

PARENT INFORMATION 2

Managing Moods With Mapping

Mood is often associated with the word 'moodiness', which for most parents, results in a resounding 'uuughhh.' Managing a moody child is anything but fun.

Firstly, it is important to establish that mood management is a developmental process. The developing human brain takes years and years to wire-up the connections between the emotional centre in the brain (that is very much the tantruming toddler – I want it and I want it now!) and the part of the brain responsible for rational thought and emotional regulation.

Here's an example. A two year old will pass by the sweets in the shopping centre and will repeatedly demand to have some... NOW! That same child - at age twelve - should be able to walk past the sweets and accept, "Not today, maybe next time," without a tantrum. That child has learned to stay calm and control his/her feelings. It's a process of maturation in the human brain with assistance from the outside world (yourself, teachers, grandparents, peers) that helps children to manage big feelings. It would have taken many trips past the sweets, with lots of support initially, and then an increasing reliance on the child's own skills at managing their emotional response, to now be able to walk past and accept "No" for an answer.

There's good news and bad news here. The good news is that most children get there eventually - with consistent help from the outside world, and the natural process of their brain maturing. The bad news is that it takes longer for some children to learn the skill of emotional self-regulation than others, which can be very trying for parents, siblings and teachers.

The earlier children develop a good vocabulary to express their feelings, develop an awareness of when the feeling is starting and know how to manage it, the better they are at learning the skills of emotional self-regulation - which in turns helps with mood management.



What's the difference between a feeling and a mood? A feeling or emotion is what a child experiences in the moment; it might last a while, and then fades. A feeling that lingers rather than fading, may grow into a mood, lasting anywhere from an hour, to a day, to days.

In older children, hormones can play a role in moodiness, but parents understand that this is a normal part of growing-up, and will make accommodations around the times when their child is hormonally moody.

It is essential however, for parents to help their child to take increasing responsibility for managing their mood as they mature. There's little enjoyment in managing a moody teen

who still needs a parent to 'jolly' them out of their mood. While it's reasonable to be available to try to help a child to change their mood, it's a life skill to develop for them to develop the necessary TOOLS for managing their own moods.

The earlier children are taught about feelings, how they start, what helps them to grow and what helps them to linger and become a mood, the better their skills for monitoring themselves emotionally, and being able to do something, **before** it develops into an unpleasant mood.

The Triple B's 4 What's My Mood helps your child to understand the contributing factors to a mood. Here they are:

Brain 'What am I thinking; what am I telling myself?' ***Your child's self-talk is very powerful in how they manage their mood.***

Breathing 'What's happening with my breathing; is it slow and relaxed or fast and 'jerky'?' ***Breathing rate tells the brain whether the body is relaxed or tense. Controlling breathing is essential to mood.***

Body 'What's happening with my muscles; are they tense and tight, or soft and loose? And what about my shoulders; are they hunched up around my ears, or are they sitting loosely at the bottom of my neck?' ***A loose, relaxed body helps with breathing.***

During this week, talk to your child about the Triple B's – for either a positive or a negative feeling. Excitement, for example, leads to positive body tension, rapid breathing and lots of excited internal and external chatter.

This week your child will be mapping their mood to develop an awareness of the different moods that they can, will, and do experience over a day. Again, this is a useful discussion point, especially if you reference your own mood and how you might have used The Triple B's for What's My Mood to focus on your Brain, Breathing and Body.

REFLECTION POINT:

How do you monitor and manage your mood? Do you think to yourself, 'I'm in a bad mood today!' If you do, how do you then manage it? Quite often, adults use The Triple B's without knowing it. A stern talk to yourself: 'Snap out of it', is often followed by deep breaths, a loosening of the shoulders and stretching of tense muscles. How can you incorporate The Triple B's into your daily life to better assist your own mood management?