Supporting Your Child With Big Emotions

City & Hackney CAMHS Alliance

A supportive space

To help us get the most out of today:

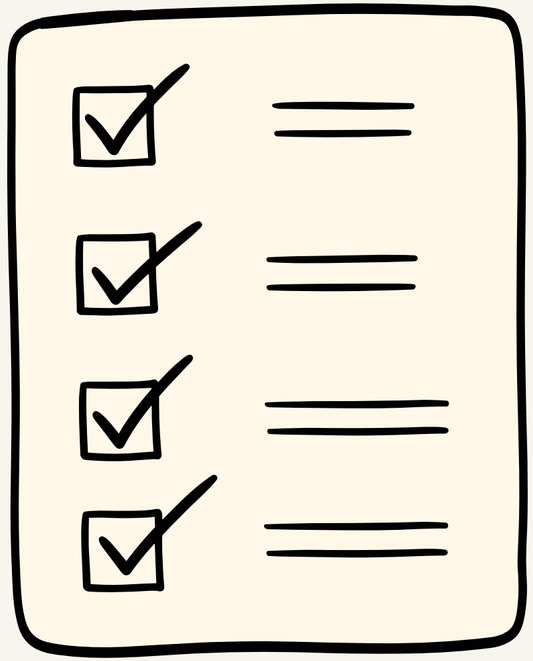
- No judgement
- Respect for each other
- Share only if you feel comfortable
- Every family is different
- Phones on silent



Warm-up reflection: What situations at home tend to bring up big emotions for your child?

Today’s aims

- Understand what emotional regulation looks like in primary school children
- Explore the most common reasons children experience big emotions and meltdowns
- Learn practical, evidence-based strategies
- Build a simple, realistic emotional regulation plan for your family



What is emotional regulation?

Emotional regulation is the ability to:

- Calm the body when emotions are strong
- Notice and name feelings
- Manage how emotions are expressed or acted on



This is a skill that develops over time — children learn it with adults before they can do it alone.

(Gross, 1998; Thompson, 1994; Siegel, 2012; Siegel and Bryson, 2012; Birth to 5 Matters, 2021; Raising Children Network, 2024)

How regulation develops

Emotional regulation develops through:

- Brain development over time
- Repeated experiences of calming support
- Practice during everyday emotional moments

This continues throughout the primary years — adult support is developmentally expected.



(Siegel and Bryson, 2012; Thompson, 1994; Paley et al., 2022; Moriguchi, 2013; Finlay-Jones et al., 2021)

What's happening below the surface?

What we often see

•Shouting •Refusing •Meltdowns

What we don't always see

- Tiredness •Worry or stress
- Sensory overload
- Big feelings held in all day

Behaviour is often just the tip of the iceberg.



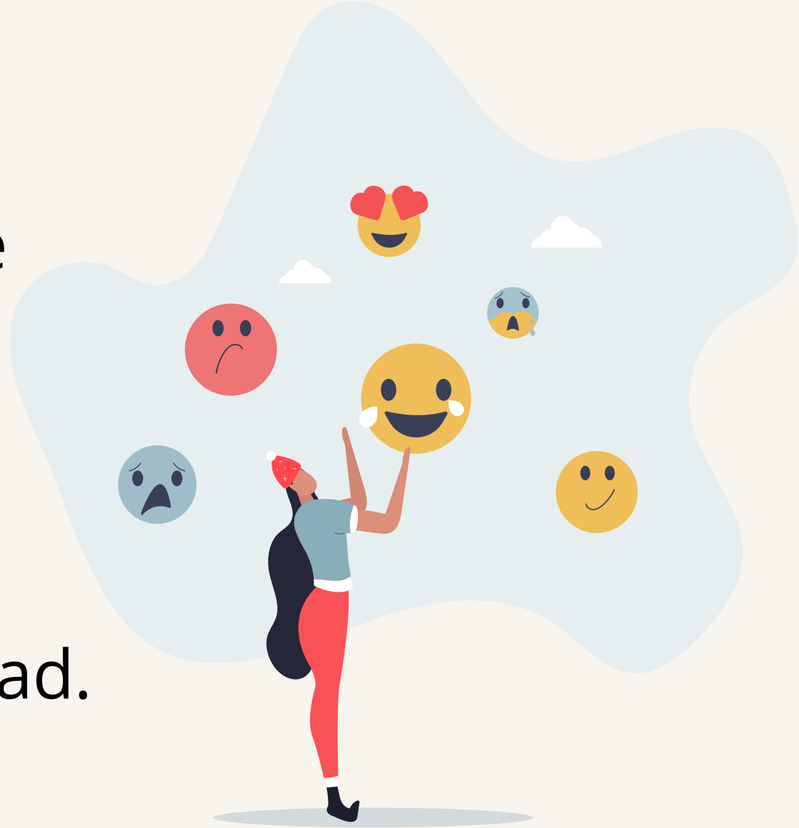
(Thompson, 1994; Siegel, 2012; Siegel and Bryson, 2012)

Big emotions & behaviour

When emotions are big:

- Behaviour often becomes louder or more intense
- Thinking and listening become harder
- Children need support, not lectures

Behaviour is often a sign of emotional overload.



(Siegel, 2012; Siegel and Bryson, 2012; Thompson, 1994; Paley et al., 2022)

Zones of Regulation

	Blue Zone	Green Zone	Yellow Zone	Red Zone
Feelings	Sad, Tired, Bored, Lonley	Happy, Calm, Focused	Worried, Frustrated, Silly, Excited	Angry, Mad, Terrified, Explosive
Control of feelings	Slow, in control	Relaxed, in control	Loosing control	Out of control
Energy Levels	Low	Just Right	High Energy / Wobbly Mood	Extrememly High Energy / Explosive
Needs	Comfort, connection — re-engage when ready	Learning, independence, connection — maintain regulation	Calm — slow the body, name feelings	Calm — reduce demands, settle the body

Supporting children in each zone

Green Zone Learning and problem-solving, Practising skills, Encouragement and connection	**Yellow Zone** Calm presence, Slow the body, Name feelings, Support strategies together
Blue Zone Comfort and connection, Gentle encouragement, Re-engage when ready	**Red Zone** Safety and calm, Reduce demands. Help the body settle (teaching comes later)

(Kuypers, 2011; Siegel and Bryson, 2012)

Responding in the moment

Reason: Once calm, talk things through, problem-solve, and set boundaries.

Relate: Show understanding and connection so your child feels safe and supported.

Regulate: Help the body calm first — fewer words, calm presence, reduced demands.



(Siegel and Bryson, 2012)

Pause & Reflect

Take a moment to reflect:

- Which zone does your child move into most often at home?
- Which part of responding in the moment do you find hardest — regulate, relate, or reason?
- Is there anything that feels clearer or more reassuring so far?

(No need to share unless you’d like to)



Everyday ways - support regulation

What helps children build regulation over time:

- Predictable responses and routines
- Modelling how to stay calm and handle feelings
- Naming emotions in everyday moments
- Repairing when things don’t go to plan

Consistency matters more than doing it perfectly.



(Siegel, 2012; Siegel and Bryson, 2012; Thompson, 1994; Paley et al., 2022)

Let's try an example together

A Year 4 child (age 8–9) comes home from school. They’re asked to start homework. They shout “No!”, throw their bag on the floor, and storm off.

Thinking together:

- What might be going on beneath the surface?
- What zone might they be in?
- What could help first?

(No wrong answers — this is about understanding, not fixing.)



Being good enough

Supporting emotional regulation is not about doing it perfectly

- Children don’t need perfect responses
- Regulation develops through repeated, supportive experiences
- Repair matters more than getting it right every time

Good enough support builds regulation over time



Bringing it together

As we come to the end, take a moment to reflect:

- What feels clearer or more reassuring than before?
- Is there one idea or way of thinking you want to hold onto?
- What already feels like you’re doing “well enough”?

(No need to share unless you’d like to)



Support available in school

Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools Support (WAMHS)– parent support – **parent groups!**

We can offer support for parents of primary-aged children experiencing:

• anxiety or worries • behavioural challenges

This may be:

• 1:1 parent support • a parent group

How to access support

• Speak with **Choe or Emma** at your child's school

• They can link with the MHST to discuss suitability

Other support available

Hackney SENDIAGS

A service for parents and carers of children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). Providing impartial and helpful advice on a range of topics.

https://hackneysendiags.co.uk/

Family Action

Provides practical, emotional, and financial support for difficulties such as poverty, debt, or social isolation for families nationwide.

www.family-action.org.uk

Hackney Local Offer

Hackney
0-25 SEND Local Offer | Family Information Service

Provides a comprehensive list of services & support for children and young people (aged 0-25). Covering education, health, social care, leisure activities, and more.

https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/

Early Help Support

Provides support and advice for families who are facing challenges. From parenting to your child's well-being, you can contact the team for guidance and to find the right support.

https://chscp.org.uk/early-help-in-hackney/

Father2Father

A structured programme for fathers of children ages 9-18 of African and Caribbean descent who are experiencing emotional or behavioural challenges at home or at school. https://www.father2father.co.uk/

Family Coach Service

Hackney

Offers courses and support to help parents with children who have SEND. They can help you feel more confident in your parenting and find ways to manage stressful moments.

0208 356 7344

familycoach@hackney.gov.uk

HENRY

(Health, Exercise, Nutrition, Really Young)

Offers parenting workshops to help you build a healthy, happy family. From managing your child's well-being to improving communication and mealtimes.

https://www.henry.org.uk/city-and-hackney

YOUNGMiNDS

https://www.youngminds.org.uk/

YoungMinds has a parents helpline for anyone worried about a child's mental health. Their website also provides a wealth of information and resources to help you support your child. 0800 802 5544

St Joseph's Hospice

St Joseph's Hospice
Serving East London and the City

Offers professional bereavement support for families in Hackney. They provide a safe space and expert guidance to help both children and adults cope with loss.

stjosephs.firstcontact@nhs.net.

Any Questions?

We’re here to support you.

If you’d like to talk privately after the workshop, just let me know.

Thank you for your engagement today.



References

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