

# LISTENING & COMING ALONGSIDE KID'S EMOTIONS



KIDS BEST BET

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What does it mean to listen to our children's/teens emotions and convey we are there to support and care for them?

## WHAT DOESN'T WORK & GETS IN THE WAY?

### ● JUDGE THEIR FEELINGS

Statements like "you shouldn't feel that way, why can't you just happy," can convey judgement and create defensiveness as a result

### ● DISCOUNT FEELINGS

Responding to their feelings with "it isn't that bad, why are you so dramatic," discounts their experiences and they will likely stop sharing with you

### ● DEFEND ONESELF

If we become defensive with "I didn't say that or mean that, or why do you take it so personally," then we are responding from our feelings and not listening to theirs

### ● CONVEY THEY ARE TOO MUCH

Replying to them with "what is the matter with you, I can't take this anymore," suggests to the child they are too big, too much, too difficult for you and they likely won't share their feelings as a result

### ● TEACH A LESSON

Focussing on the lessons a child needs to learn conveys you are more invested in their behaviour than in understanding their feelings and helping them make sense of themselves

### ● SOLVE A PROBLEM

If sharing their experiences leads to a focus on problem solving then they may feel we care more about fixing things than in hearing their feelings.

## COMING ALONGSIDE EMOTIONS

### ACCEPT THEIR FEELINGS

Coming alongside their emotions means we accept the feelings they have without trying to change them, despite how irrational or unreasonable they seem to us. We don't need to agree with their behaviour when we help them try to put names to their feelings. What they want most is for us to listen, accept, and honour how they are experiencing things.

### NORMALIZE THEIR FEELINGS

Normalizing feelings may sound like, "I can imagine that would feel sad, scary, make you upset." This helps to convey we are by their side and treats feelings as part of the human experience. This can help them feel closer to us, that they are like other people, and will encourage them to tell us more. It makes feelings less scary and conveys that we need to embrace them.

### MAKE ROOM FOR FEELINGS

We need to make room for emotions to be expressed and to come out rather than telling kids to stop feeling (e.g, stop crying, cheer up). Emotions need to be made sense out of and one of the best places is through play where they can come out on objects, through stories or actions. Play is a protective place where feelings aren't judged and they don't have to solve problems.