



When my child is stressed and emotionally overwhelmed, it can look like:



- Crying
- Clinging
- Looking away, squirming, or other avoidant behaviours
- Complaints of physical pains or tummy aches
- Increase in or new bedwetting
- Sleeping less or more wakings
- Changes in appetite
- Increase in aggressive or 'acting out' behaviours
- Unwilling to participate in activities they used to enjoy
- Regressing to comforting/soothing behaviours from earlier in their childhood

I will remember to:

### Pause, take a breath and connect with myself.

*What is getting stirred up in me? What am I feeling in my body? I will give myself a few moments to breathe into where I am holding tension.*

### Check in with my expectations.

*I don't like this behaviour, but I know my child's brain is still developing. Is my child just behaving appropriately for their age or stage of development? Can I accept that they are doing the best they can with the skills they have and the stage they are at?*

### Look beyond behaviours.

*Could my child be flooded with stress hormones? Hungry or tired? Overstimulated? Anxious or scared? What is your child trying to communicate through their behaviours?*

### Make room for feelings.

*I know overreacting to something small can be a sign of pent-up big feelings. Is this a time when I can welcome all my child's emotions (even the tough ones) without rushing, dismissing or stifling them?*

Instead of asking myself "What should I do?" I will first ask "How can I be with my child in this moment?"

### Things I can say

"This feels really big."

"I am right here."

"You are not alone in this."

"I love you. You are safe."

**Play is essential for regulation.** Your child may not be able to communicate how they feel. Instead, they may ask, "Will you play with me?" Having regular opportunities for play with a caring adult is essential for children's emotional well-being as they gain a sense of mastery and learn how to safely work through big or difficult emotions.



To learn more, see [Supporting Your Child Through Big Feelings](#).