



Managing My Big Feelings – Thinking Like a Turtle At Home

Children can learn to manage their big emotions and increase impulse control when they are taught and supported to use effective strategies. The Turtle Technique is a strategy that provides children an opportunity to STOP, BREATHE, and THINK of ways to respond that work better for everyone.

Read the Tucker Turtle Book often and use the Turtle Technique cue cards as you teach your child each step. Teach during calm moments in your day, and practice with them as often as you can during everyday activities. This teaching and practice will build your child’s skills to “think like a turtle” when experiencing big emotions.

Step 1: **Recognize** feelings and emotions in self and others

- **Pay attention** to your own emotions as well as your child’s, from happiness to sadness to anger. Identify emotions by naming them as you or your child is experiencing them.
- **Name** emotions throughout the day and describe how the body feels and looks. Ex: “Your nose is squished like this, your fists are tight, you look like you are feeling angry.”
- Throughout the day, find opportunities to **point out** emotions in stories you read, characters on TV, or introduce games that teach emotions.

Step 2: **Stop** your body

- Play games where children can **practice** stopping or slowing down/speeding up. Play games like, freeze dance, musical statues, Simon Says, Ring around the Rosie, and Red light/green light.
- Provide activities that require **slowing** minds and bodies, like Yoga poses or walking slowly on a balance beam/line.

Step 3: **Breathe:** Tuck inside your “shell” and take 3 deep breaths

- Help your child see what a turtle looks like when they **tuck** inside their shell. Practice being a turtle throughout the day with your child.
- Play games that teach **slow breathing** into the belly such as: blowing bubbles, laying on the floor with a breathing buddy on your belly watching it rise and fall as you breath, or the [Take a Deep Breath](#) game.

Step 4: **Come out** when you are calm and think of a solution

- Help children think of possible **solutions**.
- Use the [Problem Solving Story](#) and [Problem Solving Steps](#) to teach children how to solve the problem.
- Use the [Solution Kit](#) to think of possible solutions to the problem.

Especially for infants and toddlers, *you are their “turtle”* when they express big emotions. Name their emotion, model by taking 3 deep breaths while you provide them with comfort and calmly support them to become regulated.

Helpful Tips to Support “Thinking Like a Turtle”

- Practice tucking like a turtle throughout the day. This is also a great way to slow a child down before transitioning to the next activity. “Let’s tuck like Tucker, take 3 breathes, then we can clean up our toys”. “Let’s tuck like Tucker, take 3 breaths, and then we can get out of our car seat and sit in the cart.”
- Practice taking 3 deep breaths throughout the day. Model by taking the deep breaths with your child.
- Model using the steps when you are feeling big emotions. As adults, we also respond to big emotions in a more regulated way when we can Stop and Breathe.
- Use the cue cards and stories to teach the steps and support use of the steps when emotions are big.
- Provide reminders to “Think Like a Turtle” when your child is expressing anger or disappointment. Notice when your child is likely to experience strong emotion and plan to practice tucking like a turtle before these times.
- Offer encouragement and walk through the steps—calmly—together with your child when emotions feel strong.
- Notice and comment positively when your child stays calm.
- Teach all family members to use the steps of “Thinking like a Turtle”. This provides consistent language, expectations, and support for your child who is learning to manage big emotions.

Find more resources [HERE](https://bit.ly/37162xM): <https://bit.ly/37162xM>

If your child attends school, ask their teacher for ideas that may be best for your child.

