

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Beyond

Evidence-based tips to help support your child's mental wellbeing

Managing Big Feelings

Worried? Upset? Bored? Frustrated? It's normal. Feelings like these are important. They let us know when something doesn't feel right and can help remind us to do important things, like wash our hands or call Grandma to cheer her up. Sometimes though, feelings take over our behaviour. Other times, we can get stuck in our thoughts and feelings and it stops us having fun or making the best of the situation. This handy Octopus Tool provides some steps for managing feelings in a positive way. It can be helpful for parents, carers and kids stuck at home. And, for learning emotional literacy as part of 'home school'.

1. Draw an octopus shape and choose an emotion that's bothering you.
2. Think of 8 things you like to do and that you can do by yourself. The more unusual and creative the better! Draw or write them on the tentacles.
3. Stick your octopus somewhere you can find it easily.

★ Top Tip: Make sure you lay out the resources so children can find these themselves when they need to. ★

4. Now the tricky part...notice when you are feeling the emotion. Don't try to stop or ignore it, just spot it. Then choose one or more of the activities from your octopus instead.

★ Top Tip: It's not always easy to know how you feel, but often your body or behaviour is showing you. For example, if you are whining, feeling grumpy, looking for a snack or bugging others you might be feeling bored. That's a good time to look for your octopus.

5. Make a new octopus as often as you want. Try different designs if you prefer - spider, jellyfish, flower, stack of cards...

Keep talking and listening

Check in regularly with how each other is feeling about the situation. If you are concerned that you really aren't coping it is important to seek professional advice (many services are available on-line or by phone).

