

Positive Direction

How to listen, be heard, engage cooperation and encourage good decision making

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Helping children deal with their feelings

Why this is so important

- There is a direct connection between how a child feels and how they behave..
- Adults don't usually accept children's feelings: "You don't really feel that way." "There's no reason to be so upset."
- Denial of feelings can confuse and enrage children and can disconnect them from being able to identify what their own feelings are. They will not be able to trust what they are feeling and will not learn how to deal with them.
- Children (and people in general) often just want to be seen and acknowledged for who they are and for what they are going through. (Not to be discounted)

Accepting children's feelings

Communicating with respect

- Empathize. How would you have wanted a parent to respond when you were a child.
- Know that feelings are neither good or bad, they just are. Learning how to identify what one is feeling and to cope is an important life skill.
- The more the child can figure out for himself, the better. (Not in dangerous or harmful situations).

Identify the feeling

Examples: Child says

- I don't like my new baby brother
- I'm not wearing that stupid retainer anymore, It hurts.
- My teacher is mean, I can't stand her, she wouldn't let me have recess.
- I'm not going to school anymore, no one likes me
- Janie is not my friend anymore, she called me a loser.
- This reading assignment is really boring
- I'm not applying to that college, they wouldn't want me anyway.

Scenario

The get together

- You plan a wonderful dinner party for your family. You have worked hard and have been informing them for weeks about it. In spite of this, one of your sons and his girlfriend just don't show up. Your two youngest grandchildren complain about the food and refuse to eat. The parents do not offer correction. No one offers to help cook. After the meal, everyone retires to watch a football game leaving you to clean up by yourself. You are still upset when the following day you meet your best friend and describe what happened.

The ways people generally respond to be “helpful”

- **Denial of Feelings:** *There's no reason for you to be so upset. You are just too sensitive. You're probably just tired. You should smile, you look better when you smile.*
- **Philosophical:** *Life is like that. It's not always fair.*
- **Advice:** *Here's what I think you should do.*
- **Questions:** *Has this happened before? What did you do to create the situation?*
- **Defense of the other person:** *I can understand the other persons reaction.*
- **Pity:** *Oh you poor thing That is terrible. I feel so sorry for you*
- **Amateur Psychologist:** *Has it ever occurred to you that the real reason you are so upset is > > >*
- **Empathetic Response: (tune into feelings)** *That sounds tough, (Be specific about why) After you worked so hard you must have been disappointed*

To Help with Feelings

From: How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk

- **Listen with full attention.**
- **Acknowledge their feelings with a word - *Oh, mmm, I see***
- ***Give their feelings a name.***
- ***Give them their wishes in fantasy.***

Engaging a child's co-operation

From: How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will talk

- Describe. Describe what you see or describe the problem.
- Give information
- Offer a choice.
- Say it with a word
- Talk about your feelings
- Write a note

Alternatives to Punishment

From: how to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk

- Point out a way to be helpful (redirection)
- Express strong disapproval (without attacking character).
- State your Expectations.
- Show the child how to make amends
- Take action
- Allow the child to experience the consequence of his misbehavior.

Conclusion

Our purpose when communicating

- When talking to a child or to any human being, speak to what is best in them; intelligence, initiative, their sense of responsibility, their sense of humor and their empathy for others.

