

# Emotion



## ★ Your Feelings Matter

Every brain is different, and that means everybody feels things in their own way.  
**Your feelings are real. Your feelings are valid. Your feelings matter.**

There is no “right” or “wrong” way to feel something.  
How *you* feel is important — and it deserves to be understood.

## What Is Emotional Regulation?

Emotional regulation is just a way of saying:

**Noticing** how you feel  
**Understanding** what’s going on inside you  
**Finding ways to help yourself feel safe again**

Some people feel emotions really strong.  
Some people feel them for a long time.  
Some people find them hard to explain.

None of that means you’re “wrong”.  
It just means your brain works in its own special way.

And you don’t have to deal with big feelings alone.  
Grown-ups can help you calm down — this is called **co-regulation**, and it means:

💛 *“You don’t have to calm yourself; I’m here with you.”*

## ★ If You’re Neurodivergent, Feelings Might Feel Different

If you’re autistic, have ADHD, or your brain works differently in another way, feelings might sometimes:

- feel **bigger**
- last **longer**
- be **harder to explain**
- come out suddenly
- feel overwhelming

This doesn’t mean you’re “overreacting”.  
It just means your emotions are strong and your brain is doing its best to handle them.

You are not choosing to feel this way — your brain makes feelings extra powerful sometimes.



### ★ When Feelings Get Big

Lots of everyday things can make feelings feel huge, like:

- losing a game
- making a mistake
- plans changing suddenly
- feeling stuck on schoolwork
- being the centre of attention
- having a problem with a friend
- trying something new

To someone else these might feel small, but to *you* they might feel **very big and very real**.

That's okay.

Your feelings make sense for the brain you have.

### ★ If You're Struggling

If you're having a tough moment, it doesn't mean you're being "bad".

It means:

You need support

Your brain is overwhelmed

Your feelings are too big for your body to hold on its own

Some days you might handle things well.

Other days the same thing might feel impossible.

That's normal.

### ★ A Neuro-Affirming Way to Support You

A neuro-affirming approach means:

- ✦ Your emotions don't need to be "fixed".
- ✦ You deserve understanding, not judgement.
- ✦ Adults help you feel safe, calm, and cared for.
- ✦ Your strengths — kindness, fairness, creativity — are noticed and celebrated.

Emotional support isn't about changing who you are.

It's about helping you feel safe being yourself.

## ★ What Helps When Feelings Are Big



### 1. Co-regulation

An adult stays calm with you so you can feel safe.

### 2. Reducing demands

You might need fewer questions, fewer tasks, or more space.

### 3. Sensory safety

Things like noise, lights, or crowds can make feelings bigger. It's okay to find a quieter space.

### 4. Empathy

Hearing someone say "I know this feels really hard for you" can help a lot.

### 5. Communication

Using words, pictures, emojis, colours — whatever helps you show how you feel.

## ★ Meltdowns and Shutdowns

You might hear these words, but here's what they really mean:

### **Meltdown = Your body's "too much!" reaction**

You might shout, cry, run, freeze, or do things you didn't mean to.

This is not a choice.  
It's your nervous system being overwhelmed.

### **Shutdown = Your body's "I can't cope" reaction**

You might go quiet, stop talking, hide, or feel frozen.

This is also not a choice.  
Your brain is trying to keep you safe.

Both are **stress responses**, not misbehaviour.

### **What Helps in the Moment**

- an adult staying calm
- having space or quiet time

- fewer words and fewer instructions
- knowing it's okay to have big feelings
- waiting to talk about it until you're safe and calm



You deserve patience.

### ★ Helping Your Body Calm Down

Here are things many young people find helpful:

- breathing slowly
- using fidget toys
- listening to calming music
- stretching or gentle movement
- having a quiet, safe place
- sensory tools (weighted blanket, headphones, soft textures)

### ★ Creative Ways to Express Feelings

You don't always have to use words.

You can express your feelings through:

- drawing
- painting
- writing
- music
- dancing
- nature
- building things

Your feelings can come out in lots of safe and creative ways.

### ★ You Are Not Alone

You're allowed to:

- ask for help
- cry
- take a break
- need comfort
- talk when you're ready
- be quiet when feelings are too big

There is no single "right" way to feel.

What matters is finding what works **for you** — with support from people who care about you.