



STEFFEN
COUNSELING SERVICES

Generations & Emotions

A Family Activity for Understanding Emotion Across Generations

Purpose:

Help you notice how different generations in your family have handled emotions, and use that understanding to talk about differences without blame or defensiveness.

You can complete this on your own, or with a partner, grandparent, or other caregiver.

Part 1: How Were Emotions Handled in Each Generation?

Instructions:

Think about each generation. Use short phrases, bullet points, or check boxes. There are no right or wrong answers.

A. My Grandparents' Generation

- What emotions were okay to show?
 - What emotions were not okay to show?
 - How did adults usually respond when someone was upset?
 - One thing I remember or have heard about this generation:
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B. My Parents' Generation

- What emotions were okay to show?
- What emotions were not okay to show?
- How did adults usually respond when someone was upset?

- One thing I remember from my own childhood:
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C. My Generation (as a Parent or Caregiver)

- What emotions do I try to allow my child to show?
 - What emotions still feel hard for me to handle?
 - How do I usually respond when my child is upset?
 - One intention I have for how emotions are handled in my home:
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D. My Child's Generation / World

- What do I notice about how kids today are encouraged to talk about feelings?
 - What new sources of emotional stress do my children face?
 - (e.g., school, social media, peer pressure, identity)
 - One thing I wish all caregivers understood about kids today:
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Part 2: Where Do Generations Clash?

Instructions:

List the emotion-related topics that tend to cause tension or confusion between you and other adults (parents, grandparents, co-parents, etc.).

A. Common Friction Points

Check the ones that feel relevant, then add your own.

- How much we talk about feelings
- How we handle anger or frustration
- Whether we talk about “hard” topics (divorce, death, mental health)
- How much comfort we show when a child is upset
- How we discipline (shaming, yelling, quiet conversations, etc.)
- Screens and emotional regulation (e.g., “just put the phone away”)
- Other:

B. Pick One Issue to Explore

Issue:

- **How I see it:**
(What is this about for me? What do I worry about?)
 - **How the other generation might see it:**
(What might they be trying to protect or prevent?)
 - **What I worry might happen if we don't agree:**
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Part 3: Talking About Differences Without Blame

Instructions:

Use these fill-in-the-blank scripts to prepare for conversations with grandparents, other parents, or caregivers.

Script 1: Acknowledging the Past

"I know you grew up with , and I understand that helped you feel ."

"In my family, we're trying because ."

Script 2: Sharing Your Intention

"I'm not saying your way was wrong; I'm trying because I want my child to ."

"For me, this is about , not about criticizing how you were raised."

Script 3: Inviting Collaboration

"Can we talk about what we both want for ?"

"What feels most important to you in this situation?"

Script 4: Setting Gentle Boundaries

"I hear your concern, and I also need to ."

"If this happens again, I'll , and I'd appreciate your support with that."

Part 4: My Family's Emotion Plan

Instructions:

With your partner, co-parent, or another caregiver, create a simple plan for how emotions will be handled in your home (especially when other generations are involved).

Our shared goals:

(e.g., “We all want the child to feel safe, respected, and understood.”)

What we will try to do:

- When the child is upset, we will:
- When adults feel frustrated, we will:
- When there is disagreement between caregivers, we will:

What we will avoid:

- Saying things like:
- Doing things like:

How we will check in:

- Frequency: (e.g., weekly, after big events)
 - Who will start the conversation:
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Part 5: Reflection

Complete this after you've filled out the earlier sections (and ideally after discussing them with someone).

- What surprised me about how different generations view emotions?
- What did I notice about how my own upbringing shapes how I parent now?
- One thing I want to intentionally change in how emotions are handled in my family:
- One thing I'm proud of already doing differently: