

Working Through Wobbly Moments Together

Why do children have wobbly moments?

Dan Siegel developed the 'Brain House' model as a way to explain why children might have wobbly moments. Imagine a brain as a house with an upstairs and a downstairs. The 'upstairs brain' helps us to think and the 'downstairs brain' tells us how to behave in response to something that has happened. Children are at an early stage in their development where they tend to rely on their downstairs brain rather than their upstairs brain. This means they are more likely to have wobbly moments because they are not always able to think before they react.

Please watch the following video for more information:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/pshe-ks2-the-brain-house/zd7kd6f>



Wobbly moments are important for a child's development as they can help a child to learn, build resilience, and communicate with others. As a supportive adult, it can be difficult to know how best to help a child when they have a wobbly moment. Here are our top 5 tips:

Support your Own Wellbeing First

Children can pick up on adults' emotions. Try to support your own wellbeing before your child's. Think of the 'oxygen mask' analogy; you must put on your own 'mask' first in order to support your child. Think about the things that work best for you to help you feel calm and better able to respond.



Tweak your Language

Think of a time when someone told you that you could not do something. How did this make you feel? It often makes people feel angry, upset or frustrated. Try avoiding using the word 'No!' or saying what a child *cannot do*. Try to focus on giving them ideas for what they *can do*. For example, "you can have this when...". You can also use signs/gestures/pictures to support this. It can also be helpful to offer a choice between two options so that children still feel in control of decisions.



Support Expectations and Boundaries

Before entering a new place or doing something out of routine, you can offer a sense of predictability and consistency to children by using simple language and visuals. Predictability is important to help children feel safe and secure.



Pick your 'Battles'

Each day you as an adult and your child will face different challenges, and how you respond to them will depend on your thoughts and feelings that particular moment/day. We could view these challenges as opportunities to learn together. Remember, you know your child best, weigh up which option is going to have a more positive effect on you and your child's wellbeing.



Create a 'Toolbox' to Support your Child's Emotions

A creative activity you could try with your child is to create an emotional toolbox, for example, using an old shoe box. Fill this box with items that your child finds regulating such as a spinning toy, light, or fidget toy. Remember you do not always have to fill it with toys. For example, you may write your child's favourite song for others to sing to them, or ask them to count items you have drawn/stuck around the box. When your child is experiencing a wobbly moment try to make sure your box is easily accessible.

