

Helping children communicate their emotions



Multilingual Families Lab conducted a survey on children's communication during COVID-19.

201 Anglophone, Francophone and Hispanophone families answered our questionnaire and have shared what would be useful for their children.

Thanks for your participation! Here are the results of the survey. We hope this material is helpful!



How to help children with their difficult emotions in hard times

Children experience many emotions and may not know how to talk about them. That is why they act their emotions out. As a parent, you can help them learn to express their feelings:

- **Understanding and naming feelings and body language:** Help children understand the relation between what happened and the emotion that was caused and the body language of the feeling.
- **Practice naming feelings:** Ask children to practice naming feelings and explaining situations about themselves and others; a good moment to start is when they are calm
- **Responding to feelings:** Teach children different ways to respond to their feelings. Explain with real examples how you deal with your emotions and name alternative ways to react. For example, taking a deep breath, asking for help from an adult, requesting a turn when someone won't share, asking for hugs if sad, and seeking a quiet place to calm down when agitated.
- **Expressing feelings:** Teach your child to express feelings in appropriate ways instead of shouting and screaming. For example, talking about them, drawing them, using picture books and stories.
- **Encouragement:** Praise them when they start using these methods. Tell them what they did well and it is OK to express their feelings.
- **Getting feedback and their opinion:** When they talk about a feeling, explain the situation and how they felt in it in your own words and ask them if that was correct. Let THEM tell you how they feel. Validating their opinion and feeling is very important.

How you feel and act matters

Children copy behaviours they see. So set a good example:



- **Give your feelings space, listen in and respond to them:** Set aside a time to rest, play, take a walk, be alone or do something you like.
- **Model calm behaviour:** In difficult situations or when your child behaves inappropriately stay calm and act the way you want your child to learn and behave.
- **Don't take it personally:** Tantrums are about uneasy and mixed feelings, not you!
- **Show empathy and create a safe environment to express feelings:** When your child is distressed, it is important to be gentle, empathetic and connected with them while trying to calm them down and ask them about their feelings.

Maintain regular schedules and everyday routines

Having daily schedules, routines and habits help us calm anxiety and stay healthy



- Try to sleep, wake up and have breakfast at a regular time.
- Find a workplace at home for everyone, with few distractions.
- Organize work times but also breaks for you and your children (such as fun physical activities after learning time)!
- Communicate your work hours so that your children know when your workday ends.
- Schedule lunch, snacks, and dinner time, and discuss as a family. In the afternoons, plan play times or exercises together.



Staying in touch is essential

The Covid-19 has changed our daily lives bringing with it many restrictions, so help children stay connected to friends and family through telephone or other online means.

- http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/teaching_emotions.pdf<https://ptaourchildren.org/kids-staying-connected-during-covid-19/>
- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Working-and-Learning-from-Home-COVID-19.aspx>
- <https://news.fiu.edu/2020/watching-smart,-avoiding-news-overload-in-the-time-of-coronavirus>
- <https://childmind.org/article/how-to-avoid-passing-anxiety-on-to-your-kids/>
- <https://www.thepragmaticparent.com/helping-your-child-express-their-emotions/>

Do not forget that we are experiencing exceptional and challenging times, so if you or a member of your family needs help, do not hesitate to seek professional advice.

Visit our lab website to see other useful infographics and more!

<https://bilingualacquisition.ca/>

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