



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

**EMOTIONAL
FIRST AID AT
HOME**

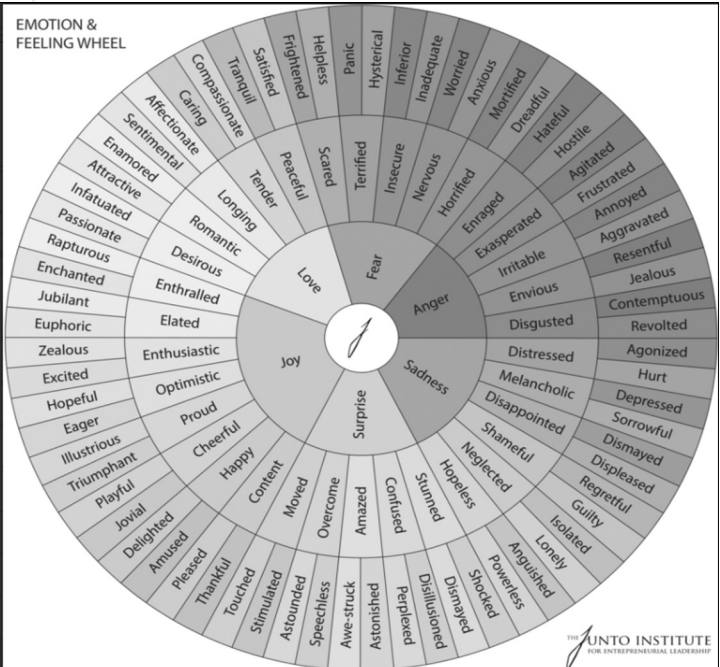
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THE FUNTO INSTITUTE
FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP

Emotion & Feeling Wheel

Common Emotions Children and Adolescents have a problem tolerating

In this moment, I am feeling

Anger

Frustration

I know this because I notice these sensations in my body

Disappointment




Worry

Rejection

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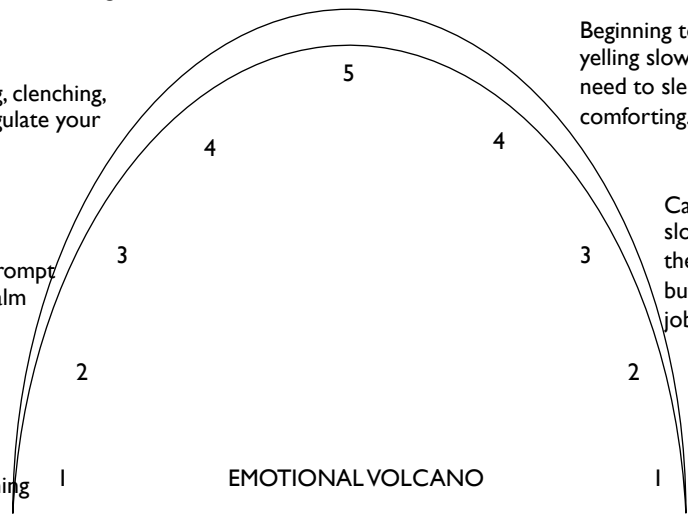
FIRST AID = CALM, CONNECT, CORRECT

Safety, Connection and Problem-Solving

 <p>Survival State</p> <p>BRAIN STEM</p> <p>The Survival State represents the primal brain and asks the question, "Am I safe?" The only way to soothe the Survival State is through the creation of Safety.</p>	 <p>Emotional State</p> <p>LIMBIC SYSTEM</p> <p>This Brain State represents mid-level functionality and asks the question, "Am I loved?" The only way to soothe an upset emotional state is through Connection.</p>	 <p>Executive State</p> <p>PREFRONTAL LOBES</p> <p>The Executive State represents the optimal state for problem-solving and learning. This Brain State asks the question, "What can I learn from this?"</p>	<p>First Aid: Calm Connect Correct</p>
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Flipped Lid: Give distance, no talking, slow your own breathing, do not approach or touch, low lights, soft music. Must cycle through



EMOTIONAL VOLCANO

<p>Agitated: Might be stomping, clenching, huffing. Limit talking, co-regulate your breathing, give space</p>	<p>Beginning to calm: screaming, kicking yelling slows, maybe crying softly, may need to sleep. May begin to accept comforting.</p>
<p>Becoming Agitated: gentle prompt to use calming strategies. Calm yourself.</p>	<p>Calming progressing: Breathing slows, crying eases, Encourage them. "Wow that looked hard, but you got through it! Good job!"</p>
<p>Calm: Prevention. Teach awareness of emotion in the body, teach and practice calming strategies</p>	<p>Back to Calm: Probably ready to reflect. Only encouragement, no consequences, no talking about it, except for encouragement</p>

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EMOTIONAL FIRST AID, IN GENERAL

- Kids need to know that their emotions are not “too much” for parents
 - As they elevate, you get calmer
 - As they get unsure, you get certain
 - They need you to be confident but you don’t need to have the “answers”
 - Listen, validate, but hold boundaries
 - Hands are for holding, not for hitting, take a brake
 - That wasn’t like you – want to try again?
 - Sometimes they need to just unload – emotional trash collectors
 - I see that you are angry, but I won’t let you hurt yourself or others

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NORMALIZE ALL EMOTIONS – NOT JUST THE PLEASANT ONES

- Which emotions were allowed/not allowed in your family of origin?
 - Anger, sadness, silliness, fear, pride, reluctance, doubt, passion, disgust, love, disappointment
 - If you know which ones were not allowed – when your kid expresses that emotion, what happens in you?



BE IN THE EMOTION – where we feel it, notice surroundings, deep breath through nose. Notice the temperature of air as it comes into your nose, how it transforms and temp as it leaves your body. This teaches distress tolerance

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EXPAND EMOTIONAL VOCABULARY

Kids who have more words around emotion in 1st and 2nd grade,
are less anxious and depressed in 6th and 7th grade

There are 2000 words in English to describe emotion. We use
10-15. Kids use fewer

First Aid: Help them name the emotion, Validate the emotion, Teach
them to tolerate distress. Avoid "saving them"



NAME IT TO TAME IT: When we use precise words to talk about emotion we experience that emotion less
intensely, we act less aggressively and less impulsively

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RIGHT-SIZING THE EMOTION TO ACTUAL PROBLEM

- There is so much information about what we might do
wrong that we may worry **big** about little things
- Sometimes we (& they) have big reactions to little
problems
- All our kids NEED is warmth and structure. The rest is
gravy

First Aid: Calm, And Connect: let them talk without solving,



ZOOM OUT – will this problem matter in 2 weeks, 2 years, 20 years? What experience will make your
child a better 30 year old? 40 year old?

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I AM AN OLD MAN I HAVE KNOWN A GREAT MANY TROUBLES MOST OF THEM NEVER HAPPENED



The GOD Box: There are many worries that we have that we cannot do anything about. Teach your children to let their worries go by writing them down and putting them in the GOD box. This is for God to take care of.

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ALL KIDS CRAVE ATTENTION AND CONNECTION WITH PARENTS

- We often provide the “juiciest” connection when things are going wrong
- We get more of what we shine a light on
- Watch when your connection with your kid is the most “energized”



Avoid Interviewing for Injury: When our children complain about friends or school, we tend to get intense, interested, physically close. Our faces are concerned and loving. Has this turned into a child who complains all the time? Is life terrible for them? Is that consistent with what school reports? Try to switch up how you interact. Give them more energy and closeness when they are reporting the good.

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WE CO-REGULATE WITH OUR KIDS

- Our children (especially littles) can sense our underlying emotional state.
- Best to get help for any issues we have OURSELVES first
- They also make mistakes about what our state is – especially in adolescence. They read concern as anger



Parenting In Two Moments: Remember that you are showing your child how to treat you now, how they can expect to treat their most beloved in adulthood, and how they can expect to be treated by their closest people. We parent in this moment to resolve the issue and IN THEIR FUTURE.

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BE AVAILABLE BUT NOT INTRUSIVE

- Best outcome is the kiddo can solve their own problem
- Validate before trying to solve
- Do you need to vent or do you want suggestions
- Recognize that this will change in adolescence. What helped before feels intrusive.



Get Curious First: Before offering suggestions, say “That’s crummy. I would feel the same way. What have you already tried? What do your other friends do? Do you want advice or a listening ear?”

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OVER-PATHOLOGIZING AND OVER-ACCOMMODATING ANXIETY

- Stress and Anxiety are normal, even helpful part of life
- 3-5% of population (DSM) 25% in actuality
- How we respond makes a big difference
- Schools, Parents, Experts encourage us to avoid/flee/reassure. This makes things worse



Overcoming Rumination: If our child seems to want to ruminate on worries, especially at bedtime, we can make things worse by constant reassuring. Instead, ask “is there anything new?” If not, then say “we’ve talked enough. Time for sleep.” (See Thought Stopping on next slide)

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Thought Stopping/Worry Scheduling: If you are waking in the night with unhelpful or scary thoughts, or worries that you can't address, say “STOP” out loud and then “No thank you, that is not helpful” then replace the thought with something more pleasant. If you have re-current unhelpful thoughts or worries, actually putting them on your calendar “I will worry about this for 15 minutes on Wednesday at 1:30” and then do the worrying then. This will help your brain “let go” for awhile. Teach this to your children.

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A BIT MORE ON ANXIETY

- Anxiety grows when you “give it what it seeks”
 - Perfectionism
 - Low distress tolerance
 - Low frustration tolerance
 - Fairness
 - Rule following
 - Rigidity



Externalize, Identify, Plan: When our children have low tolerance for things not going to plan, we can FEED those rigidities when we try to make everything perfect. Instead, talk about this part of them. “You seem to have a part of you that gets upset when others don’t follow the rules. In life, sometimes people don’t follow the rules and we have to be ok with that. Lets think of your “rule follower” inside as Rebecca Ruley. Rebecca shows up when rules aren’t followed and she gets bigger and louder when we make sure that people follow rules. Lets acknowledge her by where she shows up (physical manifestation). Then lets have a plan to address that physical feeling. That makes Rebecca smaller and quieter and less likely to show up next time.

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WHEN TO SEEK HELP

- If it is accompanied by panic attacks
- If it significantly interrupts normal interests/pleasures
- If it keeps you from daily functioning
- If you can’t sleep/eat/work or are doing those all the time

Get Help from a Professional

Anxiety is treatable – you don’t have to suffer

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PRIORITIZE TIME WITH KIDS

- There will always be chores to do, work deadlines. There won't always be children to raise
- Some undivided attention every day
- Let child lead the activity
- In adolescence, follow their lead. "I'd like to spend time with you, what would you like to do?" Then do it.
- We are STILL their most important roll model (yes even when it seems they are allergic to us)



Screens Time-Out: Agree to have a "time-out" from screens for all of the family daily and to spend that time together. Put phones/ipads in a "time-out" basket away from everyone and spend uninterrupted 30 mins or more together doing something fun. Bonus if the activity is outdoors! This is never a surprise, part of the family charter or agreement. Let kids choose the activity. If kids balk, that's fine. They don't have to have fun, they just have to do it. No being rude or disrespectful though. If that happens, they sit quietly during and get a consequence after.

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FIRST AID INCLUDES PREVENTION

- Eating
- Sleeping
- Activity
- Outdoor time
- Personal connections
- Doing for others
- Gratitude



Progress not Perfection: Spend some time thinking about each of these things and make a plan to take baby steps toward progress in each area every day. Have your kids plan an activity or a way to address each area.

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STRESS IS NOT THE PROBLEM: GETTING STUCK IN STRESS IS THE PROBLEM

- When we experience a stressor (missed deadline, big mistake at work, fight with friend, money pressure, bad news, illness, failure) even if we solve or push off the problem, the effects of the stress stay in our body (hormones, cortisol, tense muscles)
- If we don't release the physical residuals of the stressor, we can get sick, burned out, anxious, depressed
- We must complete the "stress cycle"



Completing the Stress Cycle: This is different for everybody, but usually involves movement, sweating, tears, quiet, reflection, grounding, creative pursuits, physical connection, emotional connection, quiet time, indulging in a healthy pleasure.

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TALKING ABOUT IT

- Sunshine is the best disinfectant
- If you don't know how to talk about it, get help
- Normalize talking about emotions



Windshield Time and Shared Diary : Particularly in adolescence, it can be difficult to get our kids to talk with us about their emotional life. They do this best when they don't have to look at us or even say things out loud. The car can be a great place for these conversations. Another option is to have a diary that you share with your tween. The rule is the you will never bring up (in person) anything they write unless it is a matter of health or safety. They are allowed to express their true selves in writing, and we can respond with encouragement, unconditional love, appreciation for their bravery also in writing. They lead and we respond. Don't make a pest of yourself by to get them to use it more often.

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Resources

C. Jewell, A. Wittkowski, D. Pratt. The impact of parent-only interventions on child anxiety: A systematic review and meta-analysis, *Journal of Affective Disorders*, Volume 309, 2022, Pages 324-349, ISSN 0165-0327, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2022.04.082>. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165032722004207>)

Eli R. Lebowitz, Haim Omer, Holly Hermes, Lawrence Scahill, Parent Training for Childhood Anxiety Disorders: The SPACE Program, *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, Volume 21, Issue 4, 2014, Pages 456-469, ISSN 1077-7229, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpra.2013.10.004>. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1077722913000977>)

The Stress Response <https://psychcentral.com/stress/the-stress-response-cycle>

Parenting Intervention <https://www.spacetreatment.net/>

Books:

Emotional First Aid: Practical Strategies for Treating Failure, Rejection, Guilt, and Other Everyday Psychological Injuries – Guy Winch
 Under Pressure – Lisa Damour
 Untangled – Lisa Damour
 Decoding Boys – Cara Natterson
 Connections over Compliance – Lori De Sautels
 Tenacity in Children – Same Goldstein
 Fourteen Talks by Age 14 – Michelle Icard
 How to Raise an Adult – Julie Lythcott-Haims
 Building Resilience in Children and Teens _ Kenneth Ginsburg
 Rewire your Anxious Brain – Catherine Pittman
 Maybe You Should Talk to Someone – Lori Gottlieb
 Middle School Matters – Phyllis Fagell
 Raising Resilience – Tovah Klien

Podcasts:

Lynn Lyons – Cluster Flux
 Lisa Damour – Ask Lisa
 Dr. Aliza – Raising Good Humans
 Family 360
 Practically Perfect Parenting