

TEAM HUDDLE

Using Emotion Coaching to Build a Peer Support Culture

Peer support is a protective factor against the harmful impacts of stress. Perceived support among healthcare workers is related to an increase in patient safety, teamwork, participation, accountability and work-life balance. It is also related to a decrease in delays in care delivery, disruptive behavior and burnout. Emotion coaching is one way to provide peer support.

WHAT IS EMOTION COACHING?

Emotion coaching is a skill we can use at work with our patients and each other and also outside of work.

Emotion coaching has been researched for decades by Dr. John Gottman, a clinical psychologist out of the University of Washington. He studies factors that help or harm relationships.

The basic goal of emotion coaching is to validate a person's experience.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Emotion coaching is associated with all sorts of benefits in children and families (healthier peer groups, less substance use, better school performance) and in adult relationships (increased satisfaction with partner, stay together longer).

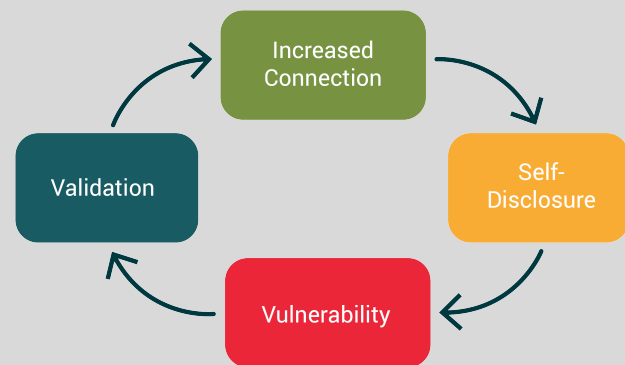
Emotion coaching can be helpful during happy, fun conversations and during stressful ones.

Find the complete step-by-step guide online at:
accelerate.uofuhealth.utah.edu/explore/wellness

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Emotion Coaching consists of four parts:

1. **Self-Disclosure:** A person shares some information with you.
2. **Vulnerability:** This sharing, even if it something very common ("Isn't it great to have a sunny morning?"), is a moment of vulnerability.
3. **Validation:** If you validate the person's comment ("It is really nice out."), then the person feels heard.
4. **Increased connectedness:** If a person feels heard, they are very likely to feel more connected to you and share a little more.



There are three simple ways to validate a person's experience.

1. **Reflect:** Share back with the person what you heard them say, like as if you were a sports commentator describing a play during a game. ("You're wondering what's going to happen.")
2. **Name the Emotion:** Acknowledge the emotion that the person might be experiencing as they describe their circumstance. "Sounds really frustrating" or "Sounds really stressful."
3. **Get Curious:** Ask more about the person's experience. "Tell me more about _____" or "How are you doing with all of this?"

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QUICK GUIDE

STEP 1: Ask your team to take a look at the example statements under the “Say This” column and see if they can label the statement as a “Reflection,” “Naming the Emotion” or “Getting Curious”

Say this	Not this
• That sounds really tough.	• At least you have a job.
• That sounds frustrating/scary/sad.	• You'll get over it.
• You're really worried	• You shouldn't feel that way.
• You're wondering what's going to happen.	• I don't know why you're so upset.
• I can tell how hard you're working.	• You should think more positively.
• Are you okay?	• Unsolicited advice.
• What are you doing to take care of yourself?	• Nothing.

STEP 2: Practice with a scenario. Read the statements out loud and ask team members to say in their mind how they would emotion coach. Then, give them the options below and have them tell you which one sounds more like emotion coaching.

Co-Worker: “That’s me, depressed.”	
<i>How would you respond?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What? Not you, we need you!” • “Yeah, a lot of people are feeling that way right now.”
Co-Worker: “I just feel tired all the time and I get overwhelmed so easily.”	
<i>How would you respond?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You should probably get more sleep.” • “It makes sense. You’re doing a lot.”
Co-Worker: “I know. I just wish I knew when it was going to get better.”	
<i>How would you respond?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yeah, you can’t think about that.” • “Oh man, I hear you. Anything that you've done lately that's been helpful?”

STEP 3: Practice with each other. Get into pairs. Have each person think of something that went well over the past week. In each pair, have one person share what went well for two minutes, the other person will experiment with emotion coaching during this time. Then switch roles.

STEP 4: Reflect as a group on the following questions.

1. What did you notice during the exercise?
2. What was it like to emotion coach?
3. What was it like for someone to use emotion coaching with you?
4. What’s one thing you will take away from today?

Find tips for implementing in clinic online at:
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