



Emotion Coaching


Dr Shannon Hatton-Corcoran (Educational Psychologist)

March 2024

Templemoor Infant School



Hello and welcome!

- 
1. Introduction to Emotion Coaching
 2. 'How To'
 3. Opportunity to practice



What is Emotion Coaching?

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



What does neuroscience tell us?

- ▶ The brain is not fully developed at birth.
- ▶ Neural pathways are constantly developing (neuroplasticity)
- ▶ Critical periods from birth to three years and during puberty.
- ▶ Experience and stimulus determines which neural pathways are strengthened (tuning) and which die away (pruning) – use it or lose it principal.

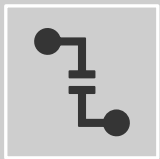
Development of the Human Brain



In the first three years of life the brain goes through rapid process of development in response to experience.



Initially the neural connections between the limbic and brainstem areas are strongest for survival reasons.



Gradually the connections within and between the neocortex and other areas are developed.

What is Emotion Coaching?

- ▶ Emotion Coaching is a strategy to help children to understand the different emotions that they experience, why they occur and how to handle them.
- ▶ It involves building relationships, daily, with low stakes events (both positive and negative).
- ▶ ***You have to build this ground work first before you can use it in higher stakes incidents.***

Different styles

Emotion Coaching

High empathy
High guidance

Disapproving

Low empathy
High guidance

Laissez Faire

High empathy
Low guidance

Dismissive

Low empathy
Low guidance

www.talaris.org/spotlight_parenting_styles.htm

Example video of each style:

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

Emotion Coaching involves:

- Teaching children about the world of emotion '*in the moment*'
- Giving children *strategies* to deal with ups and downs
- Accepting negative emotions as *normal*
- Using moments of negative behaviour as *opportunities for teaching*
- Building *trusting and respectful relationships* with children

Step 1: Recognising the child's feelings and empathising with them

- However, empathising can present us with challenges:
- We may empathise (i.e. with how the child must be feeling) but don't acknowledge this, or label it, and instead try to make the difficult emotion go away for the child (dismiss)
- We may perceive empathy as accepting the child's behaviour.

Step 1 example:

Ben is playing a board game with peers and loses. Ben's face goes red and he knocks all the pieces and the board off the table.

- 1) You recognise Ben's feelings:** Ben is angry
- 2) You empathise with Ben:** You know that Ben is a child that has not had the opportunity to develop self regulation. You recognise that Ben struggles with losing and he finds it a threat to his sense of self if he doesn't come first.

Step 2: Validating the feelings and labelling them

- ▶ Use words to reflect back the child's emotion and help the child to label the emotion
- ▶ Simply observe – saying what you see rather than asking probing questions to which the child might not know the answer
- ▶ Telling the child that you understand their emotional situation and that you don't blame them for having those feelings helps sooth their emotional brain

Step 1 and 2: Example Scripts

- ▶ 'Ben, I can see that your face went red and you stopped the game when someone else won. I wonder if you're feeling angry right now? I would feel angry inside too if I lost a game that I really wanted to win'...
- ▶ 'I can see that you're jumping up and down and your voice has got louder. I wonder if you are feeling really excited about the film we are watching today? I'm looking forward to watching it too.'
- ▶ '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? Sometimes I feel nervous trying new things too'

Step 1&2 : Hints

- Acknowledge **low levels of emotion** before they escalate to full-blown crisis.
- Acknowledge **all emotions, both positive and negative** as being **natural** and normal and not always a matter of choice.
- Recognise **behaviour as communicative** (relational not behavioural model).
- Demonstrating empathy when the stakes are low creates a good foundation.

Step 3: Setting Limits (if needed)

Validate the emotion and label the feeling

...BUT...

certain behaviours cannot be accepted.

All children and young people need boundaries and clear expectations to feel safe and secure and to feel that adults have things under control.

Setting limits fairly, consistent, predictably and sensitively supports the development of internal regulation.



Step 3: Examples

- ▶ **Ben: ... ‘the class rules are that we look after school property’.**
- ▶ ‘You’re probably angry that you can’t go out to play with the others now because you have to complete your work first, but these are the class rules for everybody’
- ▶ ‘I can see you’re annoyed but we all need to keep safe in the classroom , and keep chair legs on the floor’

Step 4: Problem solving with the child

Exploration of incident/ behaviour and scaffolding (suggesting/supporting) ideas and actions that could lead to a more productive outcome.

Step 4: Examples

- ▶ 'This is not a safe place to be angry. Let's go to a safe place and then we can talk'
- ▶ 'Next time you're feeling like this, what could you do? How do you think you will react next time or if this happens again'
- ▶ 'You need to work in a group with Ruth or work with me - which do you want to do?'

Rose, 2014

Why is Emotion Coaching Effective?

- Helps children to feel safe and calm down.
- Provides a narrative for connecting emotional and cognitive processes.
- Builds connections between survival brain and human brain
- Creates a process of co-regulation and 'repair'.
- Based on relationships.

Impact on the brain:

You get out what you put in

- ▶ The more **brain pathways** are used, the more established they become, the easier they are to use and the more they become the **chosen routes**
- ▶ Our minds are **continually shaped** by emotions, experiences, relationships, opportunities, attitudes, values and beliefs, knowledge and genes
- ▶ There is an **instinctive priority** of attachment over the brain's exploratory system: Feeling **Safe and Secure** is more important than **Learning**



Activity: Spot the Emotion Coach



Training based on Emotion Coaching UK training package

See www.emotioncoachinguk.com for more details





Thank you!

