COPE OUT LOUD

When we cope well, most of it happens inside our heads. We feel the frustration, take a breath, think through our options, and move on. Our kids usually just see the end result. When we don't cope well, everyone sees that.

So the goal is to make the hidden part more visible. I call this "Cope Out Loud." You narrate what you feel and how you move through a hard moment. Your kids can see and hear how you got from the big feeling to settling yourself to figuring out next steps.

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

One of my most common frustrations is when someone takes my parking spot or cuts me off in traffic. Anyone in the car knows it right away.

NAME IT	CALM YOURSELF	THINK IT THROUGH	COPING STATEMENT
"Ugh! I'm so mad. I can't believe they did that!"	"OK. Deep breath. One more."	"Not much I can do here. I could yell at them, but it doesn't really change anything."	"I guess I'll keep driving. I'll still get where I'm going. Let's turn up the music."

Sometimes it even comes out as "That makes me so mad." I much prefer an "I feel" statement, but keeping it real, that's not always what comes out of our mouths. And sometimes I need another deep breath or to walk away, if I can.

That's coping out loud in real life. It isn't always polished, and it doesn't always hit every step. It still counts.

WHY IT WORKS

Kids learn by watching. We'd like to think we can explain how to do something and they'll just do it, but knowing is different from doing. Seeing someone else do it makes the how much clearer. That's especially true with big feelings.

In the middle of a big emotion, the thinking part of the brain goes offline, so that's not the time for teaching. It's also why telling a kid, or anyone for that matter, to "calm down" doesn't work. If they could, they would! Learning happens in calmer moments, through watching how things are done and practicing. Over time, the words you use in your hard moments could become the words they use. We've all heard kids repeat things we'd rather they didn't say. Here, we get to use that to our advantage.

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HOW TO COPE OUT LOUD



1. Name the Problem and Feeling

Naming what you notice in your body also helps kids connect physical cues to emotions, which is often the hardest part for them.

"Well, that was unexpected. I'm so frustrated."

"Oh, that was embarrassing. My face is getting hot and my heart's pounding."

2. Say How You Calm Yourself

This is the step kids rarely get to see. It shows them that taking a pause is a smart move, not a punishment. Even better, use strategies your child already knows, like bubble, rainbow, star, or heart breathing.



"I need a minute. Let me take a deep breath."

"I'm going to step away and count to 10. I can't think straight right now."



3. Think It Through

When you come up with more than one option, kids see what flexibility actually looks like.

"That's unexpected. I guess my plan isn't going to work. OK, what are my options?"

"Bummer, my plans got cancelled. Maybe we can find another time to hang out. I'll have to find something else to do tonight."

4. Use a Coping Statement

Don't skip this step. These are the lines we want to stick. You can even "stack the deck" with coping statements that echo what you'd love to hear your kids say.



"I don't like it, but I can handle it."

"Wasn't what I wanted, but this will work."

"Plan A didn't work. Good thing there's a Plan B."

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Try It This Week

Pick one small frustration, like traffic, a burned dinner, or spilled coffee, and narrate it start to finish. Keep it short. It's not a lecture.

You're going to "lose it" sometimes. You're human. Your kids will see that, but they'll also see what you do next. The good news is they'll likely learn more from watching you work your way through it than from hearing you explain how. Each time you talk through it, you're showing them that big feelings are normal and they're manageable.

A FEW THINGS THAT HELP

Start small. Everyday annoyances are the best practice because the stakes are low for everyone. It's a lot easier to cope out loud about a long checkout line than a hard phone call. Once it feels natural, use it for the harder moments too.

Keep it real. You don't have to sound perfectly calm. Hearing the frustration in your tone when you say "Ugh, I'm really frustrated right now" is honest, and kids need to see that big feelings are OK and you can work through them.

Use it to model repair. When you snap at your kid, wait until you've settled, then talk about how you felt and what you'll try next time: "I'm sorry I yelled. I was really frustrated at what happened. Next time, I'm going to try to take a breath to settle first." That shows kids what repair looks like.

Notice when they try it. When your child tries any of these steps, even awkwardly, point it out. "*I noticed you slowed down and thought that through."* Kids tend to do more of what we pay attention to, so catch the small tries, not just the slips.

WANT MORE TIPS ON BIG FEELINGS?

Cope Out Loud builds on the Be An EMPATH Method, a way adults can help kids settle big emotions and, ideally, learn something in the process. EMPATH is what you use when your child is struggling in the moment.

Cope Out Loud teaches the same skills, using your own everyday moments and frustrations.

Get the free BE An EMPATH parent guide at www.carolinedanda.com/empath-method

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