

Can You Cry In Front of Your Kids?

By: Lindsey Bailey, Lower School Counselor

The other day I was talking to a (non-GWA) mom of two young kids at a party. Amidst our conversation, she shared that sometimes she feels overwhelmed when her husband is at work and she is caring for the kids on her own. Totally understandable! Then she said, "Sometimes you want a break, but you can't cry in front of your kids." I nodded in agreement as only someone without kids of her own would.

But this got me thinking about how adults tend to hide negative emotions from kids. Many adults want to protect children from the pain of negative emotions like sadness, anger, frustration, or worry. So when you cry or get mad, you might choose to do so in private, away from young eyes. I know I certainly have before. Yet we almost never hide laughter, joy, hope, or excitement from kids. If we hide all the negative emotions from kids, then they will learn to do the same. Yet adults get upset if and when kids don't open up about their feelings. On the flip side, if children see adults effectively label and manage strong emotions, then they become more equipped to understand, talk about, and cope with their own big feelings.

So can you cry in front of kids? Absolutely, but keep it kid friendly. [This article explains that adults should find the sweet spot when modeling emotional expression](#). You don't want to suppress all your feelings nor should you burden your kids with too much detail or, dare I say, lose control of your emotions altogether. If you're at that point, you should definitely step out of view. Therein lies another challenge: to be an effective model you must actually be able to regulate your own emotions. We're all human and struggle with this at times.

Here are some [tips for parents seeking to improve their own emotional regulation](#). I'm not suggesting that your child should be privy to your every thought and feeling - that would be inappropriate and unhealthy. But I do encourage you to talk about your feelings, if only a little, with your kids and to set a good example for healthy ways to cope.