

MIDDLE SCHOOL

MANAGING INTENSE EMOTIONS

Skill Sheet for Caregivers

It is not uncommon for middle schoolers to experience their emotions very intensely. As highlighted in the video, when emotions become intense, there is often an urge to do something connected with that feeling. Sometimes the urge might be to do something that ultimately makes them continue feeling overwhelmed or makes their problems bigger.

It's important for youth to know that intense emotions and the urges that come with them are common and they do not last forever. Middle schoolers can ride out intense feelings and urges by utilizing their five senses and different activities to ground them in the present and help them tolerate how they feel. Waiting for the intensity to pass also allows for greater control in choosing what they do next.

Summary of the **KEY POINTS** from the video.

- Everyone feels big and intense emotions sometimes.
- Everyone has urges that are caused by big, intense emotions. The key is riding out the urge until the feelings have lessened.
- Middle schoolers can ride the wave by utilizing their five senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell) and by engaging in healthy distracting activities and being active (e.g., taking a walk, talking with friends, reading, journaling).

Practice Skills

- Validate emotions! Show that you're listening to your middle schooler and that you empathize with how they feel. This helps them feel understood and connected to you.
- Check in with your child to see how they are feeling, and ask if significant events are happening or may happen in the future that could trigger intense emotions. Being aware can help them to plan for these moments and utilize effective calming strategies.
- Discuss with your child how they can tolerate and get through intense emotions. This can include ways in which they can use their five senses in addition to being active and engaging in healthy distracting activities.
- Creating healthy habits that help middle schoolers to get enough sleep, eat healthily, and stay active can contribute to effectively regulating emotions.

Start with this →

- Practice those validation skills! As a caregiver, when you feel the pull to help your middle schooler solve a problem to make their intense emotions go away, start with validation instead to help them tolerate those emotions and know they can get through them.
- Model at home healthy ways of tolerating and riding out intense emotions. Encourage your child to use effective calming strategies that work, in addition to healthy activities such as going for walks, reaching out to friends, and being active.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your middle schooler to help them plan ahead and create a self-soothe kit that they can use to tolerate intense emotions.

Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

Self-Soothe Kit

You can use your five senses to self-soothe and help tolerate intense emotions. Use the guide below to create your own self-soothe kit.

You can carry this self-soothe kit with you so you always have what you need to tolerate intense feelings.

5 Senses	One thing that makes me calm and relaxed is:	Stumped on what to pick? Here are some suggestions:
See		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calming colors• A relaxing scene• Small picture of my favorite person, family member, athlete; or place to visit
Hear		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to rainstorm or ocean sounds• Recordings of funny jokes or comedians• Happy or soothing music
Smell		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good-smelling hand lotion• Small perfume bottle• A scented candle
Taste		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pieces of your favorite candy or other treat like gum or a mint• Tea
Touch		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Satin ribbon or soft fabric• A small pompom or pouf• A small feather• A stress ball• Slime