

SKILLZ Parenting Blog: Turning Big Emotions into Teachable Moments

As parents, we all know that childhood is full of **big emotions**. Tears, frustration, meltdowns — they can feel overwhelming in the moment. But at SKILLZ, our coaches see these moments differently. We believe that emotional breakdowns aren't interruptions to learning... they *are* the learning.

When a child feels safe to express big emotions, and an adult guides them through the storm, it builds resilience, trust, and confidence. That's why SKILLZ coaches are trained to approach emotional breakdowns with compassion and skill — not by glossing over them, and not by ignoring them, but by turning them into **growth opportunities**.

Here's how we do it on the mat — and how you can do it at home, too.

How SKILLZ Coaches Support Big Emotions

1. Stay Calm

Children borrow calm from the adults around them. That's why our instructors slow down their breathing and soften their tone. This shows the child: "*You're safe. I've got you.*"

At Home: Next time your child is upset, take one slow, steady breath before responding. It helps you regulate, so you can help them regulate.

2. Get Low

Rather than standing over a child, our coaches kneel or sit to meet them at eye level. It removes intimidation and builds connection.

At Home: When your child is upset, squat or sit down so you're face to face. Eye-level presence makes them feel heard.

3. Name It to Tame It

We teach kids that emotions aren't bad — they're signals. Saying, "*I can see you're feeling really frustrated,*" helps them feel validated and starts to calm their brain.

At Home: Try labeling what you see: "You look disappointed we can't go outside right now." Naming the feeling helps kids make sense of it.

4. Offer Comfort Before Correction

A gentle hand on the shoulder or a calm voice communicates support. We don't rush to "fix" the behavior until the child feels safe.

At Home: Hug, hold their hand, or just sit nearby until they soften. Connection first, correction second.

5. Redirect When Ready

Once the child feels calmer, we give them a small step forward: *"Let's take two deep breaths together before we try again."* This builds resilience without pushing too hard.

At Home: Offer a manageable next move. "Let's get a quick snack together, then we can finish your homework." Small steps feel doable.

Keeping the Class Engaged

While the lead instructor is co-regulating with a child in need, our assistants keep the rest of the class engaged with quick "distraction tasks." These fun activities keep the energy positive and the kids focused:

- Animal walks, "Freeze" game, simple stretches, Simon Says (martial arts style), partner high-fives, speed challenges, martial arts trivia, and strength contests are just a few examples you'll see our assistants leading the rest of the class through.

This way, every child continues learning — both the one who needed extra support, and the group as a whole.

Parenting Takeaways:

- **Don't fear big emotions.** They're not a sign something is wrong — they're a chance to help your child grow.
- **Model calm.** Your child learns emotional regulation by watching you.
- **Connect before correcting.** Kids respond to safety and empathy first.
- **Break it down.** Small, manageable steps build resilience over time.

At SKILLZ, we believe that handling emotions *is a skill* — just like kicking, punching, or balance. And when we approach big feelings as teachable moments, we give kids tools that last a lifetime.