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MILESTONE MOMENTS

A COLLABORATION BY M.A.P AND MINDSHEART



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Parenting is no easy feat, and we know it comes with its fair share of highs and lows. This month, we're diving into a topic that's close to every parent's heart: **Emotional Regulation**.

Ever wondered how emotions shape your child's behavior—or even your own? In this issue, we'll share simple, practical tips to help you and your child manage those big feelings, bounce back from challenges, and build emotional resilience together.

From mindfulness techniques to tools for managing emotions, this edition is packed with insights to empower you as a parent. Think of it as your guide to creating a calmer, more mindful home—one step at a time. We're excited to have you on this journey with us!

Raising Calm Champions: The Secret to Thriving in a Fast-Paced World

As parents, we've all seen it—our child overwhelmed by frustration, excitement, or sadness, unsure how to handle those big emotions. It's in these moments that we realize how important it is to equip them with the tools to manage their feelings. This is where emotional regulation comes in. **Emotional regulation is more than just staying calm during a meltdown. It's about understanding, managing, and expressing emotions in a healthy way.** It's a skill that helps children thrive—not just academically, but socially and emotionally too.



What is Emotional Regulation and Why Does It Matter?

Emotional regulation acts as a **foundation for your child's well-being.** It **helps them navigate challenges** like a tough exam, a disagreement with a friend, or even the disappointment of losing a game.

In Singapore's fast-paced and competitive environment, children face a unique set of pressures. Academic demands, social expectations, and packed schedules can make it difficult for them to process their emotions. **Without the ability to regulate these feelings, they may struggle with stress, anxiety, or even behavioral issues.** But with the right guidance, they can learn to stay composed, make thoughtful decisions, and build resilience to overcome life's hurdles.

The Path Away

Teaching emotional regulation is one of the most valuable gifts you can give your child. It's not just about helping them manage their emotions today—**it's about equipping them with the skills to face life's challenges with confidence and resilience.** As parents, we play a vital role in guiding our children through this journey. **By being present, modeling healthy emotional habits, and creating a supportive environment, we can help them build a strong foundation for their future.**



Emotional Superpowers: How Kids Learn to Ride Life's Ups and Downs



BY MOSES WONG, FELICIA CHUA
M.A.P LEARNING AND CONSULTANCY

As children grow, so does their ability to manage emotions—but it's not always smooth sailing. **Understanding how emotional regulation develops can help parents guide their children through the ups and downs of growing up.**

How Emotional Regulation Grows With Your Child

Early Childhood (3–6 years): At this age, **emotions often feel overwhelming** for children. They may cry, throw tantrums, or act out **because they don't yet have the words or tools to express themselves**. This is where parents step in to **help them name their feelings and find simple ways to calm down**.

- Example: When a 4-year-old throws a tantrum over a toy, teaching them to say, "I'm upset because I want my toy back," helps them start to process their emotions.

Middle Childhood (7–12 years): As children enter primary school, they **become more self-aware and start using logic to manage their emotions**. This is the perfect time to **teach them how to reflect on their feelings and respond thoughtfully**.

- Example: An 8-year-old frustrated with homework **can be encouraged to take a short break, breathe deeply, and return with a clearer mind**.



Adolescence (13–18 years): The teenage years bring **hormonal changes, academic stress, and social pressures, all of which can amplify emotions.** Teens **need advanced tools like mindfulness and journaling to navigate these challenges.**

- Example: A teenager feeling overwhelmed by peer pressure can benefit from mindfulness exercises or journaling **to process their emotions and regain control.**

What Shapes Emotional Regulation?

In Singapore's fast-paced, multicultural environment, several factors influence how children learn to manage their emotions. Here's what parents should know:

Physical Health: Sleep, nutrition, and exercise are the building blocks of emotional well-being. **A well-rested and well-fed child is better equipped to handle challenges, while fatigue or hunger can make even small setbacks feel overwhelming.**

Technology: Screens are everywhere, from online classes to social media. While some apps promote mindfulness, **excessive screen time can overstimulate children and make it harder for them to process emotions.**

Culture: In Singapore's multicultural society, families approach emotions in diverse ways. Some may **prioritize harmony and encourage children to suppress their feelings,** while others promote open expression.

Myths About Emotional Regulation

Even well-meaning parents can fall into common traps when it comes to emotional regulation.

Here are two myths to watch out for:

Myth: "Crying is a sign of weakness."

- **Truth: Expressing emotions is healthy and builds resilience. Teaching children to articulate their feelings helps them process emotions constructively.**

Myth: "Teenagers should manage emotions on their own."

- **Truth: While teens are learning independence, they still need guidance to navigate complex emotions and social pressures.**

By understanding how emotional regulation develops, what shapes it, and the myths surrounding it, parents can empower their children to thrive emotionally. In Singapore's unique cultural and educational landscape, **these skills are more important than ever for helping children grow into resilient, well-rounded individuals.**





Not Just Smarts: How Emotional Skills Boosts School Performance



BY MOSES WONG, FELICIA CHUA
M.A.P LEARNING AND CONSULTANCY



Emotional regulation quietly shapes a child's grades, motivation, and relationships. When students manage their feelings, they're better able to focus, recover from setbacks, and enjoy school.

Emotional regulation—basically, how we handle our feelings—can make all the difference between a child who enjoys school and one who dreads it. In our years of teaching, we've seen how much a students' emotional skills can quietly influence their academic results, motivation, and even their relationships with others in their life.

Why Emotional Regulation Matters in School

We all know that school here isn't a walk in the park. There's pressure from exams, CCAs, and sometimes even from us parents. **If your child can recognise their feelings, talk about them, and bounce back from setbacks, they'll find it much easier to focus, join in, and recover from disappointments.** We've seen students get stuck on a tough math problem, but instead of panicking, they pause, jot down what's confusing, and ask for help. That small step keeps them moving forward.

But if a child struggles to manage their emotions, things can go south pretty quickly. **Stress can turn into frustration, avoidance, or even anger.** We've seen kids give up on homework, procrastinate, or get into arguments with classmates and teachers. Over time, this doesn't just hurt their grades—it **chips away at their confidence and makes school feel like a chore.**



How Emotional Regulation Impacts Academic and Overall Wellbeing

When kids learn to manage their emotions, it's not just their marks that improve. **They're less anxious, more focused, and they don't get thrown off as easily by setbacks.** Sometimes, **all it takes is a quick pause and a deep breath during revision, and suddenly, they're able to get back on track instead of spiralling into frustration.** It's a small habit, but it really adds up—especially during exam season.

On the flip side, **if a child's always feeling stressed or overwhelmed, it can show up in all sorts of ways**—trouble sleeping, no motivation, or even tummy aches. Some kids start avoiding tough subjects or group work, and before you know it, **their confidence takes a hit.** In our “kiasu” culture, where everyone's trying to keep up, this can feel even tougher.

Notable Issues and Patterns We've Observed

When it comes to emotional regulation, we've noticed several recurring patterns among students in Singapore that can have a big impact on both their academic and personal lives.

Here's what we've been seeing in our students, and honestly, it's all tied to how they handle their emotions:

- **Perfectionism and Fear of Failure:** So many kids **feel like they have to get everything right. If they make a mistake, they get anxious or beat themselves up.** Sometimes, they're even scared to ask questions in class because they don't want to look “blur.”
- **Peer Comparison:** It's almost a national pastime to compare marks. We hear students ask, “What did my friends get?” right after getting back their exam scripts. **If they don't do as well, their whole mood can change for the day.**
- **Bottling Up Emotions:** **Some kids just keep everything inside, especially if their family doesn't talk much about feelings.** When they don't have a way to let it out, it can show up as sudden outbursts or just shutting down.
- **Difficulty Bouncing Back:** We've seen kids who, after one bad grade or a harsh comment, **lose motivation for weeks.** If they haven't learned how to handle those feelings, **they might start avoiding challenges altogether.**

All of these patterns are closely tied to how well a child can recognise, express, and manage their emotions. When emotional regulation is lacking, academic struggles and social difficulties often follow.

Why Prioritise Emotional Regulation?

From where we stand as tutors, **emotional regulation isn't just a “nice-to-have”—it's the foundation for real learning.** When kids can handle their feelings, they're more open to feedback and better at dealing with the ups and downs of school life. **These are skills that'll help them far beyond the classroom**—whether it's tackling university interviews, handling their first job, or navigating life's curveballs.

What Parents Can Do: Simple Steps and Pitfalls to Avoid

Supporting your child's emotional regulation doesn't need fancy tools or hours of free time. Here are some steps that are easy to get started with—and have shown results with students we've worked with:

Steps to take:

- **Listen Without Judgement:** When your child shares how they feel, **just listen. Don't rush to fix things** or say, “It's nothing.” Sometimes, **they just want to know you're there.**
- **Acknowledge Their Feelings:** **Let them know it's okay to feel upset, frustrated, or nervous.** A simple “I can see you're disappointed” can mean a lot, especially after a tough day.
- **Encourage Small Breaks:** If your child's getting overwhelmed by homework, **suggest a short break**—maybe a Milo break, a quick walk downstairs, or just stretching together.
- **Help Them Problem-Solve:** Instead of focusing on what went wrong, **ask, “What's one small thing you can try next?”** If they're stuck on a question, maybe try a similar one first.

Things to AVOID:

- **Don't Dismiss Their Feelings:** **Try not to say things like “Don't be so sensitive” or “Other people have it worse.”** It can make them feel like their feelings don't matter.
- **Don't Compare to Others:** **Avoid comparing your child to siblings, cousins, or classmates.** Every child's journey is different, and comparisons just add stress.
- **Don't Jump in to Fix Everything:** It's tempting to solve their problems for them, but **letting them work through challenges helps them build real resilience.**



These approaches are simple to put into practice and can make a meaningful difference in your child's ability to manage emotions and handle school life.

The Takeaway

Emotional regulation isn't just about school—it's about helping your child handle whatever life throws at them, with confidence and heart. With a little support at home, you'll help them build skills that'll last a lifetime, right here in Singapore's fast-paced world.

The Power of Emotional Regulation: Helping Your Child Handle Big Feelings



BY GERALD BOH

CLINICAL DIRECTOR, MINDSHEART LLP

As a psychologist working with families in Singapore, I often meet parents who are concerned about their children's "big feelings." Maybe your child loses a game and bursts into tears, or a small disagreement with a sibling turns into a meltdown. You might wonder, *"Why is my child reacting this way? Am I doing something wrong?"*

Let me reassure you: **strong emotions are a normal part of childhood**, especially in Singapore's fast-paced, high-expectation environment. **What truly matters is how children learn to manage these emotions — a skill called emotional regulation.**

What is Emotional Regulation?

Emotional regulation is the ability to understand, express, and manage our feelings in healthy ways. For children, this means learning how to calm down when upset, express feelings appropriately, and recover from disappointments. **These skills are not inborn — they are learned, and parents play a crucial role in teaching them.**

Why is Emotional Regulation Important?

Children who develop emotional regulation skills are better able to:

- **Cope with stress and setbacks** (like exams or friendship issues)
- **Build positive relationships with peers and family**
- **Focus and learn in school**
- **Develop resilience for life's challenges**

In Singapore, where academic and social pressures can be high, emotional regulation is especially important for children's well-being.



Strong emotions are normal—what matters is helping children learn to manage them. Emotional regulation helps kids cope, connect, and thrive.



Meet Sophie and Ethan

Sophie is a working mum in Singapore, raising her 7-year-old son, Ethan — a bright, energetic boy who feels things deeply. When Ethan's teacher gave him feedback on his project *"Great effort, but try to be neater next time"*, Ethan burst into tears in front of his classmates. At home, if Sophie asked him to turn off the TV, he would shout, *"You never let me have any fun!"* Sophie felt like she was walking on eggshells around his emotions.

Instead of dismissing it as "just a phase," Sophie decided to help Ethan build stronger emotional regulation skills. Here's what worked for them — and what I recommend to many Singaporean families.

1. Strategies for Managing Emotional Triggers

Start with Yourself

It's hard to teach calm if we're not calm ourselves. Sophie realised that when Ethan cried or yelled, her instinct was to "fix it" or get frustrated. Instead, **she learned to pause, take a breath, and remind herself: "This is not about me. He's learning how to deal with feelings."**

Validate, Don't Minimise

Instead of saying, *"You're overreacting"* or *"It's not a big deal,"* Sophie tried: **"I can see you're really disappointed. It's okay to feel upset."** This small shift made Ethan feel heard — and helped him calm down faster. In Singapore's results-driven culture, it's easy to focus on solutions, but **validation is the first step to emotional regulation.**

Create a "Feelings Chart"

Sophie and Ethan made a chart with emojis showing different emotions — happy, sad, frustrated, proud, embarrassed — and stuck it on the fridge. At bedtime, Sophie would ask, *"Which face matches how you felt today?"*

Talking about feelings when things are calm helps children express themselves when things get tough.

2. The Role of Mindfulness in Emotional Regulation

Mindfulness is a powerful tool for emotional regulation. **It helps children notice their feelings before they become overwhelming, and gives them strategies to calm down.**

Simple Breathing Games

When Ethan got worked up, Sophie would say: *"Let's blow up a pretend balloon together — big breath in... and slow breath out."* **They made it a fun challenge:** *"How big can we make the balloon before it pops?"*

Play "Body Detective"

Whenever Ethan seemed upset, Sophie would gently ask: *"Where in your body do you feel it? Your tummy? Your fists? Your face?"* **Noticing early signs of stress gave Ethan a chance to slow down before a meltdown.**

Mindfulness in Daily Life

On the way to school, they played *"Let's see who can hear the most different sounds."* While washing hands, *"How many bubbles can you spot?"* These mini mindfulness games **help children stay present** — instead of worrying about mistakes or what others think, which is a common concern among Singaporean kids.



Validation is the first step to emotional regulation—when children feel heard, they calm down and learn to manage their feelings.

3. Tools for Building a Healthy Emotional Framework

Build a Calm-Down Kit

Together, Sophie and Ethan filled a small box with things that helped him feel better - A stress ball, a soft blanket, a notepad and crayons. When Ethan felt overwhelmed, he could **choose something from the kit instead of yelling or crying**. This is a practical way to support emotional regulation.

Practice Emotion Coaching

Instead of sending Ethan to his room when he got upset, **Sophie guided him through it**: *"Looks like you're feeling frustrated that the game didn't go your way. That's hard. Want to take three balloon breaths together, or grab your calm-down kit?"*

Problem-Solving Together

Once Ethan was calm, Sophie would ask: *"What happened?", "How did you feel?", "What can we try next time?"* This helped Ethan **see that feelings are normal — and manageable**. Over time, **he learned to regulate his emotions, not just react to them**.



Final Thoughts: Progress, Not Perfection

Sophie didn't become a "zen" parent overnight, and Ethan still has big feelings. But over time, those feelings became easier to manage — for both of them. Today, if Ethan gets upset about losing a game or making a mistake, he might still feel it strongly, but now he can say: *"I'm really frustrated. I'm going to squeeze my stress ball for a bit."*

That's real progress.

Remember – **emotional regulation isn't about never feeling upset. It's about learning what to do when we feel upset — with patience, practical tools, and lots of love**. By supporting your child's emotional regulation, you're not just teaching them to behave better. **You're helping them understand themselves** — a gift that will last a lifetime, both in Singapore's unique environment and beyond.

TEACHER, HELP!

My child is very good at hiding her feelings and pretending to be all good, in front of other adults. Should I be concerned?

Dear Parent,

I know it can be worrying when you notice your child hiding her feelings and always seeming “all good” around other adults. You’re definitely not alone—many parents wonder about this.

From what we’ve seen over the years, **sometimes, kids just want to make the adults around them happy.** Other times, **children might have had experiences where showing their emotions led to being scolded, teased, or ignored.** That can **make them worry about being judged or rejected, especially around people they don’t know well.**

It’s also pretty common for kids **to pick up on how the adults or siblings around them handle emotions.** **If they see others keeping their feelings private, or if expressing emotions has caused trouble before, they might decide it’s just safer to stay quiet about how they really feel.**

And honestly, sometimes kids just **don’t know how to talk about what’s going on inside.** **If conversations about feelings don’t happen much at home, or if the adults around them aren’t comfortable sharing emotions either, it can be hard for them to find the words.**

What really helps is **letting your child know that all feelings are normal and welcome at home.** Gentle, open conversations about emotions—and showing her by example that it’s okay to talk about how you feel—can make a big difference.

If you notice she seems upset for a long time, or you’re just feeling unsure, it’s always okay to reach out to a counselor for extra support.

SEND US YOUR
QUESTIONS!

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- Drop us a [Whatsapp DM!](#)

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