



FOUR WAYS TO SOOTHE OR ENTERTAIN A CHILD WITHOUT FOOD

Often it seems that an easy way to improve a child's mood or curb unwanted behavior is with food treats such as ice cream, cookies, or candy. While this may be a short-term solution to controlling a child's behavior, it can reinforce negative eating habits and help to create an unhealthy relationship between food and mood. In a society where super-sizing has become the norm, the potential to develop an unhealthy lifestyle that includes over-eating or over-indulging as a means to improve one's mood is a looming threat.

Instead of asking "*Will a cookie make you feel better?*" use alternative methods that prevent emotional eating. This will also give you as the opportunity to talk to your children and help them learn to process their feelings in a more positive way.

1. Get moving! Physical activity is a proven stress reliever and mood lifter. Take a brisk walk or jog; jump rope; kick, catch, or throw a ball; make up a fitness game for the class or family.
2. Be creative. Encourage your child to stencil a border in a bedroom, make a new recipe, create a diorama or scrapbook, write and illustrate a comic book—these are all things that challenge the mind and involve working with the hands.
3. Relax. Find something soothing to do together like reading, watching a movie, listening to music, or playing board games.
4. Learn something new. Teach your child how to play a new card game. Find a vegetable you've never eaten and figure out how to prepare it. Explore a new neighborhood or a place you've never been together.