

Emotionally Intelligent Communication: Applying RULER to Conversations about Homework

These are suggestions for using RULER and the skills of emotional intelligence to communicate with your child in a way that creates a positive experience around getting homework done. We suggest adding your own ideas too!



Recognizing

- Child's feelings: "It looks like this homework is causing you to feel overwhelmed."
- Parent's feelings: "I'm feeling concerned that if you don't get started soon, you won't be able to finish this and I will feel frustrated."



Understanding

- If the child is overwhelmed: "This is a big assignment and I can understand how you might feel overwhelmed. Maybe it would help if we divided it up and you just worked on one piece of it tonight. Do you think that would help?"
- If the child is frustrated: "I realize you've been working on this project for several days now, and you're not as far along as you hoped you'd be. Is there one part that seems to be holding you back?"



Labeling

- Child's feelings: "It looks like you are feeling overwhelmed." (or "frustrated").
- Parent's feelings: "I'm feeling concerned that if you don't get started soon, you won't be able to finish this."



Expressing

- "It's okay to cry. That's what families are for. Occasionally I cry when I'm overwhelmed too, and it helps the feelings pass. On the other hand, if I feel overwhelmed at work, I know I need to manage those feelings so that I'm professional on my job, and I have other ways to take care of myself. As I've gotten older, I've figured out ways to organize myself to prevent feeling overwhelmed."
- "It's hard for me to listen to you when you are stomping around. I'm here, I love you and want to support you. Can you think of another way to tell me that you feel angry or frustrated?"



Regulating

- "I've seen you do assignments like this before. What can you tell yourself or do to move from the red to the green?"
- "One strategy that really helps me is to get my circulation going. I take 15 minutes to get some fresh air, exercise/stretch, and drink a tall glass of water. Then I feel refreshed and ready to begin."



Emotionally Intelligent Communication: RULER Skills for Families

Emotions give us valuable information about ourselves and our environment. As a parent, developing these five skills in reference to our emotions and our children's emotions helps us to:

- Respond more effectively, working towards creating an emotionally connected, secure parent- child relationship
- Identify the skills that we need to teach our children
- Provide opportunities for modeling and practicing these skills within our family, so that our children will have the resilience to deal with life's ups and downs

	Definition	Strategy	Parent	Child
Recognizing	Using faces, body language, physiology and tone of voice to identify emotions	Acknowledging and validating feelings to help your child feel heard and understood	Becoming aware of my feelings	Becoming aware of my child's feelings
Understanding	Becoming aware of the causes and consequences of emotions and how they influence our thoughts, memory, judgment and behavior	Listening with full attention and curiosity, clarifying, connecting, and responding nonjudgmentally to the feelings that are driving the behaviors	What happened to make me feel this way? How will these feelings affect my thinking, memory, judgement, and behavior?	What happened to make my child feel this way? How will these feelings affect my child's thinking, memory, judgement, and behavior?
Labeling	Using a varied emotion vocabulary to describe feelings accurately and communicate a full range of emotions	Name it to tame it	Using more sophisticated, nuanced feeling words as children grow	Encouraging children to use a more varied feeling word vocabulary through modeling and practice
Expressing	Being aware of when and how to communicate feelings appropriately	Using "I" statements to communicate feelings and accept expression of emotions while limiting behaviors	Making choices about how to express my feelings in different situations (e.g., public vs. private)	Encouraging children to make choices that are appropriate for different situations (e.g, school vs. home)
Regulating	Developing and using strategies to feel more, less, or the same amount of an emotion	Breathing to calm down, reframing, positive self talk; have a problem solving conversation to brainstorm ways to shift feelings; if a desire can't be granted, grant the wish in fantasy	Developing helpful strategies to shift my emotional state in order to achieve my goals	Encouraging and supporting children to develop strategies to manage emotions or shift to more pleasant emotional states



Emotionally Intelligent Communication: RULER Skills for Families

The five skills of Emotional Intelligence are taught, modeled, practiced and developed one conversation at a time. These conversations will help your child to make sense of their experiences and learn from them.

Use the five skills of emotional intelligence to respond to:

A child's feelings and behavior

Situation: Your first grader feels excluded from a group of children who are planning to go to the park together with their families. The other parents work part time and are available to go during the week.

"It sounds like you would have really liked to be invited to go to the park with Courtney and Jamal and that you are feeling a bit left out.

[Recognize, Understand, and Label].

Is that how you are feeling, a little down? I'm noticing that you don't have much energy, your head and shoulders are down. *[Express]*

Would you like to tell me more about it? Oh, so you overheard them talking and it sounded like you would be missing a lot of fun. That must have been difficult. Is there something that you can tell yourself that would make you feel less left out and more connected to your friends? *[Regulate]*

Or perhaps there is something that we can do? For instance we could invite them on the weekend."

A situation

Situation: Your fourth grader does not get to play the drums in the school orchestra and her teacher wants her to play the trumpet. She walks off the school bus appearing angry and frustrated.

"It can be disappointing when you don't get something that you really want *[Recognize]*.

I know how much you really wanted to play the drums. *[Understand]*. It seems like you are a little angry too. Would you like to tell me more about that? *[Labeling]*

Do you think that Ms. X would be willing to hear how you feel about this? Perhaps we can practice together – I can be her and you can be you. What would you say? *[Express]*.

So do you think that a trumpet would be an acceptable instrument or would you rather have a conversation with her about the drums? *[Regulate]*

If you couldn't get to play the drums, what might be a good thing about playing the trumpet? *[Regulate]*

RULER and Emotional Intelligence: Overview for Families

RULER Skills: RULER is an acronym that stands for the five key skills of emotional intelligence. Read about each skill below.



Recognizing

Identifying emotions in ourselves and others allows us to:

- Better understand ourselves and others
- Work well in groups
- Know when children need emotional support



Understanding

Knowing the causes and consequences of our emotions helps us to:

- Anticipate, manage, or prevent unwanted feelings in ourselves and others
- Promote wanted feelings in ourselves and others
- Support children's emotional needs



Labeling

Knowing feeling words allows us to:

- Communicate our feelings accurately
- Manage our emotions
- Recognize and understand the range of emotions others have



Expressing

Learning how to display our feelings helps us to:

- Act in social situations skillfully
- Model acceptable social behavior for our children



Regulating

Developing strategies to manage feelings allows us to:

- Be more effective in reaching our goals
- Make wise choices about how we respond to emotional situations

Practicing RULER Skills at Home

Practicing RULER at Home:

All emotions matter. Everyone wants to feel understood and valued. The ability to get along with others is the glue that holds us together; Understanding ourselves and others, expressing our emotions in compassionate ways, and respecting ourselves and each other are essential life skills.

R Recognizing

To recognize emotions, families can:

- Discuss how emotions are expressed on our faces, in our voices, and bodies
- Notice and honor your children's and your emotions
- Acknowledge your children's and your own emotions instead of dismissing or minimizing them

U Understanding

To understand emotions, families can:

- Reflect on your emotional response to and your interpretation of a situation or event
- Explore how feeling this way influences your child's or your behavior
- Ask your children questions about what emotions might be underlying or driving their behaviors (i.e. I notice you're feeling sick every morning before school. What's going on? My sense is that you are anxious about something)

L Labeling

To label emotions, families can:

- Use a wide range of feeling words with children
- Find the best word to describe your feelings and encourage your children to do the same
- Build your family's feeling word vocabulary by discovering new words in books, films, or conversations

E Expressing

To express emotions, families can:

- Help children evaluate the best time, place, and way to express their feelings

R Regulating

To regulate emotions, families can:

- Model different, effective strategies for children when you manage your own emotions
- Help children find useful and successful strategies for managing the range of emotions they experience
- Validate that your children's emotions are okay and clarify acceptable behaviors for expressing their emotions.