



## Skills to Help Your Kids Manage Mood Changes



**S**ometime in a child's life, he or she will feel sad. This could be the result of a move that takes a child away from friends, the death of a relative, the loss of a pet or some other event that triggers a sense of loss or unhappiness.

Like any other emotion, the best way parents can help their child through a time of sadness is by teaching skills. Skills help a child identify situations when sadness is becoming disruptive or overpowering and then take appropriate action to

deal with it. Learning and gathering the right sets of skills helps children navigate the many challenges that are a natural part of growing up.

The following sections present language you can use with your child or teen to explore skills that can be helpful when he or she is struggling with sadness.

### What to Say to Children

First, try to identify what is making you feel sad. Does it make sense that you feel sad? For example, did a friend move away or did you lose a favorite toy? If so, remind yourself that sadness is normal and it's okay to feel sad or even to cry.

Many kids find it helpful to talk to a parent or loved one about their sad feelings. If you are ready to try to feel better, you can do that or do an activity you usually enjoy, such as playing your favorite game, spending time with your friends or family, playing outside or reading your favorite book. You may also try to distract yourself by playing with your pet, building something with LEGOS® or playing a new computer game.

### Skills:

- Try to identify what is making you feel sad.
- Remind yourself sadness is normal and it's okay to feel sad and cry.
- Talk to a parent or loved one.
- Engage in an enjoyable activity.
- Try distracting yourself.

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## What to Say to Teens

First, try to identify the source of your sadness. Does it make sense that you feel sad? For example, did you experience a break-up or a disappointment at school? If so, remind yourself that it is okay and perfectly natural to feel sad or down.

You may find it helpful to talk to someone about how you are feeling or even allow yourself to cry. Many teens also find it helpful to journal about how they are feeling.

To help yourself feel better, try doing an activity you usually enjoy (even if you don't feel like doing it), such as working on an art project, playing a game, watching a funny TV show or going outside to get some fresh air. You may try making a list of the things you are grateful for or things that are going well.

Try to spend time with friends and family, as isolating yourself can make you feel worse. Remind yourself that no feeling lasts forever and this will pass.

### Skills:

- Try to identify what is making you feel sad.
- Remind yourself that sadness is normal and it's okay to feel sad or down.
- Talk to someone you trust about your feelings.
- Journal about how you are feeling.
- Engage in an enjoyable activity.
- Make a gratitude list.
- Spend time with friends and family.

With the right skills, a clear understanding of how to appropriately address sadness, and your encouragement, your child can effectively resolve problems when they do occur.



➡ **For more information** or to make an appointment at the Boys Town Center for Behavioral Health, call **531-355-3358**.

Visit **Parenting.org** for more information from the parenting experts at Boys Town.