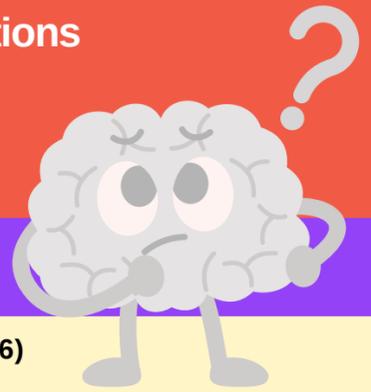


Beyond the Socials -

Helping your Child / Teen Cope with Difficult Emotions



EMOTIONAL AWARENESS STRATEGIES

1 Support your child / teen to name their emotions to better understand and express what they're feeling.

FOR PRETEENS (9-12)
Share your observations (e.g., You might be feeling sad because you're going to miss seeing your friends' posts) or your own personal examples to prompt them.

FOR TEENS (13-16)
Use open-ended questions to encourage reflection and identification of their emotions (e.g., How do you feel about the social media delay?).

2 Help your child / teen become aware of the physical sensations of emotions. Noticing these signs early can help them manage their emotions before they become overwhelming.

FOR PRETEENS (9-12)
Share simple or personal examples to build understanding before inviting reflection (e.g., sometimes when I feel worried, my breathing gets quicker, have you felt that before?).

FOR TEENS (13-16)
Use open ended questions to encourage self-awareness (e.g., what do you notice happening in your body when you feel angry?

Offer prompts if needed - Does your heart beat faster? Do you feel hot or clench your fists?).

3 Model emotional awareness by weaving it into everyday conversations

You may have regular check-ins during school drop-offs and pickups or share with other family members how you felt throughout the day when your child / teen is present.

As young people often learn through observation, model discussions about your own feelings to help your child / teen build emotional literacy and feel comfort with talking about their feelings.

4 Normalise and validate your child / teen's emotions about the social media changes

Recognise feelings expressed such as anxiety, loneliness, frustration, anger, confusion, or disappointment.

Try to put yourself in their shoes and acknowledge that, having grown up with social media, losing access to platforms they enjoy is a significant loss.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRATEGIES



1 Reassure your child that emotions are temporary and will pass

When they're in the middle of a strong emotion, such as anger, focus on showing empathy and support rather than offering solutions, as they may not be ready to take on practical suggestions at that moment.

2 Provide your child / teen with space

They may need time to process their emotions but let them know that you are there for them when they need you.

3 Have open and collaborative conversations with your child / teen about different ways to manage difficult emotions

You might share what helps you (e.g., "When I feel sad, I like to talk to my sister") and then encourage your child / teen to think about what might work best for them. There are many strategies we can use to regulate strong emotion - it is good to know a few that are helpful personally. Examples include exercise, doing something creative, listening to music, taking time out, deep breathing, talking to a friend etc.

4 Reframe boredom by highlighting its benefits

When we're not engaged in an activity, boredom allows the mind to wander, sparking creative, reflective, and imaginative thinking. Without social media, your child / teen may have difficulties coping with the discomfort of boredom and experience frustration, irritability, or restlessness. But learning to sit with boredom builds resilience and tolerance, so it's helpful to explore techniques that teach your child / teen how to self soothe during these moments.

5 Support your child's / teen's autonomy

Offer choices when exploring strategies to assist with managing strong emotions. This helps ease the transition by giving them a sense of control during a time that may feel out of their control.

FOR PRETEENS (9-12)
With preteens, you might present a few options for them to select from (e.g., *would you like to go for a walk, head to the beach, or take ten deep breaths?*).

FOR TEENS (13-16)
With teens, focus on discussing the strategies they have tried in the past and found to be helpful and let them take the lead in choosing what they want to do.

6 Brainstorm healthy distraction techniques with your child / teen

Distraction can ease strong emotions by giving them a break from the situation and time to calm down to process their emotions before reacting and/or problem solving the situation (e.g., listening to music, calling a friend, going to the shops, playing a game, etc).

7 Practice grounding exercises with your child / teen

Grounding brings our attention to the present and calms us down by easing physical reactions like a racing heart. Grounding exercises also help with boredom, as they help to self soothe during times of discomfort or restlessness.

Below are three examples you can use with your child but there are many other types of grounding exercises available on the internet – find one or two that work best for your child.

Rhythm
Tap your feet on the floor. Find an object to make a soft sound, tap your fingers on the table or lightly tap a glass or other surface until you find a pleasant sound. Create a rhythm and repeat it, staying focused on the beginning and end of each sound you create.

Categories
Choose one of the categories below and name as many items as you can in that category. For example:

- Fruit / Vegetables
- Movies / TV shows
- Songs
- Animals
- Countries / cities

Move
Wriggle your toes in your shoes, paying attention to the sensations as you move each one. See which toes you can move independently of the others. Do the same with your fingers, feeling the stretch in your muscles, the tension and relaxation as you move.