# Children’s Sadness

## The Skill of Self-Soothing in Children: How to Help Your Child Achieve Inner Harmony

### What is Self-Soothing in Children and Why is it Important?

Self-soothing is the ability of a child to manage emotional storms on their own. This skill plays a key role in the development of emotional intelligence and self-regulation. However, for most young children, this is a challenging task. When a child is upset, it can be difficult for them to manage their feelings; they may cry, scream, or seek comfort in the arms of their parents. Parents often become the "first responders," which is completely natural. However, it’s important to help the child develop the ability to find inner resources for calming down.

The skill of self-soothing allows the child to learn to manage their emotions instead of being overwhelmed by them. This is a fundamental element of personal growth that will benefit them in adulthood. Furthermore, children who are able to manage their emotions are less likely to engage in impulsive actions or aggression.

### How to Recognize if a Child Doesn’t Yet Know How to Self-Soothe?

A child may not know how to calm down on their own if their reaction to stressful situations involves prolonged tantrums or aggressive behavior. They look for external resources to restore emotional balance, such as a hug from their parents, a toy, or a treat.

**Example:**

Sasha’s mother, a five-year-old, noticed that every time he couldn’t find his favorite toy, it triggered a storm of emotions — he cried, threw things, and demanded immediate help. At these moments, Sasha didn’t know how to handle his disappointment and stress by himself.

### Stages of Developing the Self-Soothing Skill

This skill develops gradually and depends on several factors:

• **Age and emotional development.** Younger children are more impulsive and depend on external support. As they grow older, their ability to self-regulate improves.

• **Experience and learning.** A child whose parents regularly explain how to manage emotions will acquire this skill more quickly.

• **Role models in the parents' behavior.** If adults show how they cope with difficult situations, children begin to adopt these coping strategies. For example, if the mother responds to stress by taking a deep breath, the child may eventually try doing the same.

### How Can Parents Help a Child Develop this Skill?

1. **Show that emotions are normal**

Before teaching a child how to calm down, it’s important to make them understand that experiencing strong feelings is normal. You can say:  
"I understand that you're sad (angry, upset). It’s okay to feel that way right now. Let’s try together to find a way for you to feel calmer."

Such phrases not only create a safe space for emotions but also help the child realize that feelings aren’t something bad; they are a natural part of life.

1. **Teach specific calming techniques**

Techniques that help the child shift their focus from their emotions to their body or external objects are often helpful.

• **Deep breathing.** Suggest the child take a few deep breaths with you. For example, you can say:

"Let’s try to breathe slowly, as if we are blowing up a balloon."

• **"Safe place."** Teach the child to create a place in their imagination where they feel calm and safe. It could be a beach, a park, or their favorite room. Encourage them to close their eyes and imagine themselves there, feeling secure.

• **Physical activity.** Sometimes, releasing energy is necessary for self-soothing. Ask the child to run around a bit or stomp their feet to release tension.

1. **Use toys or objects to help with soothing**

Many children have favorite soft toys that serve as "emotional anchors." Hugging such a toy helps the child feel safe and reduce stress levels.

1. **Encourage the child’s independence**

When a child is learning to self-soothe, it’s important to allow them to handle their emotions independently, but with supervision and support. For example, when they show signs of stress, instead of intervening immediately, try saying:

"It seems like you’re a bit upset. How about you try to calm down on your own first? If you need help, I’m right here."

### Key Rules for Self-Soothing:

• The skill of self-soothing is a process. Developing this ability takes time and patience. Parents should not expect immediate results.

• Create a safe environment for emotions. The child needs to know that they can freely express their feelings without fear of judgment.

• Parental support is critically important. While self-soothing implies independence, children need ongoing support and examples from adults.

### Conclusion

Developing the skill of self-soothing is an important step in the development of a child’s emotional intelligence. Adults need to be patient and supportive throughout this process. Self-soothing doesn’t happen overnight, but each step forward helps the child become emotionally stronger and more confident. Parents who create a safe and supportive space are giving their child one of the most valuable life skills.