Dear Parents,

Human beings experience a wide variety of emotions each and every day. Over time, we learn to manage and deal with those emotions. However, your children are not born knowing how to deal with all the feelings they have each day. It is our job to help them learn how to do that.

Watch this quick video clip, then get some practical advice below!

<https://vimeo.com/parentministry/review/121132477/b145502f4c>

The early years of your child’s life present a unique opportunity to lay the foundation for healthy development. It is also a time of vulnerability. Studies have shown that children whose parents talk with them about their emotions have better social skills and coping capabilities. It is so important to start this communication with our kids! By the ages of two and three children can understand what they are feeling but they still have very little control over it. Emotions at this age are very situation specific and can change quickly as your child moves on to different activities. It is also common for preschoolers to express emotions in extremes, you know the ones we are talking about!

Two of the most common emotions that kids have a hard time dealing with are anger and fear. Here are some tips when dealing with these particular preschool emotions.

**Anger:** 1) Remain calm. No good will come of both of you being angry. 2) Do not try to reason with your child while they are in the middle of a tantrum. They are not thinking or behaving rationally. 3) Take a time out, for you and them. This gives you both a chance to calm down and you are not indulging their behavior. An easy method is to slowly count to 10. Then start the conversation again. “Count to ten; start again.” 4) If discipline is necessary, give consequences for the behavior, not the anger.

**Fear:** 1) In the moment, your child is dealing with something that is very real and serious to them. Don’t smile or make light of what they are going through. Your child’s fear of the neighbor’s small poodle may seem silly to you, but it is very real to them. 2) Problem solve together. This also opens communication and allows your child to be part of the solution. 3) Provide your child with a comfort object. If they have a particular stuffed animal or blanket that brings them comfort, allow them to keep it with them. 4) Teach them not to dwell on things that cause fear. Instead, explore ways to boost confidence and help them feel brave.

What are some ways to help express feelings? Give your child permission to feel and express emotion. Let them know that these feelings are normal and everyone feels that way sometimes. They will be more likely to talk to you and share if they feel safe and secure. Use books and art to help boost communication. Let us know if you need some help finding these resources.

Be a positive role model. Your child will model what you show them. If you are prone to losing your temper and emotional outbursts, don’t be surprised if your child shows those same behaviors. Show them healthy, productive ways of expressing emotions. There are many scriptures and stories in the Bible dealing with emotions. Teach your child that we should always pray and talk to God about what we are feeling. Incorporate daily prayer time with your child to praise and thank God for our blessings and happy moments each day and also reaching out in times of sorrow or anxiety.

Helping our children identify and name their emotions is the first step in giving them the tools they need as they grow to deal with these feelings. We can help them now at an early age to learn how to manage their emotions as they grow up. Building Young Disciples,

Pastor Sarah