

PARENTING TIP



HELPING KIDS DEAL WITH EMOTIONS

Many families ignore emotions or view them as a nuisance. But emotions affect children more than they realize. One of the keys to helping children understand emotions is to teach them the difference between the feeling and the response. It's okay to feel sad, but that doesn't justify treating people unkindly.

When Joel was thirteen, his dog, Skippy, died. Joel had raised Skippy from a puppy. They played together, slept together, and Joel had taken care of Skippy when he was sick. Now his beloved friend was gone. Joel's heart was broken. The pain was intense. He spent the next few days bouncing between lashing out at those around him and withdrawing into himself. His heart was working hard to absorb this unwanted new experience: life without his loyal friend.

Mom was patient with Joel, giving him space to grieve and work things out. She initiated conversation with him often and looked for ways to comfort him. Sometimes Joel used his sadness as an excuse for being unkind or disrespectful, but Mom made it clear that grieving was okay; meanness was not. Over time, Joel adjusted to life without Skippy. Mom's approach was successful because she considered Joel's heart during that time.

Romans 12:15 tells us to "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." Emotions are a part of life. Children often need help recognizing and dealing with their emotions. They haven't learned yet how to process all the feelings their hearts experience.

Teaching children about their emotions and the appropriate ways to deal with them will prepare them for experiencing even deeper joys and sadness in the future. Helping children separate what they feel from how they treat you and others is an important part of that process.

This tip comes from the book Parenting is Heart Work by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN