

FOSTERING DIFFERENCE

HELPING CHILDREN MANAGE EMOTIONS

How Difficulties with Emotional Regulation Affect Your
Childs Behaviour

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***‘When little people are overwhelmed
by big emotions it’s our job to share
our calm, not join their chaos’***

L.R. Knost, Gottman Institute

Acknowledgment:

This resource is part of a series of resources for foster parents who are raising children living with developmental difference caused by early life adversity. The guides are intended to provide general educational information only, and are not a substitute for professional assessment and intervention.

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Why is it important to help children learn to manage emotions?

It is important for children to learn how to value and express emotions. Children who freely express a range of emotions and can regulate their emotions well tend to have better peer relationships, stronger social connections, and better educational outcomes. Children who have these skills tend to have better relationships; more satisfying employment, and sound mental well-being throughout their later life. One of the main gift you can give children is to teach them to value, accept and managing their feelings in a socially acceptable way.

One of the greatest gifts you can give children is to teach them to value, accept and managing their feelings in a socially acceptable way.

Many foster children have difficulty in managing and expressing strong emotions. There are **three** main reasons why:

First, children's emotional development can be **delayed**. Children who have been raised in a family that does not value emotional expression; does not provide adequate stimulation; and where there is parental neglect or abuse are at risk of delayed development. Growing up in an abusive or neglecting family environment often means your child won't have a vocabulary for describing feelings ('feelings words'); or for describing how feelings affect them. Growing up where feelings are not valued or discussed as part of daily interactions will also result in delayed emotional development. Delayed emotional development usually means children lack the words to name and express emotions. A child with this difficulty will present as much younger than their actual age in their ability to talk about feelings. While delayed emotional development is common amongst children in care, delays in development usually respond to a supportive and enriching home environment.

Second, children can learn that some feelings are **unsafe**. A child who is ridiculed or humiliated for expressing vulnerability or sadness learns very quickly to hide these emotions from others. A child who is physically punished for expressing anger learns to suppress anger in order to keep safe. A child who has experienced overwhelming trauma and fear learns to avoid any feelings that even resemble fear, so that he doesn't have to be reminded of that trauma. A child who relies on this means of 'coping by avoiding' can become so cut off from emotions that it becomes difficulty for them to express any emotions, even positive ones. Children in foster care are likely to have learned that feelings make them vulnerable, and expressing emotions is unsafe.



Finally, children can also learn to **distort** their emotions. A child raised with a reliable and responsive caregiver learns to express emotions freely; confident that no matter what they feel, they are loved and cared for. A small child who feels angry, sad, or frustrated will become overwhelmed with emotion. They will be assisted to regulate by their caregiver. Through this co-regulation, the child eventually learns that strong emotions are safe and temporary. The caregiver remains calm and it is this calmness that helps the infant to regulate, calm and feel safe.

If a child is raised by an abusive caregiver, or one that does not reliably respond to their distress, they **learn a very different lesson** about feelings and strong emotions. The child learns that their emotions are not important enough to elicit care. Your child may have learned that they have to escalate and exaggerate their distress in order for their parent to respond. Or your child may have learned that expressing distress makes it more likely their parent will ignore or neglect them. A child with this kind of caregiver learns to suppress their genuine distress, or act as though they aren't upset, so that they do not risk their caregiver abandoning them.

In other words, children with abusive or neglectful parents learn that the expression of their feelings is **CONDITIONAL** and that they need to **DISTORT** their feelings in some way so that they can ensure they are not abandoned by their parent (by minimising, exaggerating or masking their authentic emotions). Distortions in emotional expression reflect a child's implicit beliefs about whether or not authentic and vulnerable feelings are acceptable.

The overly-dramatic, angry and demanding child is likely to have a powerful belief that being overly demanding is the only way to ensure adult attention.

The extremely self-reliant child that does not cry when hurt is likely to have a powerful belief that their emotions cannot be tolerated by others.

While these distorted displays of emotion can be used consciously to 'manipulate' carers; in most instances the child is unaware of their behaviour and will need a supportive environment to re-learn how to safely express emotions.

To sum up, if feelings are not tolerated, encouraged or valued in a child's family, then a child can't develop a good understanding of their own authentic emotions and needs. Physically abusive or explosive parents are also poor role models for how to manage strong emotions. Parents that berate children for crying or needing attention teach children to be ashamed of their feelings and that feelings don't matter. As a result, children may not recognise their own feelings and emotions; may not know the words to describe them; may not understand that emotions are normal, safe and temporary; and may have learned to suppress or exaggerate their emotions to elicit adult support.



If a child's feelings are not TOLERATED, encouraged or valued, then a child can't develop a good understanding of their own authentic emotions and needs.

So What Does Difficulty in Emotional Regulation look like?

So how can you tell if your child has difficulty in managing emotions? Difficulties will look different at each age and stage (See Child Development Milestones resource in this series). Whatever age your child is, however, there are three main areas that they are likely to struggle with.

First, children can have difficulty in **recognising and naming** emotions. Learning to accurately identify and name feelings is the first step in learning to manage them. Many children have not yet developed a language for talking about emotions and helping them develop and value a 'feelings' vocabulary will be important.

Second, children can have trouble **connecting feelings with bodily sensations** (understanding how emotions are experienced). Children may need support to understand how their feelings affect their bodies; both in ways that are similar to other children, and in ways that are unique to them.

Third, children can have difficulty in **regulating and expressing** emotions appropriately and in a socially acceptable way. Children can be over-controlled, or under-controlled in their emotional expression; both of which are problematic. They can have very few socially acceptable ways of self-calming and need support to build in self-regulation activities into their lives.

Your child should be supported with each of these areas in the sequence listed above. As a child develops, each of the skills above is normally learned sequentially; with each stage of emotional development building on the one preceding it. Children need to be able to recognise and name feelings before they can understand how emotions affect them; or understand how to safely and appropriately express their feelings.

This means that if you want to strengthen your child's ability to manage emotion; you should start with the first step-building your child's emotional vocabulary (learning to recognise and name emotions). Once your child has some language to describe emotions, they then have the language foundation from which they can learn more complex skills -like the next skill of connecting their feelings to bodily sensations. Once this connection is made, it is easier for children to begin to practice strategies for self-regulation and calming. Let's look at suggestions for building each skill area in turn.



Children need to be able to recognise and name feelings before they can understand how emotions affect them; or how to safely and appropriately express their feelings.

Trouble with recognising and naming feelings

Emotional literacy is one foundation of emotional development. Emotional literacy is the ability to recognise emotions in yourself and in others and to have a language to describe these emotions. You and I might take this ability for granted. The chances are that we grew up in an environment where conversations included feelings words and talking about how others might feel; and that communicating about feelings was safe. But children who are placed in care can have difficulty in recognising and naming emotions for a range of reasons.

Your child may not have experienced a language rich environment in which family members valued talking about feelings. It can be very difficult for children who missed out on this early language enrichment to develop emotional literacy. Research has shown that foster children are less able to name feeling words compared to other children of the same age. It will be important for you to prioritise building your child's emotional vocabulary (feelings words); and their ability to recognise and name their feelings.

Your child's experience of abuse can also affect how well they are able to recognise their feelings. Children who have been abused can become so disconnected from their emotions so that they cannot even recognise basic feelings (fear, sadness, anger). Some children can recognise a limited range of feelings (like anger or fear), but not other emotions. This kind of 'switching off' from emotions is a type of survival mechanism that a child adopts very early in life to ensure that they don't feel, or express, painful feelings that might attract punishment. Your child may need to feel safe before they are able to recognise and name feelings that haven't previously been safe.

To sum up, your child's early experiences can leave them without enough 'describing' words for communicating feelings. This is the reason why early and focussed teaching of feelings words should be a priority early on in your child's placement with you.



So how do you recognise that your child has difficulty in recognising and naming feelings?

- Your child may lack the vocabulary to explain how they are feeling.
- Your child regularly responds with a limited repertoire of feelings words. -When you ask how they are feeling their answer will not vary according to the circumstances.
- Your child doesn't have the words to describe how others are feeling.
- Your child appears to have little awareness of what they, or others, are feeling.
- Your child doesn't seem to experience a full range of emotions (for example does not show their sadness as expected).
- Your child may have trouble recognising bodily reactions as indicators of strong feelings (e.g., butterfly's in the stomach as a sign of fear/or of being excited).

How can you build your child's ability to recognise and name feelings?

A child's vocabulary and language is the foundation upon which they develop the capacity for self-expression, self-awareness and self-regulation. Developing a child's feelings vocabulary is the foundation upon which they can learn how to describe their inner world and express complex emotions. If children don't have the ability to recognise and name feelings, they are unlikely to have enough language to communicate in ways other than through their (bad) behaviour.

In very young children, the focus should initially be on **learning the basic feelings words** (happy, sad, angry, scared). Younger children will prefer to build language skills through play- you can use playtime to as an opportunity to discuss emotions as they come up. Take a simple approach to identifying and *naming* feelings: offer two choices 'Is your dolly happy or sad?'- and focus on what feelings *look like* 'He is frowning- Is he sad or angry?'. This kind of approach is more productive than forcing children into more structured discussions about their feelings. See below for ideas on how to use play to build a child's feelings vocabulary.

By the time a child is school-age, they can usually tolerate a mixture of games, drawing activities and talking activities. See the suggestions below on how to build a feelings vocabulary in the school-age child.



Generally, adolescents are more sophisticated in their conversations about inner experiences like emotions, thoughts and sensations. Remember that even adolescents can actually be functioning at a much younger developmental age in terms of their understanding and recognition of how emotions affect them. Adolescents may also have already developed unhelpful ways of coping with intolerable emotions (e.g., substance use, withdrawing, self-harm). Where this is the case, it may be necessary to seek out additional professional support to help them to recognise the link between their feelings and their use of self-destructive behaviours.

Here are some suggestions on how you can start to build your child's feelings vocabulary:

- Younger children can be helped to learn about feelings through their play. Provide a range of toys to use in imaginative play; including toy animals that can be used to convey different emotions. Examples might include 'angry' zoo animals like lions, & tigers; 'scary' animals like spiders and snakes; and 'loving' animals such as bunnies or cats. This will provide a natural means to talk about and act-out emotions through the animal figures. You can support them to learn feelings words by introducing starting with simple feelings words like 'angry' 'happy' 'sad' and 'scared'.
- To expand your child's vocabulary of feelings words, begin with simple feelings words, like sad, happy, angry, scared. Gradually build and extend their feelings vocabulary by using slightly more complex feelings words to suit the situation. For example, the feeling word 'scared' can be extended into more complex feeling words such as 'frightened', 'anxious', 'apprehensive', 'worried', 'nervous' or 'terrified' over time, depending on your child's age.
- Make a photo book with photos of familiar faces, showing different feelings. Let your child read the book and tell you what he/she sees in each photo.
- Use imaginative play as a way to model and teach feelings. For example 'Doggie fell over. I think she might feel sad. How do you think she feels?'
- Make feelings 'flashcards'. Feelings flashcards can be made from drawings, magazine pictures, or photos that depict a range of feelings. Have your child identify what feelings are being depicted. Start with simple emotions (happy, sad, angry). Help your child to identify the parts of the face or the body that let them know what the feeling is. As the child gets more comfortable with this task, you can elaborate on feeling words. For example, instead of identifying anger, you can use pictures depicting more subtle variations on anger (e.g., annoyed, irritated, impatient).



- Use your child's favourite TV shows or story books as opportunities to practise identifying the emotions in the different characters. Start by identifying basic emotions (happy, sad); then start a conversation about what might have led the story character to feel that way; or what might happen next. Ask does that character always feel (happy, sad) or do they sometimes have other feelings? In this way you can extend your child's ability to imagining how others are feeling, to recognise others' feelings; and to understand that feelings (even bad feelings) don't last forever. The ability to imagine another's perspective is an important social skill that is associated with strong social and peer relationships later in life.
- Take it in turns to pull 'feelings faces'. See if your child can guess how you are feeling and guess about one or two things that could make you feel that way. Have your child take a turn to pretend to show an emotion on their face (they might like to have a mirror to use to watch their reflection as they do so). Offer one or two guesses about what might make them feel happy/ sad – discuss.

For more suggestions for the very young child see: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html>

Trouble connecting feelings with bodily sensations

Children also need to be able to make the connection between their feelings and their bodies.

When we feel stressed we recognise that our hearts race; and we might get sweaty palms or a dry mouth. Because we understand this connection, we know that if our palms suddenly get sweaty and our hearts start to race, there is probably something happening that we need to be afraid of. Our bodies act as our early warning signals- providing us with very important information that we need to act on. We take the bodily sensations associated with fear very seriously.

This very important connection between bodily sensations and feelings has often not been learned or does not work efficiently for many children placed in care. For example, children who have been neglected may become disconnected from bodily sensations such as hunger as well as their feelings because these signals have been consistently ignored by their caregivers. Where children have lived in an environment of constant fear and stress; children can become hypersensitive to bodily sensations; but many no longer register bodily sensations very well at all.



Children can also misjudge bodily sensations; interpreting harmless body signals as dangerous. For example exercise can trigger panic reactions in some traumatised children. This is because the raised heart rate in exercise reminds them of a past trauma -in which the fear they experienced also caused their heart to beat rapidly. Because of this experience, any time their heart rate rises they associate it with overwhelming feelings of terror. These children will need a lot of support to discriminate between bodily signals that *accurately signal danger* and *non-dangerous situations* in which they may also feel similar bodily sensations.

Children entering care can also have no lived bodily experience of feeling relaxed, happy and stress free. A family environment of constant stress can mean that bodily sensations of stress are normal they have no experience of, and cannot recognise what the body feels like when they are happy and relaxed. These children may need to practice feeling the kind of bodily relaxation normally associated with feeling happy (through yoga, meditation or mindfulness) until it begins to feel normal to them.

Some children have learned to rely on 'disconnecting' from their body and feelings to varying degrees as a means of coping with overwhelming fear. In extreme cases, these children can be totally unaware of bodily sensations and feelings. A child who copes like this may not cry when injured- *almost as if their body no longer registers pain*. Many children who have 'shut off' feelings as a means of coping with stress can also experience a range of physical illnesses (called 'somatic' symptoms); thought to come from being unable to express powerful emotions. The child who has frequent headaches or stomach aches with no medical cause may in fact be reacting to *unrecognised and unexpressed feelings*, particularly anger or fear.

So how do you recognise that your child has difficulty in connecting feelings and bodily sensations?

- Your child may not show distress or cry despite being injured.
- Your child may have a lot of somatic complaints (e.g., headaches, sleeping problems or stomach ache).
- Your child may show signs of tuning out or frequent daydreaming; often appear 'spaced out'.
- Your child may show restricted range of emotions; e.g., only shows anger or sadness; does not seem to experience the full range of emotions.
- Your child may misrecognise bodily signals- for example confusing fear with hunger or thirst.
- Your child may be hyper-sensitive to bodily sensations; for example any exercise that raises heart rate can cause a panic reaction.



How can you build your child's ability to recognise and name feelings?

Children will need assistance in connecting what they are feeling in their bodies with the emotions that they are experiencing. Here are some suggestions on how you can start to strengthen your child's connection between their bodies and their feelings.

- Teach your child about the signs and symptoms of distress in their bodies. For example, a dry mouth, racing heartbeat and wobbly tummy can be signs of anxiety, fear or apprehension. This is *a connection that your child may not be aware of*. Clenched fists, pounding heart, and tensed body can be signs of anger that your child may not be acknowledging. Remember that modelling or 'talking aloud' about your own body signs of fear or anger can help your child to realise that these kinds of body signals are experienced by everyone. Two activities that can help with this are "Emotions Face" and "Body Paint" activities:
 - *Emotions Face*: Create a template of a blank face by drawing a large face outline on a piece of card or paper. Ask children to think of times that they felt different emotions (happy, sad, angry); and encourage them to show how these emotions affected their faces by drawing onto the template (for example, scrunched eyebrows, squinting eyes, tightness in the forehead, flushing of the cheeks). Guiding questions can include: 'What does this feeling do to your eyes?' or 'How does this feeling make your skin, your forehead, your cheeks etc. feel?' This discussion can become more complex over time, as your child develops increased awareness of the connection between feelings and bodily sensations. Your child may like to colour in and keep their 'happy', 'angry' and 'sad' feelings face. You can use these pictures as a prompt for discussion when the feelings arise.
 - *Body Paint*: Create an outline of a body shape on a large piece of butcher's paper. Have your child identify and colour in areas that are affected with each feeling. You can have each feeling represented by a specific colour. For example, ask your child to use a blue crayon to colour in areas of the body that are affected when they are sad; then repeat using red for anger etc. Use this opportunity to explain that it is normal for strong feelings to affect your body. Give examples from your own experience to show how strong body sensations are normal. This kind of sharing and normalising of feelings is important.



- When your child complains of stomach ache or headache, try gently introducing the idea that ‘Sometimes our body tells us how we are feeling, if we learn to listen to it’. For example, you can say ‘Sometimes our body tells us we are scared by giving us tummy aches or making our tummies feel like they are full of butterflies. When that happens to me I know it is my body telling me I am afraid and I need to ask for help’. It is important not to dismiss these symptoms, but *accept them as real way of showing emotional pain*. Over time, talking about, and normalising, somatic (body) symptoms will help your child to build their emotional awareness and make the connection to strong feelings.

Connecting bodily sensations with feelings happens more quickly for some children than others. Persistence and daily ‘practice’ can be key.

Trouble expressing and regulating feelings in socially acceptable ways

Children can also have difficulty in authentically expressing and regulating strong emotions.

Children with this difficulty tend to have one of two ‘*emotional styles*’.

On the ONE hand, children can be *emotionally over-controlled* and, on the OTHER hand, they could have very little ability to control their emotions (*emotionally under-controlled*).

Emotionally over-controlled children can have trouble letting feelings out– they are emotional restricted and under-react in situations that warrant strong feelings. Emotionally under-controlled children have the opposite problem; they regularly over-react to minor frustrations with explosive and extreme emotional outbursts.

Each of these emotional coping styles causes problems for children, although the emotionally over-reactive style is much more likely to wreak havoc on your household. Children with both of these emotional regulation styles will need support to develop more healthy ways to cope with feelings. These will be explained in more detail later.



So how do you recognise if your child has difficulty in expressing and regulating feelings?

- Your child may have limited emotional expression (e.g. rarely cries or shows anger).
- Your child may hide away or appear ashamed when upset or emotional.
- Your child may appear to ‘tune out’ when strong feelings emerge.
- Your child may have difficulty expressing emotions (e.g., sadness) in situations that others would.
- Your child may appear to over react to relatively minor upsets (emotionally over-reactive).
- Your child may take a long time to calm down following outburst.

How can you build your child’s ability to express and regulate feelings?

It is worth remembering that your child’s ability to manage or regulate emotions is based on them having already mastered the ability to recognise and connect bodily sensations and feelings. Your child needs to have learned to *recognise* feelings before they can learn to *tolerate* them; and then learn to *manage* them. Once the foundation skills are learned, the next stage is helping your child to express and regulate their feelings.

You play a key role in helping your child to develop and maintain these skills. When it comes to talking about managing feelings, it can be helpful to remind children that they have the power to be the boss of their feelings, rather than their feelings bossing them around. This is different from saying that they will always be successful in managing their feelings- but it helps them understand that they have choices in what they do about their feelings.

- Naming feelings is the first step to teaching regulation, Respond to your child’s feelings by reflecting back to them what they are feeling, using feelings words. For example, say ‘You feel really angry right now’ or ‘You feel really disappointed that you can’t go to the park because it is raining’. Reflecting back feelings helps a child to connect with that feeling. While your child may be very wound up, staying calm at this point helps them to process emotions more efficiently.



- When challenging feelings can't be avoided, reflect back to them the emotion they are feeling and suggest what to do about it. For example, 'I know you are afraid. Let me give you a cuddle and see if that helps. When this is over, we can go for a ride on our bikes'.
- The next step is to introduce co-regulation and coping strategies. You can suggest ways to cope, by giving examples 'When I get angry I like to go for a run with the dog; or hit my pillow that helps me calm down'. When you can stay calm and offer choices it gives your child the message that you can cope with their strong feelings. The goal is to convey to your child that strong feelings are normal and not to be avoided; and that there are always ways that feelings can be managed without harming others.
- Each child will have preferred ways to calm. Some like to retreat or spend time alone. Others like to do something active to release body tension. Your child may like a corner with soft cushions or a makeshift 'chill-out' tent to hide in. For others it may be a trampoline space or tree house. Involve your child in creating their own private zone filled with things that help them soothe. Those that need to move to de-stress need a different kind of support. Keep a basket of bouncy balls, basketballs or foam bats for children who need activity to soothe- so they can take them as they head out the door to calm down.
- Remember, in the midst of a meltdown, it is important to **tell your child what to do**, rather than what to stop doing. We often tell distressed children 'stop screaming' or 'stop kicking'- but it can be more helpful to tell children *what to do* in stressful situations -e.g., 'Go jump on the trampoline' or 'Run around the backyard 10 times; let's see how fast you can do it'.
- When emotions are running high, **use short, simple sentences**. Children will find it difficult to process and respond to long sentences or lots of information when their arousal level is high. Short sentences are much more effective; for example 'You're angry..... Go for a run', rather than 'I can see you are getting angry and I'm worried you are going to lose your temper. What are you going to do to calm yourself down right now so I don't have to pack up these toys?'
- **Notice when your child is successful**. You might like to praise them specifically for managing their feelings well; for example 'I could see that you were upset. I am really pleased that you used the trampoline to calm yourself down. You are really getting good at knowing when to use your cool-down ideas.' Even if your child is not entirely successful, praise their efforts!



- Children can benefit from learning stress reducing breathing techniques that can be used when emotions threaten to overwhelm them. Deep steady breathing is extremely soothing; teaching your child to take 2-3 deep breaths when the going gets tough – it's an easy to use strategy that will always be on hand. Younger children can achieve the same effect through blowing an imaginary bubble; using deep slow breaths.
- Remember, it is a good idea to practice your child's regulation strategy with them ahead of time when they are feeling reasonably calm. Using rehearsal strategies like this (similar to 'fire drills') can help this behaviour to become automatic at times of high arousal or when things become tense.
- Helping children to learn how to rate their feelings can be useful. For example, a feelings thermometer can be used to rate feelings at any one point in time; or to track changes in your child's mood's over time. This can be a concrete way to show children their progress in becoming the boss of their feelings.
- For children who don't like to talk about emotions, developing a feelings box can be useful. This box can contain objects that can help the child self sooth in response to different emotions. For example, your child might include a stress ball in the feelings box to grab when feeling angry. An object that is associated with feeling safe, such as a picture of a loved one or soft toy, can be useful to when your child is feeling apprehensive.

The impact of trauma and dissociation on children's feelings

It is important to remember that some children will need professional support in addition to the activities described in this resource. Extreme trauma can overwhelm a child's ability to cope. A child who has experienced prolonged and severe trauma will need specialised and tailored support to connect with their feelings. This is because traumatic experiences can cause a child to 'shut off' and 'disconnect' themselves from any strong feelings.



This is a protective strategy that makes sense during situations of intolerable fear; however there is a risk that it can become more of a personality or automatic coping style over time. This means that the affected child can become chronically disconnected from, and unaware of, their own feelings most of the time. They may be reluctant to experience *any strong emotions* because these feelings are associated with extremely unpleasant events in their lives. They can come to rely on 'tuning out' or 'dissociating' from events surrounding them as a means of coping. For extremely traumatised children, the journey to healthy emotional expression may take time. These children will benefit from additional therapeutic input from a qualified professional.

Summary

Poor emotional regulation is a core difficulty in many childhood disorders that are associated with challenging behaviour. Many challenging behaviours are caused by difficulties in regulating emotions. Supporting your child to tolerate and manage strong emotions can help them to relinquish challenging behaviour.

Children who are able to recognise and respond well to their feelings and the feelings of others and express their emotions in healthy and socially acceptable ways are better able to make and keep friends. Good emotional intelligence is associated with better life satisfaction, and better educational and vocational outcomes.

Learning to identify feelings is the first step in learning to manage them. Many children have not developed a language for talking about emotions.

Children can have difficulty in naming and managing strong feelings. They may be disconnected from feelings or 'stuck' in a limited range of emotions. Children who have had unresponsive parenting can learn to distort feelings in order to elicit caregivers' response. Children who have been traumatised have experienced emotions that overwhelm their ability to cope. They will need support to learn that it is safe to experience strong emotions.



Remember, supporting your child to develop emotional competence involved three basic steps that build on each other in a progressive way:

- Start with simple strategies for building emotional vocabulary- teach feelings words. Offer choices to help you child build their emotional literacy (e.g., are you feeling angry or sad?). Extend your child's feeling words gradually (e.g., scared- can be extended over time to more subtle emotions such as nervous, anxious, worried).
- Next, teach your child how their emotions affect their bodies. Normalise bodily reactions (e.g., rapid heart-beat is part of our bodies stress reaction). Gently encourage children to see the connection between somatic symptoms and emotional pain (e.g., headaches).
- Teach your child techniques for calming; both assisted by you (co-regulation); but also give them strategies that they can use unassisted – for when you are not available (see also the resource in this series 'guide to Sensory Regulation Difficulties').

To find out more about Developmental Difference and your child,
visit

www.fosteringdifference.com.au

