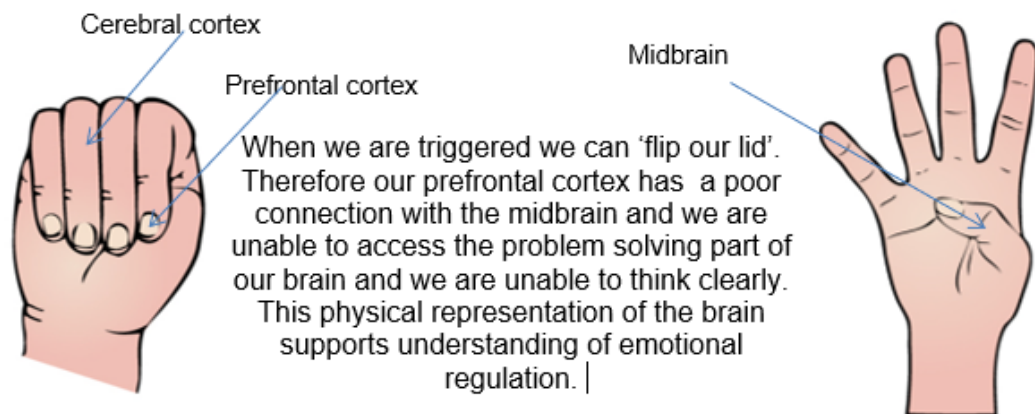
When Emotion Coaching is used as a setting-wide approach it is reported that this has a positive impact on both staff and pupils, providing a relational approach to behaviour and promoting optimal brain development and function.

Image taken from <https://www.gottman.com/blog/strengthen-childs-emotional-intelligence/>

Dan Siegel's hand model of the brain

An increasing number of education settings are teaching pupils about the link between behaviour and the brain as part of an Emotion Coaching approach. Dan Siegel's model below is an example of a physical representation of this. In Dan Siegel's metaphor – The Hand Model of the Brain the closed fist represents the regulated brain – when we make our most effective decisions - with the amygdala, pre frontal cortex and brain stem connected. When we are aroused eg angry – we 'Flip Our Lids', the fingers raise and our pre frontal cortex and amygdala disconnect.

Dan Siegel's Flipping your lid-hand model of the brain



Examples of dialogue within an Emotion Coaching approach

"I can see you are feeling angry. Shall we talk about how you are feeling? I can see that you are feeling upset but it is not ok to push others. I want to help you feel calm to make sure you do not hurt yourself or anybody else."

"You are really angry and upset right now. It is ok to feel like that. I will wait here with you until you are feeling calmer."

"How are you feeling? How has your day been so far? Do you think you would work better on your own today or in a group?"

"I can see you're frowning and you're kicking the wall and you are expressing a lot of energy. I would be feeling like that too if I didn't want to do something. I bet that does not feel nice for you. You cannot kick the wall as you could get hurt or damage something. Let's go and kick a ball around outside instead."

"I noticed you looking around at the others who are working on their projects. I think you might be feeling nervous right now about whether your work will be OK. Have I got that right?"

Top tips!

- It is important that the adults around children have an awareness of their own emotions
- Recognise all emotions as being normal (not a choice)
- Take on the child's perspective (attunement)
- Provide a narrative for an emotional experience, creating cognitive links through co-learning
- Look for physical signs of the child's emotion to support labelling
- It is vital that the adult sets the emotional tone through modelling a calm disposition
- Be clear that some behaviours cannot be accepted but that all feelings are ok
- When the child is calm explore feelings and alternative responses through scaffolding and empowering
- Building a good relationship and having good rapport is crucial to this "connection before correction" (Golding et.al.; 2013)

Top
Tips!

For Early
Years

- Use the RULER approach to support children's understanding of emotional/physical states and how to express and regulate these appropriately.
- Recognising – Understanding – Labelling – Expressing – Regulating Emotions
- Use emotion flashcards and mirrors
- Utilise circle times and relevant books to target children's individual needs such as:
 - The Colour Monster
 - Owl Babies
 - Giraffes Can't Dance
 - The Lion Inside
 - The Bad Seed

Other useful links:

<https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/personal-social-and-emotional-development/emotions>

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/booklists/f/feelings/>

Evidence-base

Gottman's research on Emotion Coaching utilises moments of heightened emotion and resulting behaviour to guide and teach the child and young person about more

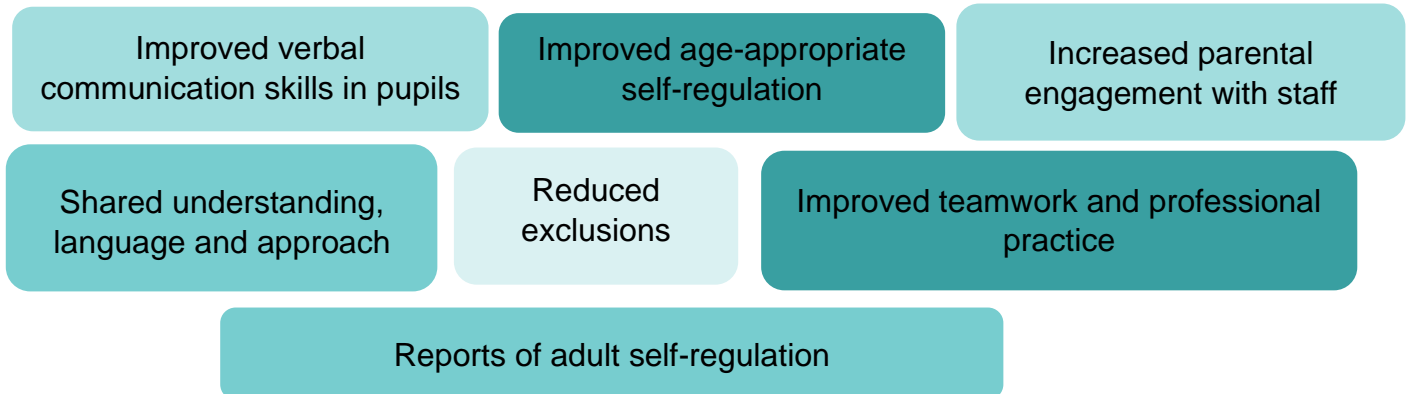
effective responses. Through empathetic engagement the child's emotional state is verbally acknowledged and validated, promoting a sense of security and feeling 'felt'. This activates changes in the child's neurological system and allows the child to calm down, physiologically and psychologically. Gottman also found that practitioner's views and emotional responses evolve as a result of increased understanding around children's behaviour.

Emotion Coaching is based on the principle that nurturing and emotionally supportive relationships provide optimal contexts for the promotion of children's outcomes and resilience.

Gottman (1996) found that Emotion Coached children and young people often:



In the UK Bath Spa University completed research led by Dr Janet Rose. It looked at the impact of using this approach in primary schools, secondary schools and other settings. The research found significant positive impact on:



Useful Resources

<https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/resources-for-professionals-parents-carers>

https://0cb242fb-7e24-4208-86de-d7c876a2f1c2.filesusr.com/ugd/994674_ef840e8a09504d37a8004a9e7c0982c3.pdf

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/downloads/>

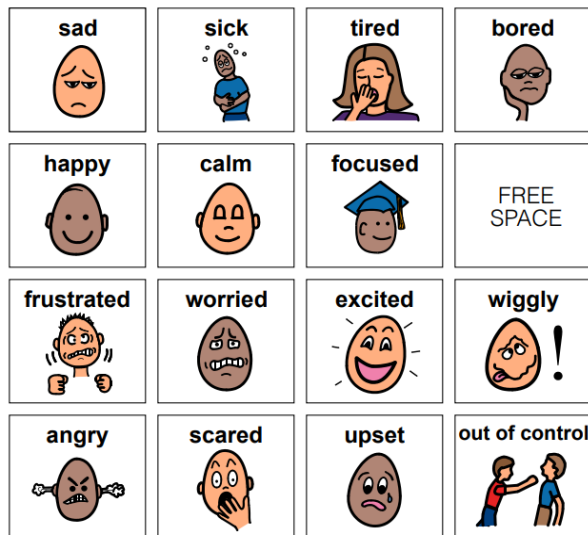
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mind-Emily-Arber-Vanessa-Lovegrove/dp/0995710600>

<http://www.safehandstinkingminds.co.uk/books-cards-worksheets/>

<http://www.safehandstinkingminds.co.uk/covid-anxiety-stress-resources-links/>

https://www.amazon.co.uk/s?k=margot+sunderland+resources&ref=nb_sb_noss

<https://www.zonesofregulation.com/teaching-tools.html>



Useful links

<https://www.headteacher-update.com/best-practice-article/pastoral-support-emotion-coaching/152306/>

https://0cb242fb-7e24-4208-86de-d7c876a2f1c2.filesusr.com/ugd/994674_d5e9463056a64632ac45298c5ab577a6.pdf

<https://www.gottman.com/>

https://www.canva.com/design/DADpj8eGbkA/8EJ1cwH57mGK7w4944hurw/view?utm_content=DADpj8eGbkA&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton

[https://kca.training/?info=emotion coaching](https://kca.training/?info=emotion%20coaching)

References

Gottman, J. M., Katz, L. F., & Hooven, C. (1996). Parental meta-emotion philosophy and the emotional life of families: Theoretical models and preliminary data. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 10, 243-268

Rose, J., Gilbert, L., & McGuire-Snieckus, R. (2015). Emotion Coaching—a strategy for promoting behavioural self-regulation in children/young people in schools: A pilot study. *The European Journal of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 13, 1766-1790.

Schore, A. N. (2000). Attachment and the regulation of the right brain. *Attachment & human development*, 2(1), 23-47.

<https://www.psychalive.org/minding-the-brain-by-daniel-siegel-m-d-2/>

