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Behavioral Dysregulation in Children: Signs and Parent Strategies

What Pediatricians Can Look For—And Say to Parents

COMMON SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIORAL DYSREGULATION

Frequent, Intense Tantrums

Frequent meltdowns that feel out of proportion to the situation.

Long Recovery After Upset

Takes a long time to calm down once triggered.

Big Reactions to Small Problems

Explosive outbursts over minor frustrations.

Aggressive Behavior

Hitting, kicking, throwing, or verbal outbursts.

Overly Rigid Thinking

Has trouble being flexible and becomes upset when routines or expectations change.

Difficulty with Limits

Struggles with boundaries, rules, or hearing “no.”

TOP RESEARCH-INFORMED STRATEGIES PARENTS CAN USE FOR EMOTION COACHING & VALIDATION

Label & Validate Emotions

Coach parents to name the emotion: “I see you’re frustrated because the game ended”.

Set Limits with Empathy

Reinforce: “It’s okay to feel mad, but it’s not okay to hit.”

Practice Problem-Solving

When the child is calm, validate their feelings, then guide them to identify the problem and choose a solution to try next time.

Praise Positive Behavior

Model how to praise progress: “Thanks for calming down quickly.”

Notice Early Warning Signs

Support parents in identifying signs of escalation early.

Promote Daily Connection

Remind families that regular one-on-one attention strengthens regulation.



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If a child’s anxiety is interfering with daily life—or if parents feel stuck—call my practice.



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