About Session 4:
Self-care, problem-solving and coaching fears and worries

Overview
- Warm-up: guided relaxation
- Self-care
- Home activity review and reflection on the week
- Role-plays
- Being an Emotion Coach (if not covered in Session 3)
- Non-derogatory and non-critical parenting (optional)
- Problem Solving
- Coaching children to manage fears and worries
- The Noodle
- Feedback from participants
- Home activities

Home activities
- Continue to practise the skills of Emotion Coaching. Notice times that you are being critical or derogatory
- Record Emotion Talk Time or emotion coaching experiences in your Emotion Diary. Note incidents of anger and stronger emotions in your child
- Teach your child The Noodle technique
- Bring Emotion Diary to next session. Next week there will be a focus on anger.
- Read your child the turtle story or another book about anger.
Parenting styles

These four parenting styles were identified by Gottman and his colleagues. Most people use a mix of styles, but one is usually more dominant than the others and thus has the greatest impact on children.

Emotion Coaching style of parenting

Parents whose style is largely Emotion Coaching:

- see emotions as a time for intimacy and teaching
- value children’s emotions
- make time to talk about feelings with children
- try to find out why their child is feeling the way they do
- help their child to be aware of the feeling, label it, and express it
- show empathy and seeks closeness
- avoid criticising or labelling the child (such as stupid, shy, mean, silly)
- are able to remain calm and help the child to solve a problem
- are aware of his/her own emotions.

Their child learns to trust their feelings, regulate their own emotions, and solve problems. S/he has high self-esteem, learns well and gets along well with others.

Permissive style of parenting

Parents whose style is largely permissive:

- accept emotion but do not help their child understand the emotion
- show lots of empathy
- are unable to use their child’s emotions to teach problem solving strategies
- do not set limits
- believe there is little you can do with negative emotions other than ride them out
- are often unclear about the meaning of the child’s emotional experience
- have a ‘hands off’ idea about handling emotions
- show their own emotions but often without being able to resolve them.

Their child might not learn to regulate their emotions. They might have trouble concentrating, forming friendships and getting along with other children, especially when they are emotional.

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Dismissive style of parenting

Parents whose style is largely dismissive:

- ignore their child’s feelings
- believe that it is most important to be positive and not to dwell on negative emotions
- find it hard to stand a child feeling sad, angry, scared etc.
- use distraction as a way to deal with their child’s emotions
- dismiss their child’s emotion as part of ‘being just a child’ or them ‘not really understanding’
- dismiss sadness, and aim to control or hide anger
- find it hard to show their own feelings.

Their child might come to believe that their own feelings are wrong, inappropriate or not valid. They might think that there is something wrong with them because of the way they feel. They might have difficulty regulating their own emotions.

Disapproving style of parenting

Parents whose style is largely disapproving:

- judge and criticise their child’s emotions
- need to set limits on their child’s emotional expression
- view emotions as behaviour that needs to be controlled
- view sadness as ‘the child getting their own way’ or being manipulative
- particularly disapprove of anger
- believe negative emotions are bad parts of a person
- believe that showing emotions is weak, and that children must be tough to survive
- do not show their own emotions unless very angry or depressed.

Like children of parents who use dismissive styles, children of parents who are disapproving might come to believe that their own feelings are wrong, inappropriate or not valid. They might think that there is something wrong with them because of the way they feel. They might have difficulty regulating their own emotions.

Gottman and colleagues found that the outcomes for these children were often more severe. They found links between disapproving parenting styles and later depression, eating disorders, alcohol and drug problems, and antisocial problems.
Problem solving when your child has a problem

When your child has a problem

- listen to the feelings behind the actions and label them
- communicate your understanding before advice giving or problem solving
- reflect empathy and validate feelings where necessary
- help your child to brainstorm options, for example, by asking:
  ‘Hmm. What can we do now?’ or
  ‘What would make things better?’
- together decide on a solution or help your child to choose a solution

Tips

- You might need to weigh up possible solutions. Together, you could ask:
  Is it fair?
  Will it work?
  Is it safe?
  How am I likely to feel?
  How are others likely to feel?
- You might need to set limits around these solutions.
Problem solving when you and your child are in conflict

When you and your child are in conflict:

- listen to the feelings behind the actions and label them
- communicate your understanding before giving advice or trying to solve the problem
- reflect empathy and validate feelings where necessary
- express your own feelings and needs
- help your child to brainstorm options, for example, by asking:
  ‘Hmm. What can we do now?’ or
  ‘What would make things better?’
- together decide on a solution or help your child to choose a solution.

Tips

- You might need to weigh up possible solutions. Together, you could ask:
  Is it fair?
  Will it work?
  Is it safe?
  How am I likely to feel?
  How are others likely to feel?
- You might need to set limits around these solutions.


TUNING IN TO KIDS™ Emotionally Intelligent Parenting
Doing *The Noodle*

This is a script to give you some ideas about helping children relax when they are stressed, anxious, or worried. The main idea is to help children be like a soft, cooked noodle and relax!

Here are the steps:

1. Start by explaining to children that a worried, stressed body is usually stiff – like an uncooked noodle that could be easily broken.
2. To relax, children want to look and feel like a cooked noodle - soft, floppy, and warm.
3. To do this, children loosen up their body parts – by wiggling them, shaking them, and telling them to relax.
4. Children start by telling their toes to wiggle.
5. Then they tell their toes to STOP and feel soft and warm.
6. Then they do the same with their other body parts – starting with their feet, legs, bottom, tummy, hands, arms, shoulders, face and head – until their whole body feels like a soft, cooked noodle lying on a plate.
Teaching *The Noodle* to a child

**Child:** (Squirmy, fidgety, tense, stiff, pacing back and forth, looking worried and stressed)

**Caregiver:** (Notices child) Gosh. You sure are fidgety. Are you worried about starting preschool tomorrow?

**Child:** (Squeaks an unintelligible response. Continues to look anxious)

**Caregiver:** Well, I could see why you might be worried. Starting preschool makes most kids a little nervous. Maybe you could relax a little by trying *The Noodle*. Do you want me to tell you about it?

**Child:** (Continues to look anxious) Kind of.

**Caregiver:** Look. Right now your muscles are stiff and tense, like an uncooked noodle. You could just about break them (caregiver shakes child’s arm and pretends arm breaks off).

**Caregiver:** Oops. (pretends to stick arm back on)

**Caregiver:** Let’s try to relax your body so it’s like a cooked noodle – You know how a noodle is all soft, floppy, and warm? Try lying like this. (Lies down with outstretched legs and arms)

**Child:** (copies caregiver position)

**Caregiver:** Now start by telling your toes to wiggle (wiggles toes)

**Child:** Toes, wiggle! (wiggles toes)

**Caregiver:** Now tell them to STOP and feel warm and soft – like a warm, wet noodle.

**Child:** Toes, stop and feel warm and soft – like a yummy noodle!

**Caregiver:** Now do the same thing with the rest of your body. Like your legs (shakes legs.)
Child: Legs, wiggle! (shakes legs).
  Caregiver: Your bottom wiggles (shakes bottom)

Child: Bottom, wiggle! (shakes bottom).
  Caregiver: Your tummy wiggles (shakes tummy)

Child: Tummy, wiggle! (shakes tummy).
  Caregiver: Your hands (shakes hands)

Child: Hands, wiggle! (shakes hands).
  Caregiver: Your arms (shakes arms)

Child: Arms, wiggle! (shakes arms).
  Caregiver: Your shoulders (shakes shoulders)

Child: Shoulder, wiggle! (shakes shoulders).
  Caregiver: And finally, your head and face (shakes head, rubs face with hands)
  Child: (shakes head and rubs face).

Caregiver: And once you’ve told all your body parts to relax, keep taking deep breaths until your whole body feels like a sleepy noodle lying on a plate.

Child: (child takes deep breaths, pretends to fall asleep, starts snoring).
  Caregiver: Hmm... I guess you’re feeling more relaxed now, huh?

With thanks to Michael Davis from Inflexxion (www.Inflexxion.com)
Emotional self care

The following are ways you can look after your emotional wellbeing. Add to the list things you like to do.

Try to do at least one of these each day:

- have time with a friend
- meditate
- go for a walk, play a game of sport, or do some other exercise
- have a bath
- read a book/magazine
- have one to one time with your partner
- go to a movie
- listen to your favourite music
- do something creative like writing, painting, playing an instrument
- write in a personal diary
- cook your favourite meal
- go out for dinner
- do some gardening.

My personal favourites:

1. ____________________________

2. ____________________________

3. ____________________________
Common worries and fears of children

There are many experiences and things that children find scary and/or worry about. Some children might find it hard to express or communicate their concerns.

It is important for you to be alert to what your child might be fearing or worrying about. These can be opportunities to emotion coach.

Write down any worries your child has. You could also add any fears you had as a child.

1.

2.

3.

Common fears and worries that children often have include:

- The dark
- Heights, spiders, dogs
- Separation from a parent/caregiver
- Peer situations
- Talking or performing in front of others
- Illness or death (either one’s own or someone close to the child)
- Being left behind or not being picked up (from preschool or school)
- School work – for example, getting work wrong or not knowing how to approach a topic
- Meeting new people
- Going to new places/new experiences
- Visitors
- Conflict at home

- Loud or unusual sounds
- Losing control
- Anticipating a new sibling
- Not pleasing you as a parent – fear of disapproval
- Clowns, fantasy animals or Santa!
- Mistakes and embarrassing moments – for example, wetting pants.
- Authority figures
- Change in routine