

APPENDIX N

Emotional Storm Checklist

Weathering an Emotional Storm Checklist

Parenting kids struggling with intense emotional outbursts is a lot like hiking in the backcountry: Always prepare for the sudden change in the weather.

Try and remember that moods are just like the weather. There are sunny days, dreary days, and stormy days. Work to support your child through all types of weather!



- On "sunny days," keep expectations and positive interactions high.
- On "dreary days," validate the mood you witness and allow some space. Avoid "logic and reason" responses. Just listen and validate.
- On "stormy days," keep supervision and structure at home (and school) very high. Safety is the main goal on those days.
- Identify a set of "go-to" coping skills with your child (try to do this on "sunny days.") Practice those skills with your child on "sunny days" and even "dreary days" so when the "stormy days" arrive, they have a point of reference.

"GO-TO" Coping Skills



Below are a set of "Go-To" Coping Skills for any child across any age.

- C = Cardio
- H = Helping Others
- I = Imagery
- L = Learn a New Skill
- L = Listen to Someone Else
- O = Opposite Emotions
- U = Unwind
- T = Temporary Point of View

Flip to Page 2 for detailed descriptions of the CHILLOUT Coping Skills,

When to get help:



As parents, it's a good idea to reach out for some help from your local school or private therapist when the emotional outbursts increase in both **FREQUENCY** and **INTENSITY**.

We all experience intense emotional outbursts—it's part of being human. However, if the outbursts begin to occur frequently and increase in intensity, something's up. When it comes to moods, much of it is out of our control as we need professional support to work through it.

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The C.H.I.L.L.O.U.T. Coping Skills

Work with your children to practice coping skills regularly. The big idea is that when we practice coping skills when things are good, we'll be more likely to use them when things are bad.

This list is by no means comprehensive. As you explore these coping skills, feel free to add any coping skills that work for you and your children. This list is just a start.



C = Cardio: This coping skill is driven by engaging in any activity that will increase the heart rate for a period of time. Getting our heart rate up and lungs working hard can help us divert our focus from an emotion to action.

H = Help Others: Service is another way for us to apply our focus on something other than our intense emotions. (It's also very rewarding to help someone in need.)

I = Imagery: This coping skill requires a little imagination. Basically, work to visualize all the pain, anger, or frustration as an object. Visualize the object on a piece of paper and then do something to get rid of the object, (e.g., crumple it up, throw it away.)

L = Learn a new skill: Work to identify something your child may like to learn that involves practice and repetition. Nothing too complicated, but something that requires attention and focus.

L = Listen to someone else: Sometimes, our kids get so focused on their own problems that they can be all-consuming. Listening to someone else's troubles helps us reach out to others while also putting our children's problems in perspective.

O = Opposite emotion: This requires two steps: 1) Identify the current, unpleasant emotion and 2) Identify the total OPPOSITE of that unpleasant emotion. If we feel rage, let's try meditation. If we feel sad, let's watch a funny movie. If we feel anxious, we can engage in a soothing activity.

U = Unwind. The best "unwinding" activities are structured and planned in advance. Really, any activity that is more simple than complicated like playing with putty, Play Doh, stress ball, moon sand, or anything that is both a simple and concrete activity.

T = Temporary: The big idea behind this coping skill is helping our kids understand how the emotions or stress we are experiencing are temporary. Stressful events can feel "permanent" for many of us. Adopting a "this will pass" mindset is a powerful coping skill.

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