

Try It! I Notice, I Feel, I Can

As children grow and develop emotional skills, model and try this family strategy to help them identify, understand, and manage big feelings (and even not-so-big ones!) with these three steps. Start small by practicing when they are not overwhelmed by a difficult feeling.

Step 1. I Notice: Help children pause to notice how their body is feeling.

- Explain that our bodies can help us understand our feelings. (“Let’s notice our bodies.”)
- Ask older children to say how their body feels, or say what you notice. (“I notice your face is a little pink.”)
- Repeat to make sure you understand and to show you’re listening. (“Your tummy is hurting.”)

Step 2. I Feel: Help children name their feelings.

- Notice and name children’s feelings (“It looks like you might be feeling frustrated.”)
- Help children name their feelings (“Are you feeling frustrated or sad?”)
- Repeat and validate their feelings (“You’re feeling frustrated. It’s okay to feel frustrated.”)
- Ask what happened or why they’re feeling this way. Explain that people feel lots of feelings... and you do, too (you might name some).

Step 3. I Can: Help children choose and practice a strategy together.

There are many strategies for managing feelings, such as belly breathing, giving ourselves a hug, going for a walk, or dancing. Choose one children have already practiced and try it together.

- “Let’s find a way to help your big feeling feel a little easier.”
- “Let’s try it. We can do it together. I’ll help you.”
- “If this doesn’t work, I’ll help you choose another way.”
- (when you’re done) “How are you feeling now?”

Model It! Before helping children try the strategy, demonstrate the three steps yourself, for instance:

- “My tummy hurts. I’m feeling sad. I need to take a little break.”
- “I can’t find my keys and I’m starting to feel hot and uncomfortable. I feel so frustrated. I’ll take some deep breaths.”

