

Help Me Get Unstuck! Coping Skills for School-Age Children

USING THIS GUIDE

This guide provides key points, resources, activities, and action items for future reference as you learn how to teach school-age children to overcome frustration and utilize coping skills. You will reference this guide throughout this course.

SPARK YOUR BRAIN! WORD SEARCH ACTIVITY:

S R Q T P U Y V U Q C L I B U K F D B L B V S G J
P W V T K T O C Q C N O G R E D E E K I A Z A V T
R Y C J Q P H C R O E Y N N D S A X U Q O M D W X
E D O I F M C P D Y S B W T S N J Z Q N I X K W D
R G Y Y N E X N U B D B E A E I S I T R X W K G K
L R W S F Y F E J J S T R Z L N T G T D L E Y T Y
Q S C I U A F W N P G R G P T M T K M O G S T K R
Z O Z E M O T I O N A B J T P H S C R F U S I S Q
X E T G T Y R I Y B A P D I K W T T U H S P M A P
L R A D Y E L O M K F F L Q Q Q N Y M E S N A O E
C T N O L R E E N H Y B E O X O N P N C T C G G D
E W J A B V A X Z O J L X K C B K P U R A U R E X
S U X J Q M E P B C K A U B V J V A A N Z I H Z M
M E P K E C J K G V E N X F Q M O H E J L N B H F
D U A O E Z I H O P O X I K K T V F G L Z O P L G
U L S B C I P G C B C I H K N N S V X M F I Q X V
M O T I V A T E D L E O A T A L A G S F C T J O Y
T N E D I F N O C L T U V A O S S H B X J A Y Z H
Y P M U R G V F M M Z S K E E U H P T K O R R G N
X R S B X U W L E T X U W J X L L H W K F T J P J
G C B W B I U N N V N P T A O C W R W E R S R I M
P A K P S D D P J I G E N N F Z I P I V R U W E R
H X T I F D B Z A J K B E B Q X G T A S X R Q W G
N D Y U A V O T J A Z L N V H N V B E Q M F K G L
B N K P E T E O D Y Y U T Z U B Q U A D G B U O D

anxious

confident

content

control

embarrassed

emotion

excited

frustration

grumpy

happy

lonely

motivated

relaxed

sad

thankful

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Reflection of Opening Activity:

In the box below, write down some thoughts/feelings you experienced during this activity.

Hygiene Hypothesis

- Exposure to germs builds better immune systems in children and adults.
- By limiting exposure to age-appropriate frustration, we are discouraging the development of perseverance, determination, and the ability to handle uncomfortable events

Common Behaviors of Frustration

Temper Tantrums	Incessant Bodily Movement	Putting head down	Negative words toward others	Negative self-talk
Walking Away	Crumpling paper	Avoidance	Impatient	Crying

Frustration Tolerance

- Children with low frustration tolerance will often resort to negative verbiage when trying to avoid a task.
- Children with high frustration tolerance will often resort to more positive verbiage even if they are experiencing some difficulty with a given task.

Scenario #1

Brielle is excited for group games outside. As she runs over to line-up, she sees her shoe is untied. Ms. Meredith reminds her to tie her shoe. Brielle looks down and says, "I don't even like this game! I'm not playing!" She then sits down with her head on her knees. Ms. Meredith asks Brielle if she needs help tying her shoe, and Brielle just yells, "No!"

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Scenario #2

Kai and Reggie are working on a computer puzzle together. Kai notices Reggie trying to fit a piece into a place it doesn't belong. Kai tells Reggie, "That piece doesn't look like it goes there." Reggie responds, "It looks like it can fit, let me try again." The piece still doesn't fit. Reggie tells Kai, "I don't think this piece goes here, can you help me?" Kai shows Reggie a place the piece may fit. Reggie puts the piece in the right spot and says, "It was really tough at first, but I was able to figure it out!"

Scenario #3

Aniyah was working on her Math assignment when Mr. Kevin heard a loud bang. He looked back to see Aniyah's math book on the floor. He walked back to see if he could help Aniyah solve the problem she was stuck on, but Aniyah just yelled, "I hate this! It's too hard!" Mr. Kevin sat next to Aniyah to read the problem with her but she said, "This is stupid. I'm done!" then closed her book.

Scenario #4

Laura wanted to climb up the ramp at the playground, but she knew it would be challenging for her. She tried to climb the ramp without assistance and began to fall. "This is kind of hard," she said quietly. She stood for a few minutes, then shouted, "I can grab the chain on the ramp to get up on the bridge!"

- Observing whether a child's frustration level is high or low can help you predict which activities may pose potential challenges for them.
- Identifying levels of frustration can also help you distinguish between challenging behaviors and low frustration tolerance.

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Building Frustration Tolerance

Part of helping a child understand their feelings and begin to build a frustration tolerance is helping them recognize what event(s) trigger them

Common Triggers of Frustration

Transitions		Lack of Control
	Challenging Academics	Feeling Misunderstood
Hunger	Unexpected Situations	

Trigger Tracker

- A trigger tracker is designed to help individual children identify emotional trigger points as well as moments of positivity in their day-to-day life.
- Use the example trigger tracker below to write down an example of behavior that may trigger an emotional response

FEELINGS TRACKER    

COMPLETED WITH _____
DATES _____
NAME _____

MONDAY

	ACTIVITY	FEELING	REASON (optional)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

TUESDAY

	ACTIVITY	FEELING	REASON (optional)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

What tolerance techniques are you currently using for school-age children?

Which of the tolerance techniques are you considering implementing?

Scenario #1

Bailey's family had an unexpected move due to his father's job. He is not sleeping well at his new house, rarely has gotten a good breakfast before school starts and has fallen behind in his schoolwork. When he arrives at the after-school program, Mr. Marc notices Bailey is at the table crying because he can't understand the Reading comprehension questions in his homework. Bailey also begins to pound his fists on the table.

Scenario #2

Dahlia is a very bright 6th grade student. Most times, she easily completes homework, understands directions the first time, and often is chosen to be a leader in the after-school program. Lately, Dahlia has had to leave the after-school program early to accommodate her mom's new work schedule. As a result, she hasn't learned the new group games, wasn't there for the start of the group STEM project and feels no one wants her in their group. Ms. Amelia has noticed Dahlia avoiding activities or talking negatively about other kids in the program.

EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING SKILLS

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Playing a game	Calm down kits	Positive self-talk
Mood Boosters	Playing Music	Exercising/Yoga

PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING SKILLS

Asking for help	Listing pros/cons	Using an Unstuck Wheel
Problem-solving Flashcards	Engaging in Problem-solving	What can/can't I control?

IMPLEMENTING “MY UNSTUCK WHEEL”



USING COPING SKILLS ROLE-PLAY

Scenario #1

Caroline's pet dog, Sully, passed away recently and everyone at her table is talking about how much they love their pets. Role-play how Caroline might react and how staff can help her using the appropriate coping skills.

Scenario #2

Deshawn gets very stressed when he doesn't have enough time to finish his art projects. He knows that art time will only last 30 minutes, but he still never finishes in time. Sometimes, he won't even attempt the project. Role-play how Deshawn might react and how staff can help him using the appropriate coping skills.

Scenario #3

Juan tends to be a perfectionist. He always has very neat coloring pages, STEM projects, and keeps his cubbie spotless. Lately, Katie has been paired with Juan on projects and is the complete opposite. She tends to be careless and sloppy. Role-play how Juan might react and how staff can help him using the appropriate coping skills.

Scenario #4

Cristina has been getting bullied lately and she is afraid to tell the teacher. Instead, she has been avoiding those peers and choosing different activities during group time. Role-play how Cristina might react and how staff can help her using the appropriate coping skills.

- Without healthy coping skills, children are likely to act out—essentially sending a message that says, “I feel out of control so I’m going to act out of control.”
- Children who don't know how to deal with their feelings also are more likely to turn to unhealthy coping strategies.

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REFLECTION & NEXT STEPS

- Which section of the training seems the most challenging to implement?

- Which section of the training do you see your school-age children struggling with most?

- As you plan to implement the skills taught in this training, where is one area that you can improve, personally?

- What will you specifically do to help your school-age children increase their frustration tolerance?

ACTION PLAN

What is one action step you will complete within ONE WEEK?

What is one goal you plan to accomplish in ONE MONTH?

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What roadblocks do you foresee and how can you overcome them?

RESOURCES

1. 15 Coping Strategies for Kids (Amy Morin, August 2020) <https://www.verywellfamily.com/coping-skills-for-kids-4586871#impact-of-coping-skills>
2. Big Life Journal Resilience Kit for Kids (2021) <https://biglifejournal.com/>
3. Children's Feelings: How Children Express Frustration (Scholastic, 2021) <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/childrens-feelings-how-children-express-frustration/>
4. Healthy Coping Skills for Uncomfortable Emotions (Amy Morin, November 2021) <https://www.verywellmind.com/forty-healthy-coping-skills-4586742>
5. How Parents Can Model Healthy Coping Skills for Their Kids (February 2019) <https://www.neuralbalance.com/blogs/parenting/how-parents-can-model-healthy-coping-skills-for-their-kids>
6. Tips for Parents: Managing Frustration and Difficult Feelings in Gifted Children (June 2020) Davidson Institute <https://www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-blog/tips-for-parents-managing-frustration-and-difficult-feelings-in-gifted-children/>
7. Tracking My Feelings (2021) Mentally Healthy Schools, National Centre for Children and Families <https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2295/tracking-my-feelings.pdf>