

Inclusive Developmental and Therapy Center

Big Feelings & Self-Control (Older Children)

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✓ Can I help my child at home?

Yes. To help an older child or teen learn to notice, name and manage big feelings so anger, worry and frustration feel less overwhelming — with you calm and connected beside them. This free program breaks it into simple weekly steps built from proven therapy techniques — things any parent can do at home, in everyday moments, at no cost. It doesn't replace a professional assessment where one is needed, but for many children it makes a real difference, and it never does harm.

Go at your own pace — a new, gentle focus each week.

Download the whole program as a printable PDF.

Includes the signs that mean it's worth seeking extra help.

Big feelings do not stop when childhood ends — for many 8 to 16 year olds they get bigger and more confusing. Anger that boils over, worry that will not switch off, or a small setback that turns into a full meltdown are all common at this age, especially as the brain and body are changing fast. None of it means your child is “bad” or that you have failed as a parent.

What helps most is a calm, connected adult who can stay steady when their child cannot. This program gives you simple things to practise together over six weeks, so your child slowly builds their own toolkit for handling strong emotions. It supports your family, but it does not replace advice from a doctor, counsellor or mental health professional — please reach out if you are worried.

♥ Who this program is for

- ✓ Gets angry quickly or “explodes” over things that seem small
- ✓ Has big meltdowns or shutdowns that feel intense for their age
- ✓ Carries a lot of worry, anxiety or overthinking
- ✓ Finds it very hard to calm down once they are upset
- ✓ Slips into all-or-nothing thinking — “everyone hates me”, “I always fail”

⚡ Important — when to get professional help

This is a supportive home program, not a diagnosis or a substitute for an assessment. Please speak to a professional promptly if:

ANY talk of self-harm, hurting themselves or others, or not wanting to be here — SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY from a doctor or your local emergency service

Ongoing low mood, hopelessness or crying that lasts for weeks

Sudden big changes — withdrawing from friends, sleep, appetite or things they used to enjoy

Feelings that are taking over daily life, school or relationships

Any worry that feels too big to handle on your own — trust your instinct and ask a professional

📍 Getting help where you live

Everything here is free to use **anywhere in the world**. If you'd like a professional to take a closer look, the best next step is someone local to you:

Work with us online, from anywhere. We offer **online sessions and parent coaching** worldwide — book an online consultation and we'll guide you and your child directly.

Talk to your child's **doctor, pediatrician, GP or health visitor** — share what you noticed.

Ask about **free early-childhood or early-intervention services** in your area — many countries offer them for young children (e.g. Early Intervention in the US, NHS referrals in the UK).

Search “**child speech & language therapist near me**”, or ask your doctor for a referral.

Near Multan, Pakistan? You're also warmly welcome in person at our centre — **contact us here**.

☆ **Your step-by-step roadmap**

Move at your child's pace, not the calendar's — the “weeks” are a gentle order, not a race. Repeat any stage as long as it helps.

Week 1 – What feelings are & spotting the early signs

Help your child understand that all feelings are normal, and learn to notice them in their body before they boil over.

Talk together about the idea that feelings are signals, not problems — even anger and worry are trying to tell us something.

Ask where they feel big feelings in their body (hot face, tight chest, clenched fists, racing heart) and name their own early warning signs.

Over the week, gently point out one early sign as it happens: “I can see your shoulders going tense — that's good noticing.”

⚡ **Try this:** Feelings are like a kettle — the earlier you notice the steam, the easier it is to turn down the heat.

Week 2 – Building a personal calm-down toolkit

Create a set of calming tools your child actually chooses, so they have real options when feelings rise.

Sit together (in a calm moment) and pick 4–5 calming tools: slow breathing, going for a walk or run, music, a fidget or sensory item, a drink of water, or a quiet “safe space”.

Try each one out for real this week so they know how it feels, and let them keep the ones that work for them.

Agree on a “safe space” or signal they can use to step away and reset without getting in trouble.

 **Try** Let them design and name their toolkit — a plan they helped build is one **this:** they’ll actually use.

Week 3 – Naming & rating feelings

Give feelings words and a size, so your child can tell the difference between a small annoyance and a huge wave.

Introduce an “emotion thermometer” or a simple 1–10 scale, where 1 is calm and 10 is completely overwhelmed.

Practise naming and rating feelings out loud at easy moments: “That looks like a 4 frustration — am I right?”

Link the number to a plan: agree that around a 5 or 6 is the moment to reach for a calm-down tool, before it hits 10.

 **Try** Naming it takes the power out of it — “name it to tame it” works because **this:** words help the thinking brain switch back on.

Week 4 – Helpful vs unhelpful thoughts

Show your child that thoughts are not always facts, and gently practise kinder, more balanced self-talk.

Talk about how thoughts, feelings and actions are linked — an unhelpful thought like “I always mess up” makes the feeling bigger.

When you spot all-or-nothing thinking, help them find a more balanced version: “I always” becomes “this time” or “not yet”.

Together, come up with 2–3 calm coping phrases they can say to themselves, like “this feeling will pass” or “I can handle this”.

⚡ **Try** Ask “What would you say to a friend who felt this way?” — kids are **this:** usually far kinder to friends than to themselves.

Week 5 – Solving the problem & repairing after a blow-up

Once everyone is calm, work on the real problem and mend any hurt — without shame or blame.

Only after your child has fully calmed down, revisit what happened together and name the problem underneath the feeling.

Brainstorm a couple of options for next time, and let them help choose one — the goal is problem-solving, not punishment.

Model repair: a simple “I’m sorry I raised my voice, let’s try again” teaches that everyone recovers and relationships stay safe.

⚡ **Try** Connect before you correct — a calm reconnection first makes the **this:** problem-solving actually land.

Week 6 — Building everyday resilience

Strengthen the daily foundations — sleep, routine, connection and talking — that make big feelings easier to handle.

Protect sleep and a predictable routine; a tired, hungry or overstimulated child has a much shorter fuse.

Build in small, regular moments of one-to-one connection with no agenda — a walk, a game, a chat before bed.

Keep the door open for talking, and keep quietly modelling your own calming so it stays a normal family habit.

 **Try this:** A regulated adult regulates a child — your own calm is the most powerful tool in the whole toolkit.

Tricks that make it work

- ✓ Name it to tame it — putting a word to a feeling helps calm the emotional part of the brain.
- ✓ Catch and praise calm moments to practise skills — never try to teach a new skill mid-meltdown.
- ✓ When your child is at a 10, your only job is to stay calm and safe — teach and talk later.
- ✓ Connect before you correct — a calm, warm reconnection works far better than a lecture.
- ✓ Model your own calming out loud: “I’m feeling frustrated, so I’m going to take a few slow breaths.”

How you’ll know it’s working

- Your child starts to notice or name a feeling before it fully takes over
- They reach for a calming tool sometimes, even if not every time

- Meltdowns become shorter, less intense, or easier to recover from
- They talk to you more openly about worries or what upset them



Is this based on real methods? This program draws on widely used, non-proprietary approaches: emotional regulation and co-regulation (a calm adult helping a child settle and, over time, learn to settle themselves), and CBT-informed strategies such as naming and rating feelings and gently reframing unhelpful thoughts. Consistent, warm and calm parenting is well recognised as supporting a child's developing self-regulation. It is general educational guidance, not a diagnosis or treatment, and does not replace advice from a qualified professional.



Educational information, not a diagnosis. Our guidance follows standard, research-based practice (CDC, NHS, ASHA and WHO), is written by our therapy team and **medically reviewed by a GMC-registered doctor**. Every child is different, so we can't promise specific results — always use your own judgement and speak to a qualified professional about your child. **Read our full disclaimer.**