

## SMART Moves: Emotional Wellness Family and Caregiver Resource

# Family Activity: The Coping Game

***Play a game as a family to practice using coping strategies in all kinds of situations!***

### Why Are Emotional Wellness and Coping Strategies Important?

In SMART Moves, youth have been learning about emotional wellness. But what exactly is emotional wellness? Emotional wellness has to do with how you feel about yourself, how you relate to others, and how you react to events in your life. It's the ability to successfully deal with life's challenges, develop healthy relationships and adapt to change.

Through fun activities in the program, youth have been learning how to identify their own emotions and the emotions of others. As they discover how to recognize what they're feeling in different situations, they begin to see why they do the things they do and find ways to help themselves and others when they're not feeling calm or happy.

Many of us have learned to calm ourselves down when we're upset, and we often do it by using coping strategies like taking a walk or breathing deeply. Coping strategies are ways to help their bodies and minds slow down when we are feeling a strong emotion. Youth need to learn this skill so they can manage their feelings – and their actions – when facing a tough situation. When youth can't manage their emotions in healthy ways, sometimes they act impulsively, have trouble focusing or calming down, or act in ways that are hurtful to others. Learning and practicing coping strategies will support your young person in school, help them get along with friends and build independence.

### Family Activity: Emotional Wellness Family Game!

Youth have practiced many coping strategies in this program. They are encouraged to teach families what they have learned about emotional regulation and coping skills so family members can support them in using coping strategies at home. In this game, your young person takes the lead in teaching you what they know.

#### **Prepare for the Game**

Encourage youth to follow these steps to prepare for the game:

- Cut out the different sets of cards: Feelings, Coping Strategies, Scenarios.
- Some of the cards are complete and others have blank spaces for you to draw on.
- Complete the blank Feelings Faces cards by writing an emotion and/or drawing a picture of it.
- Complete the blank Coping Strategies cards by writing the name of a coping strategy and/or draw a picture of it.
- Complete the blank scenarios cards by writing additional scenarios.
- Cut out all the cards and place them in an envelope.

**Play the Game**

Ask your young person to explain the directions to you and other family members.

- Players take turns picking a card from the envelope.
- The player reads the card to the group.
- Other players do what is written on the card. For example:
  - › Feeling Faces: act out the emotion and share a time you felt that way.
  - › Coping Strategies: name the coping strategy and practice the strategy together.
  - › Scenarios: share what coping strategy you would use if the situation happened to you.

**Discuss**

After you've played the game, ask your young person the following questions:

- How did it feel to talk about identifying feelings and coping?
- Why is it important to use some of your favorite coping strategies?
- Describe two situations in which you might use two different coping strategies.

**Providing Continued Support**

- Model behaviors. All of us have times when we're sad, angry, frustrated or excited. Try to model positive self-regulation. For example, show your young person how you can do a frustrating task without getting upset. You could say something like, "Wow, that was hard. I'm glad I didn't get angry because I might not have been able to do it."
- Talk about emotions. After your young person has calmed down, you might ask, "I understand you threw that toy because you were frustrated it wasn't working. What is a different thing you can do the next time you're feeling frustrated?"
- Focus on skills. If your young person demonstrates a strong emotion, try not to give feedback that suggests it's bad behavior. Let them know they need to learn a new skill – just like the skills they learn in school.
- Take small steps. If certain activities – like getting ready for school – cause your young person to get upset, try breaking them down into smaller steps. This helps them learn to manage their feelings for shorter periods of time.
- Acknowledge progress. Encourage your young person when they show self-regulation and manage a tricky situation. For example, "You were great at waiting for your turn," or "I liked the way you shared with your brother when he asked."
- Use common games to practice coping strategies. Younger youth might appreciate simple games to help them pay attention, follow directions and manage their emotions. Consider adapting some of the following: Red Light, Green Light; Simon Says; and Musical Chairs.