

# PARENTING THROUGH STRONG EMOTIONS



## Session 4 Handouts

Emotional Coaching Tips & Tricks and Shortcuts to Validation

Emotion Coaching Script-Builder

Behaviour Coaching

Repair Handout



***Intersect***  
*Youth & Family Services*

## Emotion Coaching for Caregivers: Tips and Tricks

“Emotions go up like an elevator but the door to reason is on the ground floor.  
Emotion coaching can get you there.” Dr. Adele Lafrance

Emotion coaching is a universal strategy for supporting the behavioral and emotional well-being of children, adolescents and adults. It can be used as an ‘in the moment’ technique to connect with your loved one, redirect behavior and avoid or de-escalate outbursts. It can also be used to support the development of emotional health in general. But how does it work? Relating to your loved one using the principles and skills of emotion coaching activates growth enhancing chemistry in the brain that leads to stronger connections between regions of the brain involved in the regulation of emotions. Therefore, by experiencing emotion coaching repeatedly, and over time, your loved one will develop the capacity to manage their own emotions instead of acting out with behaviors, developing symptoms or needing to connect with others in order to feel ok.

### Steps of Emotion Coaching – Brief Version

Ready to begin? First things first – check in with yourself. Are you calm? If not, take a breath. Seriously. The breath is like the brain’s remote control. It’s definitely a powerful, yet undervalued resource that is readily available and will make it easier for you to engage in the steps of emotion coaching outlined below.

#### Step 1. Learning to Validate

The first skill of emotion coaching is to validate your loved one. You can do so by transforming “BUT to BECAUSE”. For example, when your loved one tells you they feel sad about missing out on a family event, rather than leading with a typical response like:

“I can understand why you might feel sad **but** there’s always next time”

You would first imagine **why** it would make sense for her to feel sad and then convey your understanding using the word “because” like:

“I can understand why you might feel sad **because** you know you’re going to miss out on the fun”

Validating your loved one’s emotional experience – even if you don’t personally agree – will have a calming effect for your loved one. In fact, validation is most effective when it involves at least three “because’s”. For example... “I can understand why you might feel sad **because** you know you’re going to miss out on the fun; and because you were really looking forward to this; and because you don’t know when you’ll have another opportunity”. You don’t need to use the word “because” each time, but it can help you to structure your validation until doing so becomes more natural.

For more information and access to additional resources, please visit:

[www.mentalhealthfoundations.ca](http://www.mentalhealthfoundations.ca)

## EFFT - Emotion Coaching Framework Cheat Sheet

### Step 1 - Validate

A. Convey understanding of their experience (from their point of view):

I could understand you...

I could imagine you...

No wonder you...

It would make sense that you...

When I put myself in your shoes I could imagine you...

...might feel/think/want to/not want to \_\_\_\_\_

B. Demonstrate that you “get it” with sincerity and in a way that reflects their positive intentions, vulnerable feelings, or attempts for relief from pain:

because 1: \_\_\_\_\_ because 2: \_\_\_\_\_ because 3: \_\_\_\_\_

### Example:

I could understand you might feel/think/want to/not want to \_\_\_\_\_ because #1

No wonder you might feel/think/want to/not want to \_\_\_\_\_ because #2

It would make sense that you might feel/think/want to/not want to \_\_\_\_\_ because #3

### Step 2 - Support

A: Emotional support ideas

- Comfort (a hand, a hug or loving words)
- Reassurance (“It’s going to be ok”)
- Communication of understanding (“I understand you”; “I hear you”)
- Communication of positive regard (“I know you are doing the best you can right now”)
- Communication of belief in the other (“I believe in you; “I believe you can do this”)
- Communication of togetherness (“We’re in this together”; “I want the best for you too”)
- Space\* (Why don’t I give you a few minutes and we’ll try again)

\*space can be physical or psychological *and* time-limited in that the plan for reconnection must be clearly communicated

B: Practical support ideas

- Proceed with plan
- Suggest a distraction activity (walk, movie, music, etc)
- Redirect to another thought or activity
- Teach skills
- Exposure to the anxiety-provoking stimulus (in a gradual way)
- Offer solutions to solve the practical problem or take over to solve the problem
- Set a limit
- N/A (sometimes, once the other is validated and supported emotionally, no more is required)



## EFFT Emotion Coaching: Practicing with Scripts

### 1. I want to \_\_\_\_\_

I can understand why you wouldn't want to \_\_\_\_\_ because:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Emotional support sentence:

Practical support suggestion:

### 2. I don't want to \_\_\_\_\_

I can understand why you wouldn't want to \_\_\_\_\_ because:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Emotional support sentence:

Practical support suggestion:

### 3. I feel so \_\_\_\_\_

No wonder you feel so \_\_\_\_\_ because:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Emotional support sentence:

Practical support suggestion:

### 4. Why are you trying to talk to me like that? (said after you've gone through the steps of EC)

I can imagine you would be weirded out by what I'm saying because:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Emotional support sentence:

Practical support suggestion:



# **Behavior Coaching:**

## **Increase Cooperation and Compliance**

1. CHECK YOURSELF
2. CONNECT
3. MAKE THE REQUEST
4. VALIDATE
5. MAKE THE REQUEST  
(set a limit if necessary)

## **Behavior Coaching: Increase Cooperation and Compliance**

### **Step 1: Check yourself**

- Are you calm? Is your expectation reasonable?

### **Step 2: Connect**

- Connect with your child.
  - Oh wow –look at the drawing! / What’s happening in the show?
- Do this for at least 2 minutes – it will be a great investment.

### **Step 3: Make the request**

- Deliver the command – Please do X. Rather than: can you do this?
- Pay attention to your tone of voice and posture. The way you ask can evoke different responses from your child. Aim to sound confident and have a strong stance - straight back and feet planted, but not overly forceful or impatient
- Be as concise as possible; resist giving a list of reasons why you need them to do this (you may do this if you have anxiety about asking)

### **Step 4: Validate**

- Be prepared for pushback - this is the content that you want to validate

### **Step 5: Make the request a second time + set a limit if it’s not followed through**

**Practice example:** Your loved one won’t stop texting at the family dinner table.

- 1) Check yourself (are you calm? is your request reasonable?)
- 2) Connect (inquire sincerely about their friend)
- 3) Make the request (“I need you to put your phone away until dinner is over”)
- 4) Validate (“I know – it doesn’t seem fair and you might be worried about your friend. I get it.”)
- 5) Make the request again (“Please put your phone away. You can connect with your friend after dinner.”) If your child doesn’t comply – then set a limit / consequence.

**Parenting Through Strong Emotions**  
Session 4: What's Getting in Our Way?

**Circling Back**

- Take a breath /check in with yourself to calm and regulate (think stairs).
- Invite your child/youth to take a moment with you.
- Remind them of the situation.
  - i.e. “Remember when you \_\_\_\_\_, I reacted by \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Ask to share how you wished you had responded.
  - i.e. “Could I tell you how I would have done it differently if I could rewind to that moment?”
- Emotion coach your child/youth in the situation.
  - Validate: “I imagine you may have felt \_\_\_\_\_ because (x3)\_\_\_\_\_.”
  - Meet emotional need: “I realize now that I should have probably said/done \_\_\_\_\_.”
  - Meet practical need: “In the future, I will \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Thank them.
  - “Thank you for letting me share this with you.”

\*See back of this page for a reflection guide.

## Reflection

How did you feel before approaching your loved one?

How did it feel to use the skill of Circling Back?

How did your loved one react? How do you think they felt underneath?

What step in Circling Back would you like to improve on?



If you want to increase the effectiveness of the skill of validation, when you communicate your statement using three “because’s”, match your loved one’s **tone and volume**. For example, if they are feeling blue, say it low and slow. If they are feeling angry, say it with energy (but not anger). Doing so will quite literally calm the emotional circuits in their brain.

### Step 2a: Support – Meet the Emotional Need

Once the other feels validated, you can then offer emotional support. Every emotion has a specific emotional need. If your loved one is sad, offer them comfort (e.g., a hug). If they feel angry, help them to communicate what it is they need (e.g., space, a boundary, to feel heard). If they feel shame or anxiety, you can now offer reassurance and practical support. That being said, our society is deeply conditioned to offer reassurance when someone shares with us that they are struggling in some way. Providing reassurance **WITHOUT** validation is ineffective, despite how often we feel pulled to do so. That said, when preceded by deep validation, reassurance is much more likely to have the desired effect.

### Step 2b: Support – Meet the Practical Need

Finally it’s time for problem-solving! When faced with an emotional challenge, most of us want to move right to “fixing it”. However, if you skip over the steps above, you are likely going to experience resistance to your efforts to solve the emotional problem. Your loved one may also get frustrated, perhaps feeling like you aren’t listening. And so the order in which you move through these steps is very important. Only after you’ve validated and offered emotional support do you then support your loved one practically.

### **Practical Tips**

When using the steps of emotion coaching, the skill of validation is critical. It calms the brain and makes the other more open and flexible to comfort, reassurance, problem-solving - even redirection and limits. There will be times when you will notice that once you’ve deeply validated your loved one, meeting the emotional and practical need isn’t even necessary because they will feel calmer or will have figured out themselves what to do next. Be aware, however, that once you start to validate your loved one, they may initially react in the following ways:

“Why are you talking to me like that? That’s weird.”

“You can’t possibly understand.”

“I’m not sad – I’m mad!”

Do not be discouraged by these types of responses. They are normal and to be expected when you initiate a new style of communication, especially if there is a history of strain in the relationship. In these instances, simply start over with validating anew. We call it “validation whack-a-mole” and it’s actually a great sign that your loved one is feeling heard and is willing to share with you more than what was initially on the surface. Keep using the validation script and be sure to communicate three “because’s” each time and the emotional storm will soon pass.

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## Shortcuts to Validation

Here are some helpful phrases to get you started. Communicating with your loved one may feel unnatural at first, but it is like exercising a new muscle and it will get easier with time.

I get why you would feel \_\_\_\_\_ because X 3

I can see how that might make you feel \_\_\_\_\_ because X 3

It makes sense that you're feeling \_\_\_\_\_ because X 3

I can only imagine how difficult this must be because... because X 3

No wonder you're \_\_\_\_\_ because X 3

I can understand why you might feel \_\_\_\_\_ because X 3

“This is so \_\_\_\_\_” because X 3

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