



Helping With Big Feelings: A Caregiver Sheet

Use these prompts when a young child has a difficult moment. Choose the ideas that fit the situation; a sheet cannot explain every cause or make a child calm on command.

Before: notice the situation

What was happening before the feeling became strong?

Was there a change, wait, difficult task or unmet need?

What can we make clearer or easier next time?

Example: before leaving a game, give a short warning and one choice about the next step. Avoid offering a choice about something already decided.

During: a feeling and a limit

Use a few words and keep necessary safety limits clear. “You wanted another turn. It's hard to stop. We are leaving now.” If a child hits, protect people and name the limit: “I won't let you hit.”

Our short explanation:

The limit or safety action needed:

An acceptable alternative:

After: reconnect and practice

When you are both calmer, return to the situation briefly. Explain what happened, repair an adult mistake if needed and practice the next step. A long lecture is not required to make the limit clear.

What we will practice:

What another caregiver needs to know:

Three illustrative situations

- **Leaving:** name the change, acknowledge wanting to stay and offer a role in leaving.
- **Waiting:** explain what is being waited for and offer something the child can do meanwhile.
- **A difficult task:** break the task into one manageable part and ask what kind of help is wanted.

These are examples for discussion, not a diagnosis or required script. If a concern persists or safety is difficult to maintain, discuss the specific observations with an appropriate professional.

[Read the full feelings guide](#) · [Read about clear limits](#) · [Read about hitting and biting](#)

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